EDITORIAL

175 Editor’s Note
Jeffrey S. Lamp, Lead Editor

177 Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Leading and Being Led
John Thompson, Guest Editor

ESSAYS

181 In Memoriam: Vinson Synan: Model of Spirit-Led Leadership
Sally Shelton

199 Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership Distinctives: A Literature Review
Daniel D. Isgrigg

217 The Prophetic Servant: The Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders
Wonsuk Ma

235 Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Exploring Three Dimensions
Jay Gary

253 Bulgarian Pentecostal Leadership in the Crucible of Change
John Thompson

275 Charles Stanley’s Pentecostal Roots
Vinson Synan

REVIEWS

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John Paul Thompson, Guest Editor
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CONTENTS

Editor’s Note
Jeffrey S. Lamp .................................................................175

Editorial
Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Leading and Being Led
John Thompson, Guest Editor ...........................................177

Essays
In Memoriam: Vinson Synan: Model of Spirit-Led Leadership
Sally Jo Shelton ............................................................181

Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership Distinctives: A Literature Review
Daniel D. Isgrigg ............................................................199

The Prophetic Servant: The Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders
Wonsuk Ma .................................................................217

Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Exploring Three Dimensions
Jay Gary .................................................................235

Bulgarian Pentecostal Leadership in the Crucible of Change
John Thompson ............................................................253

Charles Stanley’s Pentecostal Roots
Vinson Synan ............................................................275

Reviews
M. K. Killian. Formational Leadership: Developing Spiritual and Emotional Maturity in Toxic Leaders
Bill Buker .................................................................287
Rick Wadholm, Jr. *A Theology of the Spirit in the Former Prophets: A Pentecostal Perspective*
William L. Lyons .................................................................290

Robert J. Clinton. *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*
Jay Gary .................................................................................293

Larry Hart..............................................................................296
In Celebration of the Life of

H. Vinson Synan, Ph.D.

December 1, 1934—March 15, 2020

Contributions to Oral Roberts University

1990–1994 Professor of Pentecostal & Charismatic Studies and the Director of the Holy Spirit Research Center

2015–2020 Scholar in Residence

2016–2017 Interim Dean, College of Theology & Ministry

2019–2020 PhD Program Director
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The editorial committee of *Spiritus* had long planned on this issue’s theme, Spirit-empowered leadership, and there was unanimity that the right person to serve as guest editor was John Thompson. John’s long experience and training in the field of leadership positioned him to vet submissions, identify peer reviewers, and maintain a high standard of quality. I worked closely with him in the process, and I can attest he gave his all to see this issue come to fruition.

In the process of forming this issue, we received the sad news of the passing of a giant in the worldwide Spirit-empowered Movement, Vinson Synan. He was a longtime friend of Oral Roberts University, serving recently as interim dean of the College of Theology and Ministry and as the director of the newly launched PhD program at ORU. As we were working on this issue, the decision was made to dedicate it to this leader for his lifetime of service to the Pentecostal Movement. One article here, by Sally Shelton, both honors Vinson Synan’s work and examines his approach to leadership. And we have one article that he had submitted for publication before his death. I had planned to publish it in the Spring 2021 issue, but the editorial committee thought it appropriate to include it in this issue.

I would like to thank John Thompson and all those who contributed to this issue. In an odd occurrence, all of the articles and book reviews were written by present and former ORU faculty. I am grateful for the participation of the ORU faculty in the production of this issue. Looking forward to the Spring 2021 issue, we already have a good selection of pieces from both ORU faculty and those outside of the ORU community.

But for now, leadership!

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Spirit-empowered Leadership: Leading and Being Led

John Thompson, Guest Editor

Given that you are presently reading this special journal issue devoted to Spirit-empowered leadership, I would guess many of you are like me: I love strategy and vision. Dreaming, developing, and deploying a new plan invigorates me. However, over the last twenty years I have grown in my understanding and conviction that Spirit-leading is more important than strategic thinking. God’s plan is better than our plans and he sees what is ahead much more clearly than I (or we) do.

Two decades ago, I entered a doctoral program in Strategic Leadership. It was an interdisciplinary program with participants from the fields of business, education, medicine, government, and theology. Leadership imbeds every profession and touches every sphere of life. We all desire to be effective (and hopefully good) leaders in our particular professions, in our families, in our communities, and in our organizations. Embarking on a multi-national church plant at the time, my desire was to gain skills needed not just to lead one church but eventually to lead a multiplication movement of multi-ethnic churches in other American cities. How that played out over the last twenty years turned out differently than I had pictured. I did pastor that new church for a decade. But leading a stateside multiplying movement of church plants never materialized. Instead, I found myself in multiple countries training ministry leaders and the last seven years teaching in the university setting. While attempting to lead others, God has led me into unexpected territories. I expect you too have been surprised by how the Holy Spirit has directed your journey, intervened in supernatural ways, and provided guidance and giftings to accomplish his purpose for your life.

We need the Spirit of God in our leadership. We desperately need both the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit in our leadership. Without this empowerment, we default to leading from our own brokenness resulting in the manipulation and wounding of those around us in the pursuit of our own agendas. Leadership skill can be dangerous and bring great harm if it is not Spirit-empowered. Conversely, leadership skill can bless and foster human and organizational flourishing if it is formed by, filled with, and functioning under the Holy Spirit in our lives.
Over the last century, the academic study of leadership has evolved in its quest both to understand the fundamental nature of leadership and to find the “silver bullet” for leading effectively. Leader traits and behaviors, environmental and cultural contexts, principles of power and influence, and organizational complexity have all been explored over the years. These approaches focus on the human, organizational, and sociological factors of leadership. This journal issue poses another question for consideration: How might the Holy Spirit enable people and their institutions to lead well?

Jesus told his followers to wait in Jerusalem and “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:4, 8). Acts 2 through the end of the book described transformed leaders impacting the world around them. These leaders had Spirit-inspired boldness in the moment and yet continued to grow in their transformation individually and as a community. Peter spoke with boldness in Acts 2 and yet still needed transformation in his own understanding of God’s inclusion of the gentiles in Acts 10. He and others subsequently discerned and led the community of faith into new expressions of their faith at the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. The book of Acts, furthermore, described the empowerment of the early church for strength in the face of persecution. We need these attributes of empowerment as leaders as well. We need Spirit-empowered growth, gifting, character, adaptability, and perseverance.

This edition includes five articles that help us look at Spirit-empowered leadership. While there is so much that could and should be said about Spirit-empowered leadership, we hope the articles presented here push the conversation forward and provide an impetus for continued scholarly work in this area that can inform and shape our personal and collective understanding, experience, and practice of Spirit-empowered leadership.

We begin with an exemplary Spirit-empowered leader to whom issue is dedicated. Sally Shelton, in her article “In Memoriam: Vinson Synan: Model of Spirit-led Leadership,” calls attention to the unifying work of the Holy Spirit. She examines the life of Dr. Vinson Synan as a pastor, denominational leader, historian, writer, and an academic. She described his leadership as visionary, Spirit-led, and bridge-building.

Daniel Isgrigg, then, lays a foundational orientation to the current literature in Spirit-empowered leadership in “Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership Distinctives: A Literature Review.” He highlights some of the challenges in defining Spirit-empowered leadership, identifies and describes the few resources presently that do address this challenge, and identifies five common characteristics.
mentioned in many of the studies for Spirit-empowered leadership. This article provides a vital baseline for present and future research in Spirit-empowered leadership.

Wonsuk Ma moves us into a biblical and theological look at Spirit-empowered leadership. He examines two biblical models of Spirit-empowered leaders in the Old Testament in “The Prophetic Servant: The Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders.” The Old Testament provides both good and bad examples of Spirit-empowered leaders. Ma examines the good examples of David as the ideal king as well as the prophetic Servant figure that emerges in the prophetic writings. Through these models, principles for Spirit-empowered leadership are extracted and a theological lens is given foreshadowing Jesus as God’s Spirit-empowered prophetic Servant.

From these foundations both in the literature and in Scripture, we then move to two articles that provide contemporary application of Spirit-empowered leadership in an academic setting and in a ministry setting. Jay Gary offers a case study from Oral Roberts University on developing a process for Spirit-empowered leadership formation in higher education. Oral Roberts University was founded by the world-renown Spirit-empowered leader, Oral Roberts, with the mission to raise up healthy and effective Spirit-empowered leaders who through their leadership would serve as healers in every domain of society and every corner of our world. In his article, “Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Exploring Three Dimensions,” Gary describes the university’s process over the last twenty-four months of refining this process fifty years after the founding of the university. Gary shares a three-dimensional model of personal development, interpersonal influence, and generational emergence that has emerged through the process for understanding and shaping the development of Spirit-empowered leadership.

From the academic context, we move to an international setting to examine what Spirit-empowered ministry leadership looks like in the rapidly changing environment of Bulgaria. In “Bulgarian Pentecostal Leadership in the Crucible of Change,” I (John Thompson) describe how the leadership characteristics, behaviors, and values of Pentecostal leaders have changed over the last thirty years in a society experiencing tumultuous change since the fall of Communism. This cultural setting provides a look at both the impact of culture on leadership and the need for leadership adaptation and change for a rapidly shifting context. Spirit-empowered leadership must not be static, but rather must be dynamic.

We conclude this journal with one of Vinson Synan’s last written pieces. He provides bookends to this journal with the first article describing his life and the last...
article providing a sample of his prolific writing. May each of us follow in Synan’s footsteps living a life of Spirit-empowered leadership.

My prayer and declaration for each of you in your pursuit of Spirit-empowered leadership is found in the words of Paul: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6). May we keep learning and growing in our Spirit-empowered leadership.

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In Memoriam: Vinson Synan

Model of Spirit-led Leadership

SALLY JO SHELTON

Keywords Vinson Synan, Pentecostalism, Classical Pentecostalism, Catholic Renewal, ecumenism, biography, Catholic Charismatic, Charismatic Movement, Spirit-empowerment, Christian leadership, Pentecostal leadership, Spirit-led leadership, Holy Spirit

Abstract

H. Vinson Synan (December 1, 1934—March 15, 2020) was a key successor to David du Plessis, known as Mr. Pentecost to Catholic and mainline Protestant leaders. Like du Plessis, Synan was a classical Pentecostal who dedicated much of his life to promoting the move of the Holy Spirit beyond the confines of his own classical Pentecostal denomination, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. His call to this work came in 1972 at an annual Catholic Charismatic Conference held at Notre Dame University when seeing some 8,000 participants singing in the Spirit, he came to the conviction that Catholics had indeed received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, or what classical Pentecostals call the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This realization was life-changing. In addition to continuing to serve as a top church administrator later, as well as a church historian and author, teacher, and academic administrator, Synan collaborated with other Charismatic leaders to hold national conferences in the 1980s and 1990s and then international conferences of Empowered21. After reviewing Synan’s diverse accomplishments, the rest of the piece analyzes the leadership style that Synan modeled, which was visionary, Spirit-led, and bridge building. Although Synan remained true to his Pentecostal upbringing, he celebrated the outpouring of the Spirit on churches and denominations far different from his own,
and exhibited great humility and love in the process. Those who have benefited by his bridge building are deeply indebted to Synan’s work.

**Introduction**

H. Vinson Synan (December 1, 1934—March 15, 2020) was unquestionably one of David du Plessis’s key successors. Du Plessis (1905–1987), heralded as “Mr. Pentecost” due to his extensive ecumenical work beginning in 1947,¹ was one of the first classical Pentecostals after the Second World War actively to encourage mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders to open their hearts and their churches to the move of the Spirit. Having received a call in 1936 through a prophetic message from Smith Wigglesworth, du Plessis had dedicated the second half of his life to serving as an unofficial Pentecostal ambassador to the rest of the Christian world, for eighteen of those years sacrificing his affiliation with the Assemblies of God USA to do so.² Although Synan did not engage with the World Council of Churches as du Plessis had, he did follow in du Plessis’s footsteps in promoting the outpouring of God’s Spirit on all Christians.

By the grace of God Synan was able to lay aside the prejudice he had conceived in his youth against Catholics,³ a bias he freely admitted, to recognize the authenticity of the outpouring of the Spirit on all Christians regardless of ecclesial or denominational affiliation. Once Synan recognized this surprising outpouring of the Spirit on what Pentecostals had tended to regard as ritualistic, dying churches, he responded first with tears and then, for the rest of his life, celebrated with joy, taking advantage of every opportunity to promote this unprecedented move of God.

To call Vinson Synan du Plessis’s successor is to acknowledge the visionary, Spirit-led, bridge-building leadership whereby he, like du Plessis, came to serve the larger renewal that far exceeded the limits of his own denomination, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC). However, before analyzing the leadership Synan exercised so effectively throughout his life and ministry, let us first review, as has been done to some extent elsewhere,⁴ his many accomplishments. Then the rest of the article will be devoted to a brief analysis of Synan’s leadership, which, though typically Pentecostal in many ways, far exceeded that of most of the Pentecostal leaders of his time in the boldness with which he embraced the Charismatic movement, particularly the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among
Catholics, and his efforts to build bridges of friendship and reconciliation with those of other traditions.

**Achievements**

Synan’s lifework was multi-faceted, his leadership capabilities evident in virtually every task he undertook whether as pastor and church official, historian and author, teacher and academic administrator, or advocate of Christian unity and bridge builder, to say nothing of his personal roles as wise mentor, warm friend, and devoted family man. Whatever the level of his work—whether teaching a high school or seminary class, preaching in a small church of less than a hundred members or sharing the platform with Pope Francis, addressing over 30,000 Catholic Charismatics in Rome’s Circus Maximus—Synan humbly but authoritatively proclaimed what the Spirit was saying to the church of his time.

**Churchman**

Synan’s church work was widely diverse, including the establishment of an interdenominational, city-wide youth ministry patterned after the Jesus Movement. He served in the IPHC administration for twelve years, his highest offices being General Secretary and Assistant General Superintendent. At one point, he was called upon to oversee the trial of a bishop charged with misadministration. While others jockeyed for political power, Synan maintained a neutral stance, distancing himself from the fray, refusing to take advantage of the situation to advance his own position within the denomination. His energy was particularly manifest during his tenure as Director of Evangelism when in the space of four years he oversaw the planting of over 150 new churches. He was also instrumental in helping to unite two Chilean churches—the Pentecostal Methodist Church of Chile and the Pentecostal Church of Chile—with the Pentecostal Holiness Church USA, thereby forming the IPHC.

**Educator**

Synan was also a successful educator, beginning his teaching career first as a high school history teacher and then serving at Emmanuel College, an IPHC college in Franklin Springs, Georgia, teaching history and economics and heading the Social and Behavioral Science Department. He later taught at Southwestern College in Oklahoma City, where he also served as interim president for a brief period. Then,
from 1990 to 1994, Synan was professor of Pentecostal and Charismatic history at Oral Roberts University (ORU) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as well as Director of ORU’s Holy Spirit Research Center. Moving to Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 1994, he became dean of the School of Divinity at Regent University, serving there for twelve years, and after retiring from the deanship, teaching there several more years. After his return to Oklahoma, he served a year as ORU’s interim dean of the College of Theology and Ministry and then remained as Scholar in Residence, working with Billy Wilson, ORU’s president, on Empowered21.

While dean at Regent, Synan had created a PhD program in renewal theology, a project he had originally hoped to accomplish at ORU while there the first time. When Synan’s return to ORU coincided with the establishment of its PhD in theology program, he jumped at the opportunity to help ORU’s new College of Theology and Ministry dean Wonsuk Ma and the assistant PhD program director Eric Newberg in completing that process. Though suffering from serious ill health by that time, Synan took great delight in seeing his dream for an ORU PhD program fulfilled when it was launched at the beginning of the fall of 2019, ORU’s fully ATS-accredited doctorate in Spirit-empowered global Christian theology, with contextual theology being the first track offered.

**Pentecostal Scholarship Promoter**

Apart from his academic achievements, Synan’s greatest contribution to the Pentecostal scholarly world was the founding of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS). Synan had first discussed the idea with two of his fellow Pentecostal academics—Horace Ward and William Menzies—then worked with them to inaugurate the Society by holding a banquet for prospective members at the 1970 World Pentecostal Conference in Dallas, Texas. Synan demonstrated his flexibility and sensitivity by responding to a concern expressed by a church leader who questioned his welcome into the Society because he did not hold a graduate degree. As soon as Synan’s team realized that the name originally chosen—The Society of Pentecostal Scholars—posed a potential barrier, they quickly changed the word scholars in the name to studies. Synan was elected SPS’s General Secretary in 1970 and then President in 1973.

Upon its formation, the Society became the venue for the International Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue led initially by David du Plessis and Fr. Kilian McDonnell, a prominent Catholic scholar, Synan himself participating in the earliest meetings. The Society rapidly became a venue for Pentecostal scholars
from around the world, a catalyst for global Pentecostal research, and a hotbed of Pentecostal scholarship in the US. While other scholarly Pentecostal societies would later emerge, SPS continues to play a major role. Having come from a background in which Pentecostals with advanced degrees had been few and far between, Synan lived to enjoy a day when Pentecostals with doctorates abound and in which Pentecostal scholarship continues to expand rapidly through SPS, the doctoral programs he helped to create, and beyond.

**Historian and Author**

Synan gained a global reputation as a church historian and author with the publication of his dissertation in 1971, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, re-titled in its 1997 edition, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*. In this his major work, Synan traced the origins of the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition back to the perfectionism of John Wesley and the subsequent Holiness and Keswickian movements. Due to a frustrating four-year delay in finding a publisher for the dissertation, Synan had the time to develop further the section that traced the beginnings of the Charismatic Movement by writing a chapter on the Catholic Renewal, thereby expanding the book’s influence far beyond those in the Pentecostal Movement to all those in the Renewal, especially Catholics. Throughout his lifetime, Synan wrote some two dozen monographs as well as numerous journal and magazine articles. Considering the many aspects of his work and the extensive travel he undertook, this prolific literary output speaks to Synan’s lifelong energy and self-discipline, although he also credits Carol Lee, his wife of fifty-nine years, for her assistance as she had faithfully served as his editor, relieving him of the close work required to prepare manuscripts for publication.

**Ecumenist**

While Synan’s life would be considered highly productive in light of his many achievements enumerated thus far, what makes him truly worthy of being called one of du Plessis’s successors is the bridge-building role he played, promoting the move of the Holy Spirit among all the denominations, not just Pentecostals. Even before recognizing the authenticity of the move of the Holy Spirit among Catholics, Synan had heard of the Spirit’s movement among the mainline Protestant denominations through the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI). What Synan saw when attending his first FGBMFI
meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1970, helped lay the foundation for his understanding that God was doing things Pentecostals had never dreamed possible. After meeting Fr. Kilian McDonnell at the Pentecostal World Conference in 1970, Synan invited him to Franklin Springs, Georgia, to visit Emmanuel College there. Synan was fascinated as McDonnell told of the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Movement at Duquesne University in 1967 and its spread to Notre Dame, the University of Michigan, and beyond. Synan was deeply gratified to hear from McDonnell how grateful the Catholics were to Pentecostals for helping them rediscover the Pentecostal experience, which McDonnell called “a treasure of the Gospel and the church.”

Synan’s call to ecumenical bridge building came when, at the invitation of McDonnell, he attended the sixth annual Catholic Charismatic Conference at Notre Dame University in 1972. Whenever recounting this event, Synan enjoyed explaining how that from youth he had been “more afraid of Catholics than of Communists or rattlesnakes.” (This down-home, humor-padded honesty is partly what makes Synan’s message so compelling and his books so readable.) Apparently, at that point in his life, even though he had developed a friendship with McDonnell and written a chapter on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal for the published version of his dissertation, he was still not fully convinced of the authenticity of Catholics’ experience of the Holy Spirit.

Upon arriving on the Notre Dame campus, Synan heard that a preliminary prayer service would soon be held at the basketball coliseum. Not wanting to miss a minute—Synan’s usual modus operandi—he rushed to the meeting, taking a seat as high in the stands as he could to distance himself from the crowd, and gazed down in fascination at the sight of some 8,000 Catholics raising their hands in praise and worship to God. Then, to his amazement, arose the sound of those 8,000 voices singing in the Spirit in four-part harmony. Suddenly, the realization that the Catholics had indeed received the baptism in the Spirit overwhelmed him, and he began to weep. Hardly able to breathe for the deluge of tears, he went to a restroom to regain his composure, but sobbed only harder. Then he heard God’s message in his heart as clearly as though he had heard it with his ears:

This is real. I am doing a new thing in the Catholic Church, and it will spread over all the earth. You will be a part of it and will contribute to this great awakening. You must tell your own people
what you have seen and lead them to pray for these Catholic Pentecostals.\textsuperscript{10}

Later that year, when given the opportunity to speak briefly at the annual IPHC conference, Synan gave the message that God had told him to share: that the Holy Spirit had indeed fallen on the Catholics as on the Azusa Street Pentecostals. At the time, he thought this announcement would be his “ecclesiastical swan song,” the last he would be invited to speak on an IPHC platform. Instead, two days later, the IPHC delegates voted him the General Secretary of the church, placing him in the third highest administrative position in his denomination. While Synan found great joy in serving in the administration of his denomination as he was following in the footsteps of his father who had been IPHC bishop for many years, he never lost sight of the call to have an active part in promoting the Charismatic Renewal and was obedient to that call to the end of his life.\textsuperscript{11}

Being elected to serve in IPHC administration in no way detracted from Synan’s response to his call to promote the expansion of the Charismatic Movement. For some ten years Synan met annually with a Charismatic leaders group in Glencoe, a small town near St. Louis, Missouri. At these meetings, the leaders discussed issues and strove to resolve controversies that arose from time to time in the movement, the most well-known of which was called the “shepherding movement.” Synan also served for some fifteen years as a member of the North American Renewal Service Committee (NARSC). As part of the NARSC planning committee, he helped to orchestrate the 1977 Charismatic Conference in Kansas City, which had some 50,000 in attendance, the largest gathering of Charismatics and Pentecostals held to that point, with Catholic Charismatics accounting for half the attendance.

Ralph Martin, in his preface to Synan’s \textit{Charismatic Bridges}, credits Synan for envisioning such a meeting for the purpose of “witness[ing] . . . to the world God’s power to unite in love.”\textsuperscript{12} In reflecting on the 1977 event, Synan claimed that “the conference was not just a call for unity. It was a demonstration of the unity the Lord has already given.” He considered it to be “one of the most significant religious gatherings in the history of this nation . . . [and] certainly the most important denominationally sponsored ecumenical gathering in our history.” For Synan, “[T]he message of Kansas City is that the charismatic renewal is the most vibrant, powerful force in Christendom today, and that this great force is not going to be fragmented but is going to move in the same direction.”\textsuperscript{13}

\hspace{1cm} Vinson Synan | 187

In the ensuing years, Synan continued to promote the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on an even more global scale by working with Billy Wilson, who currently serves as ORU President, Global Co-chair of Empowered21, and Chair of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Synan had worked with Wilson, first, on the Azusa Street Centennial (2006). Then later, he served as a leader and scholar participant in the Empowered21 conversations beginning in 2008. Despite health problems, he traveled with Wilson, visiting cities all over the world. He also served as chair of the scholars track for the first Global Conference on Holy Spirit Empowerment in the 21st Century held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 2010, and the Empowered21 conference held in Jerusalem in 2015.

How fittingly climactic that in June 2017 Synan spoke to a gathering of some 30,000 Catholic Charismatics from 230 countries on the Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, sharing the platform of Rome’s Circus Maximus with Pope Francis, Billy Wilson, and other Charismatic leaders.

**Synan’s Leadership Style**

Having reviewed Synan’s many accomplishments, I will now analyze the kind of leadership he exercised, which was primarily visionary, Spirit-led, and bridge-building.

**Visionary**

As a faithful son who had closely observed the example of his father, Joseph A. Synan, bishop of the IPHC from 1950 to 1969, Synan naturally would have wanted to serve as the head of his denomination as his father had before him. However, God had a bigger plan for his life. The call of God on Synan’s life went far beyond parochial churchmanship, transcending denominational ties and destining him for bigger things. Synan was able to respond to this call because he was willing to follow God’s leading despite any loss to his personal ambitions or desires. In fact, in later years, when offered the opportunity to run for the top office
in his denomination, he declined. He had long ago left behind that early desire, having answered God’s call to serve the church in a much broader capacity.

Visionary leadership for Synan meant that he had the humility and courage to look beyond what he was familiar with and to allow God to broaden his horizons. It meant looking not only beyond his own denomination but beyond the Pentecostal Movement itself to see and acknowledge the move of the Spirit first among the Charismatics in the mainline Protestant churches and then among Catholics as well. The vision God gave Synan, like that of du Plessis, was the same as the early ecumenical vision of the Azusa Street revivalists, the vision of “the renewal of the entire church by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ.”

To become a leader on a national and global scale required Synan to open his mind and heart to acknowledge and embrace the gracious largesse by which God was pouring out the Holy Spirit not only on classical Pentecostal folk but on all who called themselves Christian. It also required Spirit-inspired boldness to announce to his fellow Pentecostals this surprising move of God that far exceeded their imagination and to lead them in celebrating the fulfillment of the promise from the lips of Joel that Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost: “I shall pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (2:28; Acts 2:17).

**Spirit-led**

The leadership style Synan modeled was Spirit-led leadership, the underlying principle on which it was based being that God is the true leader and that authentic human leadership is based on one’s consecration to God. Such leadership is neither self-appointed nor self-directed, but divinely appointed and is contingent on sensitivity and docility to the Spirit. This kind of leadership can be exercised only by those who are humble and teachable, attentive to the voice of the Spirit not only as they hear it in their own hearts but also as the Spirit speaks through others. This was seen in the life of du Plessis who held the call in his heart for some ten years after he had first heard it from Smith Wigglesworth, and in the life of Synan who responded to God’s calling by tirelessly promoting the work of the Spirit among Charismatics, Catholic and otherwise, despite the prejudice against Catholics with which he had been burdened from youth.

As Synan acknowledged in the title of his most recent autobiography, *Where He Leads Me,* spiritual leadership depends, first, on followership, submission of one’s life to God’s will. Unless a leader follows God’s leadership, that person may
lead—as he or she may have natural leadership abilities—but where that person leads may not be beside the still waters or in the paths of righteousness to which the Good Shepherd calls his followers (Ps 23:3; John 10:11, 14).

For Holiness Pentecostals as well as those that came from the Keswick, or Higher Life, movement, whether or not submission to God’s will begins with an instantaneous experience of sanctification, it is lived as a continuous consecration, a daily dying to self and a moment-by-moment obedience to the leading of the Spirit. Although Synan believed in sanctification as “a definite, instantaneous work of grace,” as affirmed by the IPHC and other Holiness groups, he did not claim his every action or word to be totally aligned with the move of the Spirit, although that was indeed his earnest desire and firm purpose. Those who knew him well can personally testify to his authenticity as a true follower of God who sought daily to attune every thought, word, and deed to that of the Spirit, although as we all know from our own self-knowledge, no one meets that standard perfectly.

The earliest modern-day Pentecostals understood leadership to be dependent on listening to and following the voice of the Spirit rather than relying on human leadership. William Seymour testified to the leading of the Holy Spirit whereby he was called to Los Angeles in his first article in the Azusa Street newsletter *Apostolic Faith*: “God put it in the heart of some of the saints in Los Angeles to write to me that she felt the Lord would have me come over here and do a work, and I came, for I felt it was the leading of the Lord.” Interestingly, in “Letter from Bro. Parham,” the article that immediately follows Seymour’s, an editor of the newsletter calls Charles Parham “God’s leader in the Apostolic Faith Movement.” However, in a later issue that statement is corrected:

Some are asking if Dr. Chas. F. Parham is the leader of this movement. We can answer no, he is not. . . . We thought of having him to be our leader and so stated in our paper, before waiting on the Lord. We can be rather hasty, especially when we are very young in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are just like a baby—full of love—and were willing to accept anyone that had the baptism of the Holy Spirit as our leader. But the Lord commenced settling us down, and we saw that the Lord should be our leader. So we honor Jesus as the great Shepherd of the sheep. He is our model.

The article then goes on to name Seymour as the human leader but describes him as “simply a humble pastor of the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him
overseer, according to Acts 20.28.” From the earliest days of modern Pentecostalism, then, the Holy Spirit was the acknowledged leader.

At Azusa Street, greater emphasis was placed on unity and harmony than human leadership: “All work together in harmony under the power of the Holy Spirit.” Seymour described the basis of Christian unity in terms of the description of the expectant disciples on the day of Pentecost—“they were all with one accord in one place.” For Seymour, “[T]he Apostolic Faith doctrine means one accord, one soul, one heart. May God help every child of His to live in Jesus’ prayer: ‘That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee; that they all may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’”

In acknowledging Seymour as the Spirit-appointed “humble pastor of the flock,” the Azusa Street participants clearly considered him to be the leader of the revival, even though that leadership was challenged by Parham and later others. But clearly, from the beginning, Pentecostal leadership was considered authentic only if Spirit-appointed and Spirit-led and exercised with the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, especially love and humility. Synan followed Seymour’s leadership style, always seeking to be obedient to God’s calling.

**Bridge-building**

The first piece Synan wrote after his experience at the 1972 Catholic Charismatic conference was published as the lead article of the April 1973 issue of *New Covenant*, a Charismatic magazine edited by Ralph Martin. It was an exhortation to build Charismatic bridges rather than the walls of new denominations that would serve only to further subdivide the church. Synan later used the article as the basis for his book entitled *Charismatic Bridges*. Bridge building then became the metaphor of choice for ecumenical leadership.

In contemplating bridge building as a metaphor for working toward Christian unity, what first comes to my mind are the six unforgettable words with which United States President Ronald Reagan addressed Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in his 1987 Berlin Wall speech: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” He repeated it twice. Two years later the demolition began.

Vinson Synan, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, urged something similar to the classical Pentecostals and to the new Charismatics in the early 1970s. The language he used, however, was not one of destruction but of construction—his emphasis less on the tearing down of walls and more on the building of bridges. In reporting the move of the Holy Spirit on the traditional churches, Synan said, “I
have endeavored to build bridges of love and understanding between classical Pentecostals, the neo-pentecostals, and the charismatic Catholics. I realize fully the doctrinal and historical problems that still divide Christians who come from different backgrounds and traditions. Yet I have faith in the Holy Spirit that He will continue to break down those barriers in His own time and way.”

What was the origin of Synan’s bridge-building metaphor? When recently finding Léon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens’s book on rediscovering Jesus written two years before the publication of Synan’s book on Charismatic bridges, I found that the cardinal had also used the bridge-building metaphor:

In the person of Jesus Christ, God purposes to re-establish communion between himself and all humanity, and thus by the dynamism of love that Christ sets in motion, to build bridges [my emphasis] among all nations, all races, all families, all human beings. In this way Christ serves as the principle of a vast network of reunion, the longitudes and latitudes of this zone of Christ extend[ing] to all human horizons [my translation].

Could it be that Synan borrowed the building metaphor from Suenens? Or, perhaps, the Holy Spirit inspired both of these Charismatic leaders, the Catholic bishop and the Pentecostal churchman, to use the same metaphor. The difference was that, rather than expressing his thought in christological terms as Suenens had done, Synan interpreted bridge building pneumatologically, the Charismatic Movement being the means by which the Holy Spirit was transforming the face of Christianity. Cecil Robeck, himself an eminent Pentecostal ecumenical leader, has employed that same metaphor in several articles including one in which he refers to David du Plessis as a bridge builder. C. S. Lewis used the same metaphor when Aslan, his Christ figure in the Chronicles of Narnia, called himself the “great Bridge Builder.”

In envisioning ecumenical bridge building, Synan was thinking in terms not of orchestrating formal, structural unity but rather of encouraging spiritual unity. He sought to create opportunities for Pentecostals and Charismatics of different traditions to pray and worship together, share spiritual gifts, and develop friendships. Though each church would concentrate on the renewal of its own constituency, the underlying foundation was unity: “one body and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph 4:4–6). As Synan realized, “If there’s ever going to be a healing of Christianity’s
divisions, it’ll have to be God’s work, because men cannot do it. Even when you’re exactly alike [doctrinally and culturally], you can’t get together; breaking down barriers must be the work of the Holy Spirit.”

For Synan, the reason unity was so urgently needed was that the classical Pentecostal denominations were too small and growing too slowly to fulfill the Great Commission. To reach “the rapidly expanding world population,” Synan asserted, “the Holy Spirit must use larger structures to bring change and renewal.” Ironically, the Pentecostal who could not imagine the Holy Spirit falling on Catholics just a short time earlier was now pointing to the Catholic Church as the solution to global evangelism:

Of course, the greatest structure in Christianity is the Roman Catholic Church, world-wide, but I never dreamed that such a thing could happen. To really meet the needs of this hour, the Roman Church would have to have a real renewal in the Holy Spirit and the hundreds of millions of Catholics around the world would have to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and begin to meet the spiritual needs of the world. It is happening, and it is having the effect of accelerating what we wanted to see done in the beginning [of the Pentecostal Movement] in a way we never could have foreseen. It’s a move of the Holy Spirit. God has just gone ahead and done it, not making Pentecostals out of Catholics by making them join our church but by renewal just as the Holy Spirit renewed our church in the beginning.

The quandary for honest ecumenical bridge builders is how to be truly open to the possibility of finding truth in other traditions and yet remain faithful to their own: How far can I go in appreciating what is good and true and beautiful in the teachings and liturgies of other traditions without compromising my own? Naturally, each tradition assumes that its own doctrines should not be compromised; however, eventually it becomes apparent that other traditions have elements of truth that our own has neglected or perhaps missed altogether. This is the dilemma with which all honest ecumenists struggle. That is why, despite the dialogue principle that participants remain within their own tradition, ultimately each person must be allowed the freedom to obey should God call them to embrace another tradition because each is personally accountable to God.

Bernard Lonergan has articulated another side of the same dilemma. Ecumenists, with few exceptions, can go only so far in terms of expanding their horizons because eventually almost all reach a point where, regardless of their efforts
to understand the other’s perspective, they can go no further; they find themselves back almost to where they started: the other’s doctrines are wrong, and their own are right. Once ecumenical leaders realize this natural, very human propensity, the only solution is prayer. Only the Holy Spirit can help them to bridge that seemingly impassable obstacle that separates them from seeing the truth in the other. As Synan said, only the Holy Spirit can unite us. Only the Holy Spirit can bridge these deeply embedded divisions and free us from the walls that divide us.

To my knowledge, Synan remained unwaveringly true to his Pentecostal roots even while at the same time acknowledging and rejoicing in the authenticity of the move of the Spirit in churches that differed so significantly doctrinally and liturgically from his own. While delighting in bridge building and enjoying worshipping and fellowshipping with his Catholic and mainline Protestant Charismatic brothers and sisters in the Lord, he apparently never considered conversion to any other tradition. From his perspective that would have been compromise. His perspective coincided fully with the Pentecostal stance articulated in the fifth phase of the International Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue: “Pentecostals are cautious in regards to ecumenism. Although they recognize the work of the Spirit in other Christian traditions, and enter into fellowship with them, they are hesitant to embrace these movements wholeheartedly for fear of losing their own ecclesial identity or compromising their traditional positions.”

Even when, through a genealogical study, he came to the realization that the Synan family roots were in Catholic Ireland, not Protestant Ireland as his family had assumed, though delighted that Pentecostalism had come full circle in his family through the Catholic Renewal, he remained faithful to the classical Pentecostalism in which he had been raised.

**Conclusion**

Vinson Synan was a beloved, highly respected figure not only within his own denomination, the IPHC, but also among Pentecostals worldwide, as well as among Charismatics, especially the academics and scholars. These groups each have their own special reasons for thanking God for this Pentecostal leader who had the vision to follow the Spirit’s leading in building bridges that helped unite Pentecostals and Spirit-empowered believers around the world in joint witness to the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit whom God continues to pour out on all flesh to this day. Vinson Synan deserves special honor and gratitude
from those who in their own journey to obey God have crossed the ecumenical bridge he so courageously helped to build.

Sally Jo Shelton is retired after serving 24 years as Theological Librarian and Associate Professor of Learning Resources at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

Notes

1 Others may well lay claim to successorship to du Plessis in his role as Mr. Pentecost, Cecil Robeck being the first to come to my own mind.


6 E.g., European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association.


8 Synan, *Bridges*, 20, 21.


15 Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., preacher of the papal household since the days of John Paul II, teaches that “humility must shine in renewal leaders and in anyone who ministers in some way. We need to let ourselves be challenged without immediately taking offense. We need to let ourselves be admonished and corrected.


20 “Jesus Our Protector and Great Shepherd,” 1.


23 Synan, *Bridges*, 27.


28 “Sixth International Conference,” 5.

29 “In the process of growing mutual understanding and trust, our stereotypes of one another diminish. In other words, we change, but the change is not compromise . . . No one is called to compromise. Common witness is not a call to indifference or to uniformity. In fact, though division and separation are contrary to the will of God, the diversity within the unity of the one Body of Christ is a precious and indispensable gift which is to be recognized, valued and embraced.” Joint International Commission for Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue, “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990–1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders,” n.d., §§119, 122, *Dialogue with Pentecostals*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_pentecostals.htm (22 October 2020).


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A LITERATURE REVIEW

DANIEL D. ISGRIGG

Keywords Spirit-empowered leadership, Pentecostal, Charismatic, ecclesiology

Abstract

This essay is a literature review that seeks to chart the landscape of leadership from a distinctively Spirit-empowered perspective. The topic of Spirit-empowered leadership distinctives is still in its infancy as few in the Spirit-empowered Movement have reflected deeply on the distinctive characteristics or competencies reflective of Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality. This essay reviews the existing academic works related to definitions of Spirit-empowered leadership as a way of beginning the conversation among scholars.

Introduction

Studies on leadership abound in the fields of business and other academic disciplines. Recognizing the value of leadership in these fields, it is no surprise that there have been those who have sought to explore the role of faith in leadership studies, especially Christian leadership. A number of works, both popular and academic, have sought to explore principles and models of leadership both inside and outside ministry contexts in an effort to make Christian leaders in a variety of contexts. An example of this is Robert Clinton’s classic, The Making of a Leader, which explores the patterns of how leaders develop from a biblical point of view.¹ Other works have sought to explore what makes Christian leadership distinctive by focusing on biblical models of leadership, management, and organizational structures.² This leadership culture has more recently filtered into the church, as popular Christian leaders have emphasized organizational and leadership development within churches. Books by popular authors such as John Maxwell, Bill
Hybels, and Andy Stanley, have become more common reading for local pastors than theological or homiletical works. However, many studies of Christian leadership are popular in nature and struggle to speak to the broader field of leadership studies outside of addressing local church ministry.

This essay seeks to chart the landscape of leadership from a distinctively Spirit-empowered (SE) perspective. The global Spirit-empowered Movement (SEM), which encompasses the various parts of the Pentecostal and Charismatic tradition, has been one of the most explosive Christian traditions of the past century. Leadership has certainly contributed to the growth and success of this movement as the various leaders started movements and denominations, defined theological distinctives, and founded institutions. These leaders represent a diverse set of populations, beliefs, and theologies, but all have one thing in common: a dependency on the Holy Spirit for “empowerment” for leadership. Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo comment, “The work of the Holy Spirit cuts across race, gender, and socio-economic status and serves as the great equalizer in providing access to Christian spiritual power.”

Despite the inclusive nature of the movement that welcomes all into roles of leadership, few in the SEM have reflected deeply on the distinctive characteristics or competencies reflective of Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality. Perhaps this is not surprising. After all, one might ask, “If Christian leadership is rooted in biblical Christianity, why would such a distinctive be necessary?” A fair question. Yet, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity as a distinct Christian tradition has long been comfortable with the idea of doctrinal distinctives from the broader Christian tradition. The Spirit has always been the distinctive feature of the theological identity of the SEM. Consequently, its uniquely Spirit-oriented doctrines—such as Spirit-baptism, speaking in tongues, healing, prophecy, and miracles—are not often associated with other traditions. These distinctives serve as a cultural linguistic, defining the community and giving voice to its own ethos. However, these are not in opposition or critique of the shared beliefs of the broader Christian community, rather, they are a gift of emphasis to the church as a source of renewal within the broader Christian tradition.

Opening Challenges with Methodology

The purpose of this review is to identify what resources have been produced that attempt to articulate what may be distinctive about SE approaches to leadership. Meaning, the author has searched for those resources that have drawn from the
ethos of SE Christianity in order to describe what is unique about the SEM’s approach to leadership.9 Because my expertise is in SE Christianity, rather than leadership studies, my review focuses on the body of literature within the Pentecostal and Charismatic tradition related to leadership distinctives, rather than a full review of the various theories and models of leadership in the broader field of organizational leadership. The simple goal was to determine if Pentecostals and Charismatics have clearly defined the nature of SE leadership.

The search process for these types of studies encountered a number of challenges. First, although Pentecostals and Charismatics have long embraced the idea of leadership, there has been little reflection on leadership that is not directly tied to ministry contexts. SE leaders focus mainly on strategies for preaching, ministry, and church growth. Therefore, most books on leadership within the SEM are popular level (by pastors and for pastors) and tend not to deal directly with leadership theory, models, or competencies. To add to this difficulty, when there are academic studies from those within the SE tradition, they too are often narrowly limited to ministry leadership rather than marketplace, education, social, and other spheres of influence traditionally addressed by leadership studies.10 Because of this, these types of popular level studies were left out of this survey, but the academic ones are included when they are trying to articulate SE distinctives.

A second problem in defining Spirit-empowered leadership (SEL) literature is a semantical one in that there are various uses of the term “spirit” in relation to Christian leadership. A survey of Spirit-oriented leadership sources reveals they typically follow one of the following emphases:

1. Some in the Christian tradition draw on the Holy Spirit related to leadership, but not in any particularly distinctive way as one might expect would be the case in the SEM. They include terms familiar to the SE tradition, such as “spirit” or “empowered” but do not necessarily mean the same thing. An example of this is the idea of “empowerment” in Calvin Miller’s classic, The Empowered Leader, which is framed as servant leadership rather than charismatic empowerment.11

2. Some use the term “spirit” or “spiritual” related to leadership as synonyms for Christian leadership or the way of being spiritual or ethical leaders.12 The term “spiritual” is more of an adjective describing Christian actions than focusing on what the person of the Holy Spirit may contribute to leadership. These typically approach leadership as an
outflow of Christian discipleship and are modeled after the leadership of Jesus as the true servant leader.\textsuperscript{13}

3. Some use the term “spirit” or “spiritual” as a way of talking about spirituality in a broad religious or ethical sense, referring to “spiritual leadership” as creating space for spirituality in workplace environments.\textsuperscript{14} For example, Arthur Jue defines “Spirit-centered leadership” as the “nurturing of spiritual synchronicity in the practice of leadership.”\textsuperscript{15}

4. Some use the term “spirit” to refer to the individual or inner person of leaders. This is the case of Carnegie Samuel Calian’s \textit{Spirit-Driven Leader}, which focuses on self-leadership related to a person’s spirit rather the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{16} But when a member of the SEM uses the term in this way, it is even more confusing. An example of this is Miles Monroe, whose book \textit{The Spirit of Leadership}, uses the term “spirit” to refer to the ethos or inner development of leadership rather than drawing on the Holy Spirit or empowerment for leadership.\textsuperscript{17}

These various ways of using the concept of spirit/spirituality were left out of this survey because while utilizing the s/Spirit in the framework for workplace or organizational leadership, none of them identify an approach distinctive of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

The third challenge in surveying literature on SEL rests in the dilemma that individuals who identify with the SEM (i.e. Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders) do not themselves directly address theories or models of SEL. Most books on leadership written by SE leaders are addressing the above categories of spiritual leadership (whether ministry or organizational) rather than offering a constructive approach to a distinctively Pentecostal-Charismatic approach to leadership.\textsuperscript{18} A perfect example is the edited volume, \textit{Transformational Leadership: A Tribute to Mark Rutland}, which contains over a dozen essays by various Pentecostal educators in honor of a notable leader within the SEM, yet none of these essays even attempt to focus on distinctively SEL motifs.\textsuperscript{19} In addition, there are other books with reflections on Pentecostal or Charismatic leadership that discuss contextual issues in leadership such as women in leadership and other challenges without engaging the distinctives themselves.\textsuperscript{20}

With these limitations on which studies are included, this survey will focus on what is a small number of resources that have attempted, to varying degrees, to provide a definition of distinctly Spirit-oriented approaches to leadership or characteristics of SE leaders that are reflective of or related to the characteristics of
The overarching metanarrative of these sources is the Holy Spirit and the effects of the Spirit on the leader and leadership. The majority critically and academically engage leadership in relation to the Spirit. The goal is to survey these sources to begin to understand what SE leaders are saying about SEL.

### The Spirit in Leadership

Perhaps the clearest attempt to identify a distinctively SE model of leadership is Truls Akerlund’s *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*. Akerlund rightly recognizes that despite the strong emphasis on leaders in the global Pentecostal tradition, studies of Pentecostal leadership “are still in [their] infancy.” This is demonstrated in his review of literature on Pentecostal leadership where he uncovers small mentions of characteristics of Pentecostal leadership in various sources on Pentecostalism such as contextualization, indigenous leadership, adaptability, and charismatic personas. Yet, these observations are anecdotal rather than based on fully orbed studies of Pentecostal leadership. He notes, “There is a general lack of empirical research into how leaders in the Pentecostal movement understand their leadership.” In the second section he identifies the characteristics of Pentecostal leadership by studying the phenomenology of four Pentecostal leaders in Norwegian Pentecostalism. From this admittedly limited sample he derives the following characteristics of Pentecostal leaders (PL):

1. PL are motivated by a sense of higher purpose and lead out of a calling and giftedness derived from God (or the Spirit). This higher purpose is rooted in the inner calling that comes from a transformational experience with God.
2. PL derive their leadership from the Spirit. They operate out of a worldview that sees the Spirit as active and they join in the activities of the Spirit. This leadership operates on the prophetic level as it hears what the Spirit is saying and leads accordingly. Therefore, leadership takes the discernment of the Spirit.
3. PL embrace the relationship between rationality and spirituality. They recognize that God works everywhere and engages in both the sacred and secular spheres of life. Therefore, God’s power is available because the borders between the natural and the supernatural are transcended by the Spirit.
4. PL take a pragmatic stance toward Pentecostal tradition. They are not bound to tradition, but rather treat the Pentecostal movement as a resource rather than a source.

5. PL use persuasive communication. They use preaching as a form of leadership that motivates mission. They are persuasive because speaking prophetically is a natural outflow of Pentecostal spirituality.

6. PL embrace a dialectical relationship between structure and agency. PL work within structure, yet move easily in the realms of non-organization. PL are known for having great sway over congregations or groups of people. At the same time, leadership is accessible to anyone with a calling from God and who is used by the Spirit.

7. PL adapt easily to various contexts. They adjust easily to various contexts and embrace pragmatism as a way to minister effectively. PL take seriously the idea that they are most effective when they are being moved by the Spirit to address a particular moment in time. In this way, they are flexible and moldable in their approaches to leadership, being moved by the Spirit.

8. PL recognize that leadership involves the entire life. They see ministry as holistic: personally, organizationally, and culturally. Though admitting that this is not an exclusively Pentecostal trait, PL see their whole life and calling as integrated into their identity.

Aukerland provides a valuable study that identifies some phenomenology of SEL, but fails to be comprehensive, focusing on a small number of subjects in one Pentecostal context. He also vacillates back and forth between descriptive characteristics of leaders and prescriptive competencies, with little recognition of any systematic theory as a whole. Furthermore, this type of study is perhaps more descriptive than prescriptive. One is left wondering if these four subjects truly represent PL as a whole accurately. Nevertheless, Aukerland provides the only academic leadership study focused specifically on defining leadership in the SEM.

In the book, The Spirit-Led Leader, Timothy C. Geoffrion proposes a promising model of principles and practices of Spirit-oriented leadership focused on the spiritual development of the leader. Geoffrion believes that organizational leadership and spiritual leadership should not be bifurcated. He says, “I have come to see, however, that organization and spiritual leadership responsibilities overlap far more than I once thought. While each set of activities has its own character, every aspect of leadership is influenced by our own spirituality—consciously or unconsciously.” He says that true spiritual leaders “cultivate a spiritually rich
environment—not to promote doctrine but to catalyze team members to seek God and God’s will together.”

Geoffrion provides nine leadership practices that he believes cultivate a Spirit-led leader. (1) Envision your leadership flowing out of a deep spiritual life. (2) Actively cultivate your own spiritual life. (3) Develop specific spiritual disciplines. (4) Always seek to serve God’s purposes first. (5) Create a vital spiritual environment within your workplace. (6) Make change a personal priority. (7) Lead by listening well. (8) Steadfast trust in God is indispensable to spiritual vitality and leadership. (9) Open yourself fully to the grace and love of God.

While the nine principles are helpful, Geoffrion does not consistently root each of these practices and principles in the Spirit. However, embedded in some of his discussions of these nine practices Geoffrion does, at times, reflect beautifully on the way that the Holy Spirit distinctively reflects characteristics of SE Christianity. Whether that was intentional or not, I cannot tell. But these are more consistent with the thesis of the book (A Spirit-led Leader) than the nine principles expressed. I want to draw out these particular reflections. They are as follows:

1. Spirit-led leadership “flows out of a deep spiritual life” whereby leaders are transformed by spiritual disciplines and by the Holy Spirit. Spirit-led leaders are fruitful because the Spirit is fruitful in them.

2. Spirit-led leadership “serves God’s purposes” rather than one’s own by aligning with God’s vision for the world. This process requires prayer, discernment, and openness to the Spirit’s leadership. The gifts of the Spirit are given to serve the greater mission, which makes Spirit-filled believers servants and responsible stewards rather than self-aggrandizing success seekers.

3. Spirit-led leadership is a communal act that recognizes that God is powerfully working in those being led. Therefore, a leader facilitates communal pursuits of God and corporate discernment rather than authoritarian leadership. Leaders hear the Spirit by recognizing that God speaks through the led just as much as through the leader.

4. Spirit-led leaders follow the model of the book of Acts that values administrative competence (full of wisdom) and spiritual vitality (full of the Spirit). He says, “The most effective spiritual leaders will foster a well-grounded, vital spiritual environment by choosing the most competent and Spirit-filled staff members and volunteers available.”
5. Spirit-led leaders “embrace change as a friend” and are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who is always moving.\textsuperscript{33} While this point is not fully developed, it has potential to reflect the Pentecostal value of the Spirit’s ability to change people and the spontaneity of being led by the Spirit (my interpretation).

6. Spirit-led leaders have faith in God.\textsuperscript{34} He says, “Our world needs more leaders who have experienced the transforming power of God to set them free from doubt, fear, insecurity, an overdependence on logic and proof, and other hindrances that keep them from a life and leadership changing faith.”\textsuperscript{35} Faith is an attitude of expectancy that God is leading, guiding and giving you power to do what he has called you to do.

In these six embedded ideas, Geoffrion identifies some Spirit-centered characteristics of leaders that could be modeled in any organizational context.

In his article, “Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership,” John Carter points out that Pentecostals have a natural orientation toward the idea of power.\textsuperscript{36} This is particularly true for leaders in this tradition who see the Spirit as the one who empowers leaders to do things for God. But as Carter points out, there are also positives and negatives of power in relation to SE leaders and modes of leadership. He recognizes that leadership by nature involves power, but that power comes with great responsibility and accountability. This power should not equate to domination or control. He notes, “Whatever use of power a Christian/Pentecostal leader might make . . . it must not involve authoritarian control, coercion or domination over others.”\textsuperscript{37} He argues that one way to guard against the abuse of power is to acknowledge that the Spirit leads both the leader and the follower.\textsuperscript{38} He argues that the Spirit is essential to all forms of leadership. He says,

The practical skills of leadership and management are necessary, to be sure, and should be developed by anyone in leadership, but people long to see evidence of the touch of God and the qualities of prayer, devotion to the Word, the exercise of spiritual gifts and spiritual sensitivity in the lives of their leaders. These are a source of immense personal power to a Pentecostal leader, while their lack reduces the leader to functioning as a business professional.\textsuperscript{39}

In this way, Carter, unlike many, applies spiritual principles of leadership to outside disciplines and in contrast to non-Pentecostal leadership. He summarizes
with the following definition: “A Christian leader acquires personal power from his or her relationship to God, sensitivity and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, and a high level of personal integrity, as well as demonstrated expertise in leading the church or organization to accomplish God’s purposes for the group.”

Similarly, Wonsuk Ma studies the examples of flawed SE leaders in the Old Testament in his article, “Tragedy of Spirit-Empowered Heroes.” From these stories, Ma notes a few reflections about SEL. First, SEL is charismatic. Leadership involves prophecy, anointing, and gifts of the Spirit as its expression. Second, he notes that the work of the Spirit transforms believers, but that process is not automatic. SE leaders must cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in order not to abuse the power given to them. Third, SE leaders are empowered, but at the same time, they must be vulnerable because power can be abused. This means that power must be paired with a dependence upon God to stay shaped by God.

Related to the issue of power is the recognition of the role of effective communication and charisma in leadership. Noted UK Pentecostal scholar and educator William K. Kay led a team of scholars in a study of “human psychological type” for ministers in the UK Pentecostal community and the UK Anglican community. Using a sample of 930 ministers, they sought to explore the relationship between personality types and apostolic ministers (Pentecostal/Charismatic ministers). They discovered a number of findings. First, apostolic ministers were more extroverted and more “sensing” than Anglican counterparts. Second, their extroverted personalities also allowed them to be less risk-averse and bold when it comes to spiritual gifts. Third, males were more intuitive and feeling than their Anglican counterparts, suggesting that they are more malleable, open, and relational. This suggests that the products of SEL are extroversion, faith, and relationality.

In Maximizing the Triple Bottom Line through Spiritual Leadership, the authors draw on the emerging fields of workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership to teach leaders and their constituencies how to develop business models that address issues of ethical leadership, employee well-being, sustainability, and social responsibility without sacrificing profitability, growth, and other metrics of performance excellence. This approach, characterized by spiritual leadership rather than SEL, frames “Spiritual Leadership” as (1) the motivation to make a difference, (2) building a culture of values, and (3) an inner personal life of spiritual disciplines. This is similar to Thomas Norbutus who offers a theory of leadership from a Spirit-centered narrative of Acts 2. He compares the Acts leadership model to Theory X, Theory Y, and Situational Leadership models. He summarizes
biblical leadership in terms of trust, interrelationships, and empowerment. But these values of empowerment and interpersonal relationships, which he derives from an Acts 2 model, are not particularly framed in a Spirit-oriented approach.

**The Spirit in Ministry Leadership**

The next set of studies are each solid academically, but are written towards a more ministry and leadership audience. While addressing ministry issues, I believe that they echo some of the leadership capacities mentioned in the previous works and could easily apply to any leadership context.

In *Growing the Church in the Power of the Spirit*, Brad Long, Paul Stokes, and Cindy Stricker see Jesus as the embodiment of Spirit-shaped leadership. The authors build a model of leadership on the concept of Spirit-christology by identifying four characteristics: incorporation into the body, communication of information about the body, transformation of the character of the body, and empowerment to minister to the body. They note, “The crucially important fact is that only after the Spirit comes upon Jesus for power do we see healings, deliverance, and empowered preaching. It is this coming up—his empowerment by the Spirit—that makes a dynamic difference.” The “spirit-empowered” part of leadership begins with the experience of being “empowered.” They note, “Spirit-baptism is a shift away from our own efforts of leading or of working for God or for some other great cause and instead letting the Holy Spirit lead us as active partners in the dynamic dance of cooperation with the three persons of the Trinity.” This type of leadership has seven dynamics: (1) participation in the Spirit’s drawing, (2) intercession for and with those you lead, (3) faith clothed in obedience to the Spirit’s leading, (4) receiving divine guidance, (5) spiritual discernment, (6) embracing the manifestations of the Spirit, and (7) seeing and responding to divine moments. While mainly focused on Christian ministry, these seven dynamics are uniquely dependent upon Spirit-empowerment.

Ulf Ekman seeks to articulate the characteristics of a spiritual leader versus a secular leader. In general, he recognizes leadership is the ability to move people. He identifies seven characteristics of a “spiritual leader,” some of which are particular to SEL: (1) a visionary leader that sees the dreams given by the Holy Spirit; (2) a servant leader that recognizes the responsibility is to the people they are leading; (3) a prepared leader that has been developed by God and by others; (4) a dependent leader that needs others to accomplish the work; (5) a growing leader that is developing themselves; (6) an aware leader that watches for potential pitfalls.
of money, power, and sex; and (7) a strong inner-life leader that depends on the Spirit to deepen their own spirituality. Each of these characteristics is drawn from the ethos of SE Christianity and reflect some of its distinctives. Yet, Ekman does not identify them as unique to the SEM.

In Spiritual Leadership: A Biblical Theology of the Role of the Spirit in the Leadership of God’s People, the authors attempt to build a biblical definition of leadership that demonstrates a distinctive role of the Spirit in the local church.50 They propose that “spiritual leadership” is ultimately the result of the Spirit being involved in the exercise of the leader’s leadership. In the Old Testament, the work of the Spirit includes both occasional and continuous impartations for bearing burdens, shepherding, leading, and exercising wisdom.51 In the New Testament, the Spirit’s work includes proclamation, power gifts, and the distinct “spiritual” gift or calling mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:8.52 They summarize,

The Spirit’s work in leadership in the OT was described as the Spirit granting the necessary wisdom to a leader in order for him to lead God’s people in carrying out the various purposes of God. In the NT, the Spirit’s work in leadership could be described as the Spirit granting the necessary wisdom to a leader in order for him to shepherd God’s people in carrying out the task of gospel proclamation.53

The authors identify the characteristics of the Spirit’s role in leadership as the ability to bear burdens, courage for warfare, godly living, enablement and giftedness, boldness, and proclamation, effective communication.54 In the end, this book focuses too narrowly on the biblical examples and the leadership of the local church.

Finally, one work that seeks to address a distinctively Spirit-empowered model is Thomson K. Mathew’s Spirit-Led Ministry in the Twenty-First Century.55 While focusing primarily on ministry in the local church, Mathew offers a chapter on SEL. He recognizes that many have focused on Christian leadership, but the real challenge is to be a Spirit-filled leader. He defines SEL as “servant leadership empowered by the Holy Spirit.”56 While Mathew reflects on servant leadership, he struggles to define the distinctive characteristics fully.
Toward a Spirit-empowered Leader

As a matter of conclusion, I want to explore some of the common characteristics mentioned across many of these studies. Of all the characteristics mentioned, there are five that were mentioned in the majority of these studies. While these are not comprehensive, they seem to provide a starting point for those who want to answer the call to develop a uniquely SE model of leadership.

1. A Spirit-filled Leader. SEL flows out of a deep spiritual life. For Pentecostals and Charismatics, this means that leadership begins not with a position, but with the leader’s experience of being filled with the Spirit. It is from this dynamic relationship with Christ through the Spirit that one’s deep spiritual life is nurtured, the fruit of the Spirit are developed, and the giftings of the Spirit are released. Whether leading a church of fifty or a Fortune 500 company, Spirit-filled leaders should never divorce their spirituality from their vocation. Leadership development, then, is just as much about spiritual development as it is developing one’s leadership capacity.

2. A Spirit-dependent Leader. SEL flows out of a dependency upon the Spirit as the source of leadership. The Spirit is the source of truth, the advocate on our behalf, and the comforter who journeys with us. Therefore, whatever knowledge, competency, vision, wisdom, or management strategy is offered to those who are led, the SE leader recognizes that the Spirit is the ultimate leader. Therefore, leaders remain deeply dependent upon the power of the Spirit and recognize their own fallibility and weaknesses.

3. A Spirit-moved Leader. SE leaders embrace change and adapt to situations as they arise, because they recognize the Spirit is always moving. This means that SE leaders are nimble and adapt easily. Pentecostal leaders take seriously the idea that they are most effective when they are being moved by the Spirit to address particular needs in particular moments in time. In this way, they are flexible and moldable in their approaches to leadership and resist being entrenched. But this also means they rely deeply on the discernment of the Spirit both to perceive accurately and to respond to complex situations and offer solutions.

4. A Spirit-gifted Leader. SE leaders recognize the giftings in themselves and in others. SE leaders invest in their own development as a leader, but also
serve as mentors and invest in the development of others. This form of leadership shuns the commoditization of people as means to a productive end. Rather, it flips that process on its head. The leader is there to build up or draw out the potential of the led. This attitude of service cultivates the gifts of those in their team and helps them achieve their maximum potential. In this way, leadership is relational and depends on the community for its true potential. A leader is great because the people that are led become greater. This community-dependent model empowers the disempowered and conversely disempowers the empowered.

5. A Spirit-confident Leader. SE leaders are assertive leaders that take God-given initiatives with certainty. Because SE leaders hear from God, they have confidence to do hard things and tackle big problems. It is the Spirit’s ability to transform ordinary people into assertive leaders that are not afraid to step out in faith. In this way, assertive leaders are also sanctified and tempered by the Spirit, exercising the gift of faith with the fruit of the Spirit so that they do not abuse the place of leadership. This confidence translates to bold and effective communication of the vision to those they lead. It is a divinely supplied ability to see something significant when others cannot.

Conclusion

This literature review has demonstrated that there is a discernable gap in defining the nature of SEL. In each of the studies, some moves toward defining SEL have taken place. Yet there is certainly more research and exploration to be done before a definition of SEL can be established. As this movement continues to research and explore this topic, I offer a few final observations and recommendations.

First, this survey shows that a definitive model of SEL has yet to be fully developed. There is more work to be done to explore what makes the SEM distinctive and to suggest ways in which this translates to a unique approach to leadership. These attempts need to transcend ministry contexts to engage in the broader field of leadership studies. While Truls Akerlund was perhaps the first to relate Pentecostal leadership to existing academic leadership theory, many more engagements with the field of leadership studies should take place.

Second, it is clear that whatever reflection has taken place, it has unfortunately most often been limited to North American contexts. Yet the SEM is a global movement whose resources are far greater outside the North American context than
within. No definition of leadership will be accurate if it is not from a global perspective. The Holy Spirit is the global Spirit, who pours out on all flesh. Therefore, only global and contextual studies can give us an accurate picture of the diversity of characteristics and competencies from these communities. This begs for new ethnographic, contextual, and case study research among these global communities. That said, I anticipate that there will be many correlations across various contexts because it is the same Spirit who empowers us all.

Third, this pursuit could benefit from more studies of individual leaders in the SEM. Recent Pentecostal scholarship has shifted from organizational and denominational histories to telling more stories of individuals in the movement. This is an important move. But they often are not telling these stories through the lens of leadership. The history of the SEM is a history of leadership, both good and bad. I believe there is much to be learned from these lives. One could take up the task of analyzing the leaders who shaped the movement, who navigated organizational challenges, and who blazed theological and cultural trails that have positioned us where we are today.

In conclusion, there is much to be done in order to begin to understand fully the unique contributions of SE Christianity to the field of leadership. This field is wide open for exploration from many different angles. In the days in which we are living, developing SE leaders is a task that cannot be ignored. The complex challenges of this world demand leaders who have a new set of leadership capacities in order to respond in faith and courage and offer solutions. I hope this survey will inspire many more SE scholars to step into this gap and provide the SEM with new and fresh understandings of what it means to be an SE leader for the twenty-first century.

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Notes


The author acknowledges that this limitation ignores the larger body of reflections on Christian leadership. However, this is necessary, noting that this survey is attempting to establish a baseline for a unique understanding of SE leadership.

The author searched for books, dissertations, articles, and other publications with related terms of leadership with the terms “pentecostal,” “charismatic,” “spirit,” “spiritual,” “empowered,” “spirit-empowered,” “spirit-led,” and other key words related to SE Christianity.

Most of the academic level studies are produced by Doctor of Ministry programs that seek to apply leadership to a local church context. E.g., Wilson Mugambi M’Arimi, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Local Church,” (DMin diss., Ashland Theological Seminary, 2013).


20 Such is the case for Phyllis Thompson, ed., *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership* (London: SPCK, 2013), which reflects on challenges facing leaders in the Black Pentecostal church rather than characteristics of Black Pentecostal leadership as a distinctive contextual leadership. Another example is the apologetic for women in leadership in Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Women in Leadership: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Cleveland, TN: Center for Pentecostal Leadership and Care, 2006).


22 Akerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 44.

214 | *Spiritus* Vol 5, No 2
26 Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Spirit-led Leader* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005). Geoffrion does not identify as a Charismatic or Pentecostal, yet his expression is distinctively rooted in Spirit-oriented approaches to leadership that are related to SE Christianity.
28 While not always embedded in his nine principles or practices, they are part of the discussion on these principles. I have drawn these six characteristics out for special attention because of their contribution to this conversation about SEL characteristics, recognizing that they are not embedded in the main point.
34 Geoffrion, *The Spirit-led Leader*, 175.
37 Carter, “Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership,” 194.
38 Carter, “Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership,” 200.
40 Carter, “Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership,” 204.


54 Huffstutler and Kostenberger, *Spiritual Leadership*, 159.


The Prophetic Servant

The Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders

Wonsuk Ma

Keywords Spirit of God, empowerment, Servant, prophetic, new Israel

Abstract

The study examines two groups of Spirit-empowered leaders, David in his final words, and the Servant figures, to develop the ideal of the Spirit-empowered leader as understood by the Old Testament. One of the findings is the “prophetic” feature emerging as the most significant characteristic of the ideal leader.

Introduction

After the publication of “Tragedy of Spirit-Empowered Leaders,” many expressed their expectation to see a pair-study dealing with the “good” cases of Spirit-empowerment. Therefore, this study examines “good” Old Testament figures whose life and leadership is characterized by the presence and empowerment of God’s Spirit. The earlier study selected Samson and Saul as the epitome of the “bad” cases.

Similarly, this study will select several biblical figures by examining relevant passages. Two groups have been selected: one from the historical figure, King David, and the other from the future leader in the restored age of Israel. The discussion of the two figures will benefit from the examination of relevant passages. This study concludes with a series of observable lessons for today’s believers, contributing to the profile of Spirit-empowered leadership.

David’s Last Words (2 Samuel 23:1–4)

Portraying David as the epitome of the ideal king can be problematic as he committed serious sins, particularly his adultery and murder surrounding
Bathsheba (2 Sam 11) and the census of fighting men he took (2 Sam 24:1–17). Both resulted in harsh reprimands of the prophets and severe punishments. The latter offense is ironic as the incident is recorded right after the present passage of David’s self-claim of the Spirit’s presence and his righteous rule. Yet, the overall testimony of David’s life and rule is presented in a positive light, partly due to his sincere repentance (recorded in 2 Sam 11:13 and 24:17–25 respectively). The later kings have been regularly compared to David. For example, Jeroboam is judged: “I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes” (2 Kgs 14:8). God also promises his protection of the nation “for the sake of my servant David” (e.g., 2 Kgs 20:6). Thus, David is presented as the historical royal figure closest to the ideal king.

These “last words” of David (2 Sam 23:1–4) serve as a summary of the king’s life and accomplishments as well as an admonition to future kings.

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the Strong One of Israel: The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.²

Almost all commentators agree that this “testament” of David presents the king as a prophet and a righteous ruler.³ The prophetic aspect is readily observable by the two claims: the introductory phrase, “the oracle of David,” and the triple repetition that God speaks through him (v. 2). The royal feature is overwhelming, which reflects Israel’s kingship ideology. A close look at the royal epithets reveals a strong wisdom motif, such as the “fear of God” and ruling in “justice.” In Isaiah 11, another relevant passage expressing the kingship ideology, the influence of the wisdom tradition abounds: the king equipped with “wisdom,” “understanding,” and the “fear of the Lord” (11:2–3), and judging in “righteousness,” “equity,” and “faithfulness” (11:4–5). Therefore, the last words of David take all three major traditions of Israel into the portrait of, and hope for, an ideal king.⁴ The passage, therefore, serves two functions: first, praising David for his accomplishments; and secondly, presenting the blessing of an ideal king (v. 5) and the curse of the “godless” one (vv. 6–7) for the subsequent kings.

218 | Spiritus Vol 5, No 2
The Spirit of God

In this profile of a model king, as in Isaiah 11, the Spirit of God plays an important role. Indeed, David’s rule “is bracketed by references to the Spirit” and anointing beginning with 1 Samuel 16:13. The first observation is that the Spirit equips the king with desirable qualities. It is true that in this passage, the Spirit is directly linked to the prophetic oracle and experience of the king (as “the Spirit . . . speaks through me”). Only indirectly can one establish a link between the Spirit and the kingly virtues: ruling justly and in the fear of God (v. 3b). It is the Isaiah 11 passage that presents the direct link between the Spirit and the royal virtues, thus, establishing the equipping role of the Spirit:

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (v. 2).

These God-given characteristics would allow the king to bring about the righteous rule by judging wisely, protecting the weak, and judging the wicked (vv. 3b–4). The Spirit endows the king with abilities and virtues to fulfill his “mission.” Indeed, the empowerment of the Spirit is an essential feature of the ideal king. This equipping or empowering function is in line with the long-established Spirit tradition: empowering selected leaders to undertake a specific task, such as removing the threat of an enemy (e.g., Gideon in Judg 6:34). The second is the moral and spiritual characteristics of the Spirit’s endowment. This is one distinctive feature of the ideology of Spirit-empowerment, sharply compared to the “tragic” cases such as Samson and Saul. The ideal king still performs the domestic and administrative functions such as “judging” (often as the final judiciary authority, e.g., Isa 11:3–4), and, the effect of the Spirit’s presence conspicuously lacks any physical or emotional behaviors such as “prophesying” (e.g., 1 Sam 10:5, 10), or the demonstration of physical, political, or military prowess (e.g., Judg 14:19). As the “fear of the Lord/God” sums the characteristics of the ideal king, the Spirit’s endowment is predominantly moral and spiritual. The third is the “internalization” of the Spirit’s endowment. The Spirit of God works through the recipient’s heart and character, resulting in the qualities desired for the ideal king. In both passages, this quality is summarized as the “fear of the Lord/God.” His righteous and just rule, therefore, is the manifestation of his inner disposition endowed by the Spirit.
This priority of the inner-working of the Spirit in the recipient’s character and attitude is what God intends to occur. When Samuel anointed Saul, he predicted that turning “into a different person” (1 Sam 10:6) was to accompany the rushing of the Spirit. Indeed, when Saul left Samuel, “God gave him another heart” (v. 9), suggesting the priority of the inner change at least conceptually if not chronologically. This internalization is perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of the ideal king from the unfortunate cases. Despite the Spirit’s intention, Samson and Saul may have ignored this priority and process. On the other hand, although David lacks any drastic military accomplishments directly attributed to the Spirit, his consistent reliance upon God, particularly for military campaigns, and the deep repentance of his sins mark the Spirit’s impact on his attitude toward God, his life, call, and the nation.

Prophetic Features

Then, why is the strong prophetic feature in Israel’s kingship ideology? Several scholars have observed in Israel’s kingship ideology this reduced reference to the traditional royal roles such as military and political functions. This “non-royal” feature may reflect the sophistication of the leadership structure groups in society. For example, the book of Micah reveals the rise of a new social class as urbanization accelerated in Judah and Israel in the prosperous eighth century B.C.E. (e.g., 2:1–2). The new merchant class now joins the traditional ruling social class: the social leadership (the “heads” and “rulers”) who would bring justice (3:1–3) and the prophets or religious leaders who bring God’s demands to the leaders and the nation (3:5–8). In such a setting, kingship became more “professional,” gradually moving away from the idea that God is the ultimate king of Israel and human kings are only his regents. King Ahaz, for example, refused to ask for God’s sign (Isa 7:11–12). His decline is an indirect denial of God’s role in protecting Judah from the Syro-Ephromite threat. In this degradation of kingship ideology, the role of the prophets as a counterbalance grew in prominence. The fact that every king in Israel and Judah was judged according to the prophetic standards proves this development. (That is why the histories of God’s people are called the Former Prophets).

This ideology of kingship was also motivated by the pre-monarchical theocracy, and Moses served as an example. Despite his military and political role, he remains in Scripture as a prophet, a human figure standing between God and his people, acting as God’s spokesperson. He experienced God’s rare presence and “saw
his face but did not perish” (Exod 33:20). It is, therefore, not unexpected that king David is now remembered as a prophet who ruled justly with God’s word in his mouth through the presence of the Spirit.

Then to which particular aspect(s) of prophetism does the king refer? The passage identifies the inspired speech: “oracle” (2 Sam 23:1), the Spirit speaking through him, “his word” upon his tongue (v. 2). Verse 3 is more specific, “God . . . has spoken” [and] “has said to me.” More specifically, the passage refers to the king receiving God’s message through the Spirit and relaying it to the nation. Is this oracular role all about his prophetic claim? A clue to this inquiry may be found in the close relationship between the Spirit-empowered leaders and their prophetic experiences. We will revisit this inquiry toward the close of this study.

**The Servant**

Duhm first identified four passages (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–7; 52:13–53:12) as the “Servant Songs,” and argued that they imply the single identity of the Servant.7 His lasting contribution is the recognition that the Servant figure occupies the central place in Isaiah 40–55, and even beyond. Since then, debates have continued on the legitimacy of the grouping of the four Servant Songs and the identity of the Servant. The current discussion takes the literary reading in the canonical context and includes other similar passages, particularly Isaiah 61. For the identity of the Servant, the New Testament hindsight would settle the matter relatively quickly: the Servant is the Messiah (e.g., Matt 3:16–17) fulfilling the promise in Isaiah 42:1–4. However, this inquiry is to ask, “How did the ancient people of God understand it?” All the suggested identities are categorized as either an individual or a corporate group (that is, Israel), or even both. The first two chapters of Second Isaiah use the designation both to individual and corporate figures. Would then the Servant Israel sometimes be described in individual terms? God calls Israel “my servant . . . whom I have chosen” (41:8, also 9). As the “victor” is to crush the nations, so does he make Israel “a threshing sledge, sharp, new, and having teeth” to judge the nations (41:15–16). The most serious challenge to this interpretation is Israel’s projected servant role. Yes, that it will rise to crush the nations is hard enough to take. Is it going to carry out a suffering Servant’s role to benefit others, as described in Isaiah 53:1–10? Anticipating Israel to be “crushed in pain” by God and “his life” becoming “an offering for sin” (v. 10) is hard to imagine. For this reason, some identify the Servant as “purified Israel.”8 If the Servant is an individual(s), then we have more than one Servant, as Israel is frequently identified

The Prophetic Servant | 221
as God’s servant. There are plenty of propositions to name the Servant: from Moses, Jeremiah, the prophet, to the future ideal ruler. Would the Servant be more than one? The traditional Jewish expectation of two messiahs, one royal and the other religious after the pattern of Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua (e.g., Hag 1:1, 11, 14), attest to this historical interpretation. Still, the Servant may refer both to Israel and an individual, and the two are organically connected, in the manner that Christ and the church are separate entities and yet intimately connected. Thus, the identity of the Servant may have been left fluid and ambiguous to the ancient people of God. Despite his identity being constantly clouded and therefore debated, the leader, whether an individual or a community or both, will rise to carry out God’s bidding, fulfilling God’s design for faithful leadership. Three passages will be the basis of this discussion: Isaiah 42:1–4; 61:1–3; and 44:1–5. In the course of exposition, I will include other relevant passages.

(Re)Calling and the Spirit of God

In Isaiah 42:1, the Servant is presented as an individual. God introduces his Servant to the unknown audience with elaborate credentials: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” (1a). Then God’s equipping follows: “I have put my Spirit upon him.” The manner in which the Servant receives God’s Spirit (נתן, “to give”) markedly compares to the old customary expression (צלח, “to rush” by NRSV or “come powerfully” by NIV) when the Spirit comes, for example, upon Saul (1 Sam 10:6; 11:6) and Samson (Judg 14:6). The Spirit’s coming upon selected leaders serves two functions: authentication with “prophesying” as a sign and empowerment for specific tasks. The Spirit’s presence upon this Servant may serve both purposes: as part of this endorsement to the unknown audience and, primarily, preparing him to fulfill a specific task. The close link between the Spirit and mission is unmistakable. The giving of the Spirit is directly linked to the mission of the Servant: “he will bring forth justice to the nations” (1b). Now, is he a royal or prophetic figure? With the shrouded identity of the Servant, it is difficult to determine. However, as a specific designation of an appointed person by the master or king, the term often carries a secular notion without excluding the religious. For example, the Epilogue of the Code of Hammurabi includes “servant” as one of many designations for the king: “As the shepherd of my people, a servant whose deeds were acceptable to gis-dar.” One biblical example is the use of the term by Abraham’s emissary when he introduces himself: “He said, ‘I am Abraham’s servant’” (Gen 24:34). Moses is explicitly called
“God’s servant” by himself, God, people, and Joshua (Exod 14:31; Num 12:7, 8). Later, the kings are called God’s servants as in “your servant my father David” (1 Kgs 8:24). Also, the verbs used to describe the Servant’s actions suggest more than just proclaiming: “to bring justice” and “to accomplish justice.” Nonetheless, the royal feature is not explicit, particularly considering his attitude and manner in fulfilling the task.

In Isaiah 61, the prophetic figure (not explicitly calling himself a “servant”) introduces himself to the audience claiming God’s unique call: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me” (1a). This claim is similar to what we find in Ezekiel, “Then the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, ‘Say, Thus says the Lord’” (Ezek 11:5). The single credential he claims for his authority is the Spirit coming through “anointing.” Although the word is used here figuratively, it is based on the old connection between the two. This is found in Samuel’s anointing of Saul into kingship (1 Sam 10:1 and 6) and another anointing of David (1 Sam 16:13). This term may also point toward a royal nature of the call as the kings and priests were initially anointed. As in ch. 42, the giving of the Spirit through anointing is linked to the empowerment for a specific mission. The act of anointing is for the consecration of an object or individual for a specific use. Besides, it signifies God’s provision of abilities or power to fulfill the task.

The passage singles out the marginalized and suffering members of the community: “poor,” “brokenhearted,” “captives,” and “prisoners.” The care for the weak and powerless in society is the first act of justice and righteousness. What is implicitly referred to in Isaiah 42 as “a bruised reed” and the “smoldering wick” is now elaborated in the passage. The presence of hardship and disparity among the post-exilic people of God is well attested (e.g., the problem of debt-slavery, Neh 5:1–19).

This prophetic call continues the long prophetic tradition in which the Spirit of the Lord is the source of the prophetic vocation. However, we rarely see any reference to the Spirit in the prophetic call and commissioning, let alone the single appearance of “the Spirit of the Lord God” throughout the Old Testament. Indeed, except for several call narratives, the Scripture tells little about the emergence of the non-institutional “true” prophets. Their rising is almost like that of the judges. If we apply the parallel to the prophets from the emergence of pre-monarchic leaders (e.g., the seventy elders), the Spirit’s presence is part of their call and commissioning. Indeed, the presence of the Spirit upon two celebrated prophets is simply assumed and also extends to its continual presence. Samuel has a
group of follower-prophets (or “sons of the prophet,” 1 Sam 10:10) who prophesy (presumably under the presence of the Spirit). When Saul meets them, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him mightly and also prophesies. The same pattern appears in 1 Samuel 19:20: “When they saw the company of the prophets in a frenzy, with Samuel standing in charge of them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also fell into a prophetic frenzy.” Similarly, the presence of the Spirit upon Elijah is simply assumed through Elisha’s request, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit” (2 Kgs 2:9). The “your spirit” is taken by many as referring to the Spirit of God, which has been with Elijah. The self-claim of this prophetic figure, therefore, is in accordance with the well-established prophetic tradition of the Spirit.

In Isaiah 44, Israel is called God’s “Servant” as in 41:8. The oracle is neither a call nor commissioning: it is an affirmation of the old call with an admonition and promise. However, this passage is included in this discussion because of the designation of the “Servant” and the giving of the Spirit. The old call was to make Israel God’s own possession and his priest kingdom to the nations (Exod 19:5–6).

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness (Isa 42:6–7).

However, this Servant of the Lord has failed miserably: instead of opening blind eyes, they themselves became blind. God moans over his people: “Who is blind but my servant, or deaf like my messenger whom I send? Who is blind like my dedicated one, or blind like the servant of the Lord?” (Isa 42:19). Now God calls his people, affirming his election of Israel (“chosen” appearing twice, and “servant” twice), and his commitment of help: “But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you: Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen” (vs 1-2).

To restore their status as God’s people and servant to the covenant relationship, God takes his initiative. In this process, his Spirit is often the agent. The Spirit brings life to the dry bones in God’s army (Ezek 37:1–11), the pouring out of the Spirit ushers in the new era (Isa 32:15), and God places a new heart and his Spirit to restore his people (Ezek 11:19; 36:26; Jer 31:33). In the same way, God
is going to revive his people through the life-giving Spirit: “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring” (44:3). The parallelism between the “water” and the “Spirit” is unmistakable: what the life-giving water is to the desert, the Spirit is to God’s people, both of the present and the future. God’s people will indeed prosper, increase, and flourish “like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams” (v. 4).

In all three passages, the Spirit of God plays a vital role in the calling of his Servant. Therefore, the election of his Servant is God’s sovereign work. For Israel, although this calling is a renewed one, it is still God’s monergism: he is acting alone. Also explicit is the presence of the Spirit, signifying a special relationship between God and his Servant. For the individual Servant figure, the qualifiers such as “chosen,” “pleased,” “uphold,” and “anointing,” point to the intimate closeness between God and the Servant. In the same way, Israel has been presented in similar terms to denote intimacy with God (e.g., “my treasured possession out of all the people” as part of the covenant description, Exod 19:5).

Mission and the Spirit

In Isaiah 42, the presence of the Spirit is tied to the specific task for the Servant to perform. After the impressive array of endorsing words, God declares, “I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1). The reception of the Spirit and his God-given mission shapes his life, attitude, and resolution. His mission is to the nations (or the “coastland”), beyond God’s people. Three times in the passage, his mission is described to “bring justice to the nations” as “the coastlands wait for his teaching.” The understanding of “justice” (םשפט, or “judgment”) is critical. The administration of justice has traditionally been reserved to the king as the ultimate judicator of any dispute (e.g., Solomon in 1 Kgs 3:16–28). Based on the king’s loyalty to God as the true king of Israel, the administration of justice (and righteousness) among the people is his primary function. Maintaining a just nation also includes the purging of evil and the protection of the weak (e.g., Isa 11:1–5). However, in this passage, it is not clear what it means that the Servant brings justice to the nations, and how he is going to do it. If Israelite kings generally struggled to administer justice in their territory, the Servant mission to the nations is an audacious prospect. Nowhere in the passage is the sign of royal, that is, political or military, activities. Instead, the manner in which he is going to fulfill this mission is by his faithfulness, perseverance, and resolve. This
description points more to a prophetic than a royal approach. Then, the Servant is
going to proclaim God’s justice to the nations. The reference to *torah* (“teaching,”
v. 4) augments the interpretation that the Servant has a prophetic task, this time,
beyond his people.

Isaiah 61 elaborates the task that the Servant figure is commissioned to fulfill:

> . . . to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the
> brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the
> prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of
> vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those
> who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil
> of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint
> spirit (vv. 1b–3a).

All seven activities are linked to the verb “sent.” As in ch. 42, the direct link
between the endowment of the Spirit and the tasks suggests the equipping or
empowering role of the Spirit for the recipients to fulfill successfully the God-given
mission. Most commentators agree that the passage supports the identity of the
called recipient to be a prophetic rather than a royal figure. Most infinitives agree
with this conclusion: “To bring good news,” “to bind up the brokenhearted,” “to
proclaim liberty,” and “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,” “to comfort” and
“(to) provide for those who mourn,” and “to give them a garland.” They are either
verbal or pastoral activities. On the other hand, others point out that some terms
refer to royal duties: the “release of the prisoners” and the “day of vengeance.” It
is a king, not a prophet, who would be able to perform these functions. However,
“release” and “vengeance” are not actions but the objects of “to proclaim.”
Therefore, all the tasks of this Servant figure can be said to be prophetic.

The established tradition positions the Spirit of God as the source of the
prophetic message. Strangely, the earliest report is found in Balaam’s experience
with God’s Spirit: “Then the Spirit of God came upon him [Balaam], and he
uttered his oracle” (Num 24:2b–3a). The self-description of his experience includes
hearing “the words of God,” seeing “the vision of the Almighty,” “falling down,”
etc. (v. 4). His oracle of blessing upon Israel, against the wish of Balak, who hired
him, and even of himself, is the sure sign that God’s Spirit inspired the message.
Likewise, the encounter of Micaiah and Ahab’s four-hundred prophets (1 Kgs 22)
reveals the claim and counterclaim of the Spirit as the source of the prophetic
message. The lone provincial and anti-establishment prophet predicts the demise of
the king in the war with Aram, claiming his knowledge in the heavenly court experience. In the course of his prophecy, he reveals that the lying spirit from God is in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets (vv. 19–23). In his fury, Zedekiah, the leader of the prophets, confronts him by asking, “Which way did the Spirit of the Lord pass from me to speak to you?” (v. 24). This episode reveals that the prophets regularly claim the Spirit of God as the source of their messages. The current passage continues this tradition: the prophetic figure claims the authenticity of the message by claiming the Spirit as the source.

In contrast, Isaiah 44 is entirely different in the “task” that renewed Israel is expected to perform. While the two Servant figures have their tasks for them to perform actively, that of God’s people is a passive one. The coming of the Spirit has a different role: to renew the life of God’s people. The effect of the life-giving or revising work of the Spirit may be considered as the task for new Israel to “perform”: “This one will say, ‘I am the Lord’s,’ another will be called by the name of Jacob, yet another will write on the hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and adopt the name of Israel” (v. 5).

As in ch. 42, the scope of new Israel’s transformation by the Spirit is the nations. The restoration of God’s people through the Spirit prompts the voluntary acceptance of Israelite identity by “this,” “another,” and still “another.” They are outside of God’s own: the nations. The piling of different entities gives an impression of a continuous move of the nations toward God as envisioned in Micah 4:2–3: “... and many nations shall come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

In the absence of any reference to Israel’s response or action, it is the sole work of God’s grace. Israel is not only the beneficiary of God’s monergistic act of grace, it fulfills the very purpose of God’s call (to become God’s priestly kingdom, Exod 19:6) just by being God’s people renewed by his Spirit.

In all three passages, the coming or presence of God’s Spirit is linked to their call. The Spirit is to equip the Servant to fulfill faithfully the mission. Even for renewed Israel, the life-reviving Spirit ultimately empowers the nation to bring the surrounding peoples to the reign of Yahweh. This is an age-old tradition that the Spirit supernaturally equips selected leaders of God’s people.
Life in the Spirit

Isaiah 42 has an extraordinary description of the Servant’s attitude and life under the Spirit’s empowering presence. This elaborate description is a stark contrast to the demonstration of superhuman prowess as the outcome of the Spirit’s endowment. The first effect is his manner in carrying out God-given tasks and also his response to the seeming hardship he is to face: “He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street” (v. 2). This may reflect the more internalizing tendency of the Spirit’s presence that is prevalent in the later stage. In addition to this developmental perspective, it may still be said that the Servant consciously takes the Spirit to the personal level. Earlier, I argued that the first experience of Samson with the Spirit (Judg 13:25) was intended for internal working.20 Also, Samuel predicted that, as a result of the Spirit’s coming upon Saul, he would “be turned into a different person” (1 Sam 10:6, or “God gave him another heart,” v. 9). This experience is intended for the internal working of the Spirit, or “a radical transformation of the personality.”21 The second effect is his tender care for the hurting: “a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench” (v. 3). The care for the weak is an essential part of “justice.” The literary sense is such that he identifies himself with the powerless in society, which is a radical departure from traditional Spirit-empowerment, frequently expressed in physical (e.g., Samson in Judg 14: 6, 19; 15:14) or military (such as Saul, 1 Sam 11:6) prowess. The third effect is his persevering resolve to accomplish his mission: “he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth” (vv. 3b–4a). The fulfillment of the God-given task is the ultimate goal of the Servant’s life, despite adversaries and obstacles. The empowerment of the Spirit is completely internalized by the Servant and expressed in his obedient life.

In a different way, the renewed people of God embodies the life-giving work of the Spirit. In their seeming passivity, their active obedient and faithful living in God’s covenant is elsewhere found:

I will give you [new Israel] a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God (Ezek 36:26–28).
The giving of the Spirit is to cause God’s people to follow God’s law. Along with the heart of flesh (instead of “stone”), the Spirit has a strong internalizing effect for new Israel. As a result, they are fully restored as God’s covenant people, as seen in the covenant language: the “land,” “my people,” and “your God.” Isaiah 61 calls this restored nation “oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory” (v. 3b). In Isaiah 44, this restored nation will become the most effective witness to God’s supremacy and grace so that the nations would be drawn to Yahweh.

**Conclusion**

The closing part of the study consists of two components: a summary reflection of the ideal portrait of the Spirit-empowered leader and a list of practical lessons we can learn from this study.

**“Prophetic”**

The most frequently recurring theme through the study is “prophetic” as the descriptor of the ideal Spirit-empowered leader, both of the past and the future. Let us explore why “prophetic” is so crucial, and what it means.

When the monarchy came into being, the Israelite leadership system entered a professionalization: the kings were in charge of administrative and political function, with the prophets conveying God’s direction for the nation. Thus, the prophets are positioned between God and the kings as God’s messengers diligently checking on the kings’ (in)fidelity to God’s demands. For example, before a war, the king was to hear from the Lord through the prophet. When this rule is violated, the king crosses the “red line,” resulting in severe punishment. Saul, in his fight against the Philistines, is pressed to offer the burnt offering due to Samuel’s delay (1 Sam 13:9). The prophet not only reprimands him for not keeping God’s command (v. 13), but also declares that the kingship would no longer belong to Saul’s family (v. 14). When Israel’s next king was anointed, “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him” (1 Sam 16:14). The rest of his life and kingship was plagued by defeats, jealousy, mental torment, and eventual downfall. It all began when he crossed into the prohibited religious boundary set by the Lord. Similarly, the Judean king Uzziah, after many accomplishments, “had become strong, and he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was false to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to make offering on the altar of
incense” (2 Chr 26:16). As God’s punishment, he lived the rest of his life as a leper (vv. 19–21). It appears that Israel could survive without a king, but not without a prophet.

At the same time, the kings have a paramount influence on the fate of the people and the nation. And their success and failure are strictly measured by their spiritual and moral performances, set and reminded by the prophets. For this reason, the books of the Former Prophets (Joshua to 2 Kings) record how each leader has performed according to the prophetic standards. For each king, in particular, receives his final “grade sheet” based on his (dis)loyalty to Yahweh, set by the prophets. For example, the prophet Elijah continually charged king Ahab of Israel for his Baal worship. In the end, his twenty-year reign is summarized: “[H]e clung to the sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit; he did not depart from it” (1 Kgs 3:3). In contrast, the prophetic tradition endorses another king: “Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done” (1 Kgs 15:11). During the pre-monarchic period, Moses, Joshua, and Samuel combined the prophetic function with their leadership. Except for Joshua, upon whom the Spirit of wisdom rested (Deut 34:9), the Spirit’s presence in Moses and Samuel was simply “assumed,” as discussed above. They were successful in their leading of the nation and it was the rebellion of the people that frustrated God’s plan and their fate. This is in stark contrast to the monarchic period, where no case is found when the people behave faithfully to God even if the king is not. Bad kings have to be corrected by the prophets.

Then what is the core of this prophetic significance in these Spirit-empowered leaders? It is the prophet’s close affinity with God. An early Israelite illustration may help: “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land” (Exod 7:1–2).

The process is never mechanical: the close relationship between God and his prophets is “organic.” They are invited to the heavenly court proceedings (Isa 6; 1 Kgs 22), hear from the Lord (Ezek 1:3), see visions (Ezek 1:1), eat a scroll (Ezek 3:1), and to participate in God’s pain in his redemptive plan (Hos 1:2). They are arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and even killed to stand by the truth they preach (e.g., Jer 37:13–16). They all point to the whole inner orientation toward God and God-given mission. Their attitude, life, and ministry are the outgrowth of their continuing internal communion with God. Indeed, the coming of the Spirit symbolizes the overwhelming and continual presence of God, or the “extension of God’s personality” graciously placed in them. It is the precise reason why some
recipients of God’s Spirit prophesy, a clear sign that God has now full and ongoing control over their physical and emotional faculties (such as the seventy elders and Saul). Among the prophets, unlike ancient leaders, nowhere is the emphasis on the radical or even violent manner in which the Spirit “rushed” upon them. For this reason, Moses expresses his desire that all the Israelites become prophets: “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” (Num 11:29). This is further predicted by Joel (2:28–29) and fulfilled in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). They are to become prophets not in a vocation but in their spiritual and behavioral affinity with God. Thus, the new people of God would have God’s Spirit, which would provide motivation and delight to observe God’s law (Ezek 36:27). This internalized quality and unrelenting resolve to fulfill the God-given mission characterize the “prophetic” layer in future Spirit-empowered leaders, both individual and corporate.

Lessons from The Study

As a summary with contemporary implications, the following lessons may be gleaned from this study:

- God’s Spirit is not just required for faithful leaders of the Lord; it is all they need;
- The Spirit validates and empowers God-chosen leaders;
- The true mark of the Spirit’s presence and empowerment is the alignment of the recipient’s heart, life, and mission (as characterized by “prophetic”) to God’s;
- Thus, the Spirit of God as the “extension of Yahweh’s personality” is intended to transform the recipient’s heart before undertaking the task;
- Samson and Saul may have failed to respond appropriately for the Spirit to bring about its transformative intent and potential to their inner being;
- The attitude of meekness (as the Servant) is indeed the sign of Spirit-endowed strength (as in Christ, Phil 2:5–8);
- The Spirit-empowered leader would bring the community and nations closer to the Lord;
- The leader would also empower others; and
- Ultimately, the Spirit-empowered leaders will bring the fullness of life to God’s people, nations, and God’s creation (or shalom).
Thus, the New Testament presents Jesus as God’s Spirit-empowered prophetic Servant who is “in the Father, and the Father is in me [him]” (John 14:10, 11). Through the Spirit, he also has the mind of God: “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). Indeed, the confusion in the identity of the Servant, particularly between individual and corporate nature, is perfectly realized in the life of Jesus and the church, his body!

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Notes


2 All scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), but I capitalize the word “Spirit” if it is deemed to be of God.


9 J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 304, points out that this is the only passage among the Servant songs where the Spirit is mentioned.

11 By this time, the “anointing” is broadly used in connection with a “chosen” one for a specific task such as the Messiah: e.g., Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. David M. G. Stalker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 366.


21 Ma, “Tragedy of Spirit-Empowered Heroes,” 31, 32.


SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP

EXPLORING THREE DIMENSIONS

JAY GARY

Keywords leader development, learning outcomes, Holy Spirit, Oral Roberts University, Spirit-Empowered Movement

Abstract

How should colleges and universities within the Spirit-empowered Movement develop Spirit-empowered leadership among their students, staff, or faculty? To spur on thinking by those who frame university learning outcomes, this case study from Oral Roberts University defines Spirit-empowered leadership in terms of three dimensions: personal development, interpersonal influence, and generational emergence. It concludes with a call to create the frameworks of leadership needed for the future of the church and society, in light of A.D. 2033, the 2,000th anniversary of Pentecost.

Introduction

“Can we find anyone else like this—one in whom is the [S]pirit of God?” (Gen 41:38 NRSV). This is what the Pharaoh of Egypt, the most powerful ruler of his time, asked his royal officials upon meeting Joseph. It was remarkable that a Pharaoh would recognize the Spirit of God at work in an alien, an immigrant to Egypt, a mere Hebrew. However, Joseph had just interpreted Pharaoh’s troubling dream and offered a policy prescription that would save his empire from mass famine. Joseph, the great grandson of Abraham, was a whole leader, in service to the whole world of his day.

For the past twenty-four months, the faculty of Oral Roberts University (ORU) has been forming new initiatives for ORU’s “Impact 2030” vision, as chartered in its five-year adaptive plan.1 The 2030 goal, in part, is to develop
“whole leaders for the whole world,” demonstrate a vibrant “Spirit-empowered ethos” that impacts the world, and serve as a premier university for “Spirit-empowered leadership development.”

Almost sixty years ago, Oral Roberts established a university on the Holy Spirit. Today ORU reflects this “Spirit-empowered” culture through its campus, curriculum, and chapels. While Roberts’ call to “listen to the voice of God” and “go into every person’s world” is vital, along with its expression of “whole person” education, a shared leadership development culture is only now emerging. To this end, this article presents a case study of how ORU faculty, staff, and administrators have been thinking about Spirit-empowered leadership over the past two years. It seeks to deepen and widen the conversation of how we develop “Spirit-empowered” leadership, as college educators, student leaders, or ministry leaders.2

Any conversation in the Christian tradition on what is meant to be a Spirit-empowered leader must be grounded in the life, work, and context of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel of Luke notes that after Jesus was tested in the wilderness, he returned to Galilee, “filled with the power of the Spirit” (4:14). He went to the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath and read from the scroll of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18).

What does it mean to be empowered to lead? As illustrated from Jesus’ inaugural message, to be Spirit-empowered means to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to serve others. “Empowerment” is “the act or action of empowering someone or something . . . the power, right, or authority to do something.”3 After Jesus was tested in the wilderness, he stood before his village to declare he was endowed with spiritual power to bring wholeness to those who were broken. One might say that Jesus embraced his identity as a “whole leader for the whole world.” This article’s premise is that Spirit-Empowered Leadership (SEL), as modeled by the life of Jesus, is a developmental process best understood as a three-dimensional space created by three vectors: 1) development, 2) influence, and 3) emergence. The first vector, development, describes the internal dimension as we become whole leaders. The second vector, influence, describes the external dimension of how we interact with others. The third vector, emergence, describes the generational journey as we pursue our vocation across the phases and transitions of our life. To say it another way, SEL encompasses three lines, the personal, interpersonal, and generational textures of our lives.
Figure 1 portrays this as a three-dimensional space. The vertical Y-axis depicts leader development; the X-axis represents leadership influence; the diagonal Z-axis depicts generational emergence. This framework invites us to reflect on how we become whole leaders for the whole world, across our whole life, on behalf of the Spirit-empowered Movement.

Leadership Development

What does leadership development entail? Speaking in September 1965 to the first class at ORU on the “quest for the whole man,” Oral Roberts said, “there has only been one completely whole man. This was Jesus of Nazareth.” He continued, “our concept of the whole man derives from His life and from the example He left us. . . . You can leave here as the whole person God intended you to be.”4 From its beginning, ORU has defined its mission as developing students in spirit, mind, and body to become whole persons to impact the world.

After more than a half century, ORU continues to define Spirit-empowered leaders as whole persons ready to lead. Its mission statement reads, “to develop Holy Spirit-empowered leaders through whole person education to impact the world.”5 From this viewpoint, leadership is not a position or title we hold—it is a developmental process by which we become integrated and whole in spirit, mind, and body.

As ORU developed its core curriculum, shared in common by its colleges, the phrase “whole person education” came to describe its General Education program.6 In 2002, the faculty introduced a whole person assessment model to build students into whole, competent servant leaders.7 From 2016 to 2018, a faculty-driven
process revised the general education experience behind ORU’s “Whole Person” education. In 2017, the General Education committee expressed its mission in this way:

Oral Roberts University’s general education courses provide a core curriculum . . . designed to empower students as responsible, engaged global citizens and lifelong learners . . . with the goal of preparing graduates to be professionally competent servant-leaders who are spiritually alive, intellectually alert, physically disciplined, and socially adept.8

Note the underlying premise—that ORU’s whole person education empowers graduates to be competent leaders. ORU’s whole person education is leadership education, aligned through various “student learning outcomes,” with the first three reading:

1. Spiritually Alive. Students will learn to hear God’s voice by deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ and increasing their sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Students will learn to expand their biblical knowledge, approach life from a Christian worldview, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Intellectually Alert. Students will learn to gather, retain, apply, and create knowledge, using analytical problem-solving, critical-thinking, and decision-making skills that they can utilize in their professional and personal lives. They will develop historical, scientific, and global perspectives, including an appreciation for artistic expression in various cultural settings.
3. Physically Disciplined. Students will develop a commitment to living a balanced, healthy, and physically disciplined lifestyle.

ORU lists its student learning outcomes as an inventory on the back page of each course syllabus. A full explanation of its General Education outcomes, proficiencies, and capabilities can be found in its 2017 document.9

How much of ORU’s “whole person” model might square away with a “whole leader” developmental model, as defined by educators across the United States? In 2019 an internal ORU task force took up this question. This task force compared ORU’s “whole person” model, consisting of five learning outcomes and
twelve proficiencies, to a national Student Leadership Competencies (SLC) model, consisting of eight clusters and sixty competencies related to leadership development.\textsuperscript{10}

The leadership task force reported that ORU’s “whole person” model had competencies that the SLC model did not contain, such as “spiritually alive” and “physically disciplined.” However, there was a seventy-percent overlap or equivalency between these two leadership development frameworks, despite different aims and vocabulary. Twenty percent of SLC competencies were not represented among ORU’s first four academic outcomes. Upon further exploration of SLC skills, such as “responding to change,” “supervision,” “power dynamics,” or “creating change,” the task force concluded that many of these competencies were covered under ORU’s fifth “professional competencies” outcome, as expressed in upper-level majors, co-curricular student life programs, and professional graduate programs.\textsuperscript{11}

Having shown that ORU’s general education is a leadership development curriculum, ORU’s task force on leadership inquired of students, “What percentage of your leadership development over your college career occurred \textit{outside} the classroom versus \textit{in} the classroom?” The average answer was seventy percent \textit{outside} the classroom and thirty percent \textit{inside} the classroom (n=14; SD=17\%). This speaks to a healthy leadership culture on ORU’s campus through student life, as evidenced in a Fall 2019 student focus group:

“I learned to be a leader on my summer job when the managers went on vacation, and I had to manage new hires.”

“I figured out my leadership identity while studying abroad and then back on campus to sort things out.”

“I learned to be an assertive tutor, without reinforcing someone’s ‘learned helplessness.’”

“By joining a mission team in my freshman year, I was forced to trust others and talk about who I was in my life with God, and to be affirmed when I stepped out.”

This reality that leadership development happens outside the classroom speaks to the need, as ORU looks toward 2030, to recast its student leadership outcomes as overarching university learning outcomes that reflect both co-curricular and
curricular leadership development. Anticipating this need, in the Fall of 2018, another task force of ORU faculty asked, “How should ORU adjust its curriculum, methodology, and programs as it looks to 2030?” It stated:

ORU anticipates that its graduates of 2030 and beyond will be culturally responsive leaders who are able to define and solve problems in both local and global contexts. Graduates will be agents of transformation who will develop the resilience required to maintain a whole-person lifestyle and demonstrate Spirit-empowered leadership with the emotional intelligence for building and maintaining relationships. . . . Multi-cultural collaborative teams [will] address real-world challenges through problem- and project-based learning. Excellent teaching faculty [will] model professionalism, academic acumen, Spirit-empowered learning and leadership, and digital fluency in advanced technologies.12

To deepen our approach to develop leaders through the curriculum and co-curricular means, educators should realize that an array of organizations, from health care, technology, military, government, industry, or non-profits make investments in leader development. They do this because the solution to the most pressing problems in today’s world can only be resolved through personal relationships. In a pivotal article from the leadership studies field, Daniel Day argued that what many organizations term “leadership development” should be more accurately called “leader” development.13 Why? Because leadership is usually defined as increasing a person’s knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The individual approach to leader development, including “whole person” development, is necessary, but not sufficient. The personal approach builds on a host of educational, psychological, and spiritual theories of development that connect adult development, self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, identity development, cognitive complexity, emotional intelligence, moral development, and learning processes to cultivate domain specific expertise in the arts and sciences.14

However, as educators, if we just develop in our students “individual-level knowledge, skills, and abilities (i.e., ‘human capital’) that are relevant for leadership,” but do not enable our students “to use these skills . . . [to] develop relationships with others (i.e., ‘social capital’), can it be said that leadership was developed?” Day and his colleagues would say no, asserting, “How can someone lead without others to follow?”15

240 | Spiritus Vol 5, No 2
Day affirms that individual leader development is “a purposeful investment in human capital.” While necessary, Day points out these training approaches “ignore almost 50 years of research showing leadership to be a complex interaction between the designated leader and the social and organizational environment.” Therefore, to explore Spirit-empowered leadership, we must open up a second space of interpersonal influence to complement individualized personal development.

**Leadership Influence**

We have described how Spirit-empowered leadership is developed from a personal frame. We now ask, “How is Spirit-empowered leadership demonstrated in interpersonal contexts?” Next to Jesus’ development of his disciples, there is no better example of Spirit-empowered leadership with teams and communities than the Apostle Paul. Speaking of God’s plan to unite both Jews and Gentiles, Paul referred to his Spirit-empowered calling in this way: “Of this Gospel, I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given me by the working of his power” (Eph 3:7).

In referring to the “working of his power,” Paul speaks not only to what the Holy Spirit had done in him, deep within his inner being, to save, sanctify, and baptize him in the Holy Spirit; the “working of his power” also spoke to what the Holy Spirit was now doing through Paul to “make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” (Eph 3:9).

Through his travels, personal ministry, and letters, Paul demonstrated “leadership influence.” Even though his apostleship was God-given, he did not unilaterally control or direct the various church movements that were emerging. Instead he influenced them through persuasion, collaboration, interaction, and yes, love.

This leadership influence is evident in his letter to Philemon, whose runaway slave Onesimus started working for Paul’s apostolic team. When the time came for Onesimus to return to Philemon, Paul demonstrated leadership. He interceded on behalf of Onesimus to be received back into Philemon’s household as a member rather than be whipped, beaten, or burned. He wrote to Philemon, “Though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus” (Philm 8–9). Paul used his influence to heal broken relationships.
Joseph Rost has defined leadership in our post-industrial world as “an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.” Each word in Rost’s definition is critical. Rost uses the term “collaborators” instead of “followers.” Why? He considers them actors in their own right. While a team leader might initiate a task, the relationship with collaborators is mutual and non-coercive, as between Paul and Philemon. Influence is multi-directional, not just from top to bottom.

Seen in this light, leadership is shared endeavor. In summarizing Rost’s paradigm of leadership, an educator writes:

Rost reminds us that leadership is not what leaders do. Rather, leadership is what leaders and followers do together for the collective good. . . . Today, scholars discuss the basic nature of leadership in terms of the “interaction” among the people involved in the process: both leaders and followers. Thus, leadership is not the work of a single person, rather it can be explained and defined as a “collaborative endeavor” among group members. Therefore, the essence of leadership is not the leader, but the relationship.

This second dimension of Spirit-empowered leadership, called “leadership influence,” affirms that this is a reality in today’s world. Leadership is influence. Yes, it is limited, not absolute power. No single leader has all the answers, nor the resources unilaterally to make substantial change. At one moment, we may be the point or lead on a project, but the next moment, when the budget or situation shifts, we must defer to others to lead, based on their expertise or availability.

In this dimension, leadership is interaction. It is a process where many people participate in leadership, some as initiators, others as collaborators. Doris Kearns Goodwin, a Pulitzer Prize winning historian, wrote *Team of Rivals* to show how Abraham Lincoln displayed his political genius by building a diverse cabinet that blended the factors of influence and interaction to comprise presidential leadership.

How should ORU’s learning outcomes be understood in light of what this article calls “leadership influence”? ORU’s mission statement closes with the phrase “to impact the world.” Based on ORU’s vision, “impact” signifies that its graduates will positively influence the world with God’s light where it is dark, God’s voice where it is not heard, and God’s healing power where it is not known.

While Oral Roberts laid the foundation for leader development in spirit, mind, and body, others came along to build “social” competencies into its “whole person” learning matrix, namely:
4. Socially Adept. Students will develop the skills to communicate effectively in both spoken and written language and to ethically interact within diverse cultures, professions, and social settings. They will gain an understanding of their civic responsibility as service-oriented leaders who can make a positive impact on society—locally, nationally, and internationally.

In the 2017 revision of general education, ORU faculty included “4D. Leadership capacity” as the last proficiency of its “socially adept” outcome. “Leadership capacity” was defined as “the ability to engage, serve, and bring about change within various group settings by influencing and motivating others to pursue a vision through effective communication, collaboration, and decision making.” This definition aligns well with Rost’s paradigm of leadership as an influence relationship.

Beyond the fourth outcome of “socially adept,” ORU faculty added a fifth student learning outcome to its whole person assessment matrix:

5. Professionally Competent.

This was to prompt faculty to add discipline-specific outcomes to each student’s major or graduate degree program. This outcome invited faculty teams within specific colleges to ask, “What do our programs prepare graduates to be or to do, related to holistic qualities expected by employers, professional standards, or specialized accreditation?”

To explore how ORU outcomes might be revised to encompass more of a leadership influence emphasis, we might look at a healthcare competency model developed by ORU’s College of Nursing. This model framed out “professionally competent” in terms of four domains and twenty-nine competencies, defining personal, professional, leadership, and industry development for ORU healthcare graduates, from the bachelors, to masters, to doctoral levels. More thinking along these lines is needed by ORU faculty.

As ORU faculty or any educators in the Spirit-empowered Movement think through this second dimension of “leadership influence,” they should give specific attention to the proficiencies implied by “socially adept” and “professionally competent” outcomes. They should also identify specific spheres of leadership...
influence, enumerate these occupations, and examine these environments where practitioners will work.

Before Jesus was taken up to heaven, he appeared to his chosen apostles and gave them instructions through the Holy Spirit about the spheres of influence they would impact. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Oral Roberts personalized this by saying that those who came after him would do greater works “unto the uttermost bounds of earth, into every person’s world.” Educators need to give Spirit-empowered instructions to students about the spheres they will impact.

Figure 2: Four Spheres of Leadership Influence

Figure 2 lays out four spheres that emerging leaders might touch: one’s team at work, one’s organization, their sector, and global. Our influence to touch others can be direct or indirect. Our direct influence is most intensely mediated through our presence and service to our immediate team, whether that is our family at home or department at work. We also have a direct influence, whether small or large, on our organization’s innovation or efficiency, whether we work for a small business, a medium-sized state enterprise, or a large corporation. Our influence over our sector is usually indirect at best, whether we work in media, education, health, business, or government. The same indirect impact usually applies to the global sphere, unless we are a thought leader in podcasting or print. A faculty’s college or discipline might categorize its students’ spheres of “leadership influence” differently; that is fine. The point stands that we must realign our leadership learning outcomes according to the contexts our students will inhabit, whether systems, built infrastructures, or natural environments.
Becoming an empowered leader who influences others to enact real change goes far beyond understanding our own personal MBTI psychological type, or our five CliftonStrengths. It is not even necessary to master the often overlapping and conflicting theories of leadership studies. What is necessary to enact “leadership influence” as a Spirit-empowered leader is to harness the power of constructive conflict within our spheres of influence in such a way that we release collaboration, creativity, and innovation.

Leadership Emergence

We have described how Spirit-empowered leaders are developed within a personal frame, encompassing spirit, mind, and body. We then turned to consider how we enact leadership through influence within interpersonal spheres. We now turn to explore what it means to be empowered as an emergent leader in view of personal, cultural, and generational change.

Perhaps the most radical thing about Paul was that he was able to sense, enact, and embody the new thing that the Holy Spirit was doing in his day, both within his life and across the generations. In Galatians 4, Paul contrasts two narratives based on an allegory of two women—Hagar vs. Sarah; two sons—Ishmael vs. Isaac; two cities—Jerusalem below vs. Jerusalem above; two covenants—Mt. Sinai vs. Mt. Zion; and two modes of existence—life by the flesh vs. life in the Spirit. One pathway was based on Temple-centered piety. This led down the hill to where the people of God would be solely defined by a one-nation covenant. The other pathway led uphill to where Paul sensed the Spirit was now taking a new generation into a multi-national covenant based on mutual honor before God. Paul located himself and his church movements halfway up the hill, between these two paths. He appealed to the Galatians to follow him upward into freedom, as he followed the Holy Spirit into a new era, rather than turn back down the hill into slavery, or life under the Law.

As twenty-first-century Christians, we do not live between two covenant ages as the Apostolic generation did. At the collapse of the Second Temple, the old order passed away, and new things came (1 Cor 5:17). Paul’s approach to paradigm change is exemplary for us. We must strive to be Spirit-empowered leaders in our ability to grasp emergence, whether that is personally across our own life’s stages, or organizationally moving beyond crises, or generationally in terms of new paradigms of wholeness.
Let us now talk about personal emergence. Leadership starts with personal empowerment, but is experienced as an unfolding journey as the Holy Spirit leads us across life’s phases. I have taught alongside ORU faculty in the Master of Leadership and the Master of Christian Ministry programs for the past two years. Each program begins with a course on empowered leadership or Spirit-empowered ministry. We ground our instruction in “Leadership Emergence Theory,” or LET, as framed by Bobby Clinton. We use Clinton’s approach because it allows students to view their development as leaders as emergent, illuminated by their reflection on critical incidents in their lives. The aim is to enable them to document where the Holy Spirit taught them something important.

Clinton presents his timeline in terms of four phases: life foundations, general ministry, focused ministry, and convergent life. Students apply Clinton’s model to a biblical leader, to Oral Roberts’ life, and then to their own lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Phase I Ministry Foundations</th>
<th>Phase II General Ministry</th>
<th>Phase III Focused Ministry</th>
<th>Phase IV Convergent Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub Phase</td>
<td>A. Sovereign Foundations</td>
<td>B. Work Transition</td>
<td>A. Provisional Ministry</td>
<td>B. Growth Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phases</td>
<td>From the healed to the healer</td>
<td>From evangelism to education</td>
<td>Primetime to an architect of a city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Healed from Tuberculosis, 1935</td>
<td>- Heard God’s voice to heal his generation, 1935</td>
<td>- Started evangelism and healing ministry, 1948-1968</td>
<td>- Lost daughter and her husband in a plane accident, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Brother took him to a tent healer</td>
<td>- Greatest fight was to hear others around the table</td>
<td>- Started two monthly and one quarterly publications, 1954-1967</td>
<td>- Architect the City of Faith, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Events</td>
<td>- Heard God’s voice to heal</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Founded Oral Roberts University, 1965-Present</td>
<td>- City of Faith closed, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Merged his preaching, teaching, and healing into ORU</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Seven concepts that changed his life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Influenced other leaders in evangelism and healing ministries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Went to be with the Lord in 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Oral Roberts’ Ministry Timeline, by a MCM 510 student, 2018

According to Clinton each phase is defined by significant events in a leader’s life called process items. Phase I, ministry foundations, commences at birth and is comprised of experiences over which the “potential leader has little control,” but from which he or she can learn valuable lessons. During this phase, the leader begins to know God and seek a relationship with him. The leader transitions to
phase II, general ministry, when he/she accepts a role in ministry or the marketplace. During this period, they are active in ministry while simultaneously developing their spiritual gifts. Clinton notes that, despite the leader’s full-time work, the goal of phase II is primary character development rather than fruitfulness, as the Spirit focuses more on “working . . . in the leader, not through him.” When the “leader has identified and is using his spiritual gifts in a ministry that is satisfying,” he/she transitions to phase III, focused ministry. At this point, the leader has learned that “ministry flows out of being” and “gains a sense of priorities concerning the best use of his gifts.” In phase IV, convergent ministry, the fruitfulness of a leader’s ministry is obvious as he/she achieves maximum effectiveness before spending their senior years sharing wisdom and leaving a legacy of influence.

The beauty of LET is that it helps emergent leaders understand the spiritual, relational, and situational dynamics at play in their personal and professional development. Others have applied Clinton’s theory beyond those in ministry vocations, to women or professionals. It is common today to talk about generational cohorts, from Baby Boomers to Millennials to Generation Z. The strength of Clinton’s LET is that it is Spirit-centered, rather than a self-centric model. It allows students to view their lives in a generational progression of a 200-year present, from their grandparents to their eventual grandchildren.

Not only do adults need to build a personal narrative of how the Holy Spirit works in their lives, they also need to be resilient and understand how to emerge out from the crises that overtake their organizations and communities. We will likely remember the year 2020 as a time when our world was hit with a triple crisis: a global pandemic, an economic collapse, followed by protests for racial justice. By mid-March ORU faculty pivoted to remote teaching through Zoom, with less than a week to prepare. Following the spring semester, President Wilson worked with a Health and Safety Task Force to navigate through this storm and re-open ORU’s in-person classes for the fall semester. This is an example of emergent organizational leadership, facing an overwhelming storm, and finding a way to steer the ship toward a safe harbor.

Beyond personal and organizational change, a third generational dimension to Spirit-empowered leadership would call us to re-examine our underlying paradigms as we move across our lifetimes. According to Dent, Christian philosophy has preferred a traditional worldview (TWV), marked by a closed-system of reductionism, objective observation, logic, and determinism to undergird a modern age. By contrast, an emergent worldview (EMV) would strive to be theoretically
grounded in holism, perspectival observation, paradox, indeterminism, and complex adaptive systems. To shift Spirit-empowered Christianity from a reductionist TWV to a complex EMV will require competent leadership from Christian scholars. We will need more studies that examine Jesus’ macro-leadership in a chaotic world, compared to the challenges we face in the twenty-first century.42

Toward 2033 and Beyond

In twelve years, the world Christian movement will mark A.D. 2033 as the 2,000th anniversary of Pentecost, when our spiritual ancestors witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. They found their sons and daughters of Israel prophesied, their young men saw visions, and their old men dreamed new dreams (Acts 2:17).

For the last one hundred years, we too have experienced a New Pentecost, with wave upon wave of renewal reaching the shores of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indic-African civilizational houses. To amplify these waves, we have embraced Empowered21 relationships, as a shared identity of a global “Spirit-empowered Movement,” whose purpose has been to connect the generations for impartation and blessing.

What is the role of Spirit-empowered leadership in serving the 644 million strong community of the Spirit-empowered Movement? What role will Oral Roberts University play in supporting this movement as thought leaders, as educators? What role will you play in your career and life’s work? This article has sought to spur on thinking of ORU faculty, staff, students, and alumni to adopt new learning postures. It is a call to reframe our educational aims in view of three leadership conversations, related to our personal development, our interpersonal influence, and our generational emergence. Toward this end, let us recommit ourselves to the great work of our time, to bring about the healing of the nations.

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Notes


9 “General Education: Outcomes and Proficiencies,” 2–3.


GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

This ORU's Doctor of Ministry Program now offers a track in Moral Injury, also known as "soul wound." This program is ideal for pastors and military chaplaincy, and also encompasses additional contexts of ministry in hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, and counseling centers. Members of the program will be able to identify and support those who suffer as a result of moral injury. In addition to core courses, track courses include:

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• Assessing Moral Injury
• Treating Moral Injury
• Moral Injury Comorbidities & Systemic Concerns

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BULGARIAN PENTECOSTAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CRUCIBLE OF CHANGE

JOHN THOMPSON

Keywords Bulgaria, Pentecostalism, leadership, global Christianity

Abstract

Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders have navigated the waters of turbulent cultural change over the last thirty years in the wake of the fall of Communism in Bulgaria. From May to July 2020, eighteen Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders were interviewed to explore their leadership characteristics and how their leadership behavior and values changed over time amid a rapidly evolving society. Three generational groups of present-day Pentecostal leaders were identified, and their characteristics described. The study concludes with the leadership development needs of young emerging leaders given the continuously changing cultural environment.

Introduction

This year, A.D. 2020, marks the centennial celebration of Pentecostalism in Bulgaria. The one-hundred-year history of Bulgarian Pentecostalism is a complex story of influence and persecution, perseverance and progress, revival and regression, success and struggle. At the one-hundred-year mark, Pentecostals are the vast majority of the Evangelical population in Bulgaria. Pentecostal leaders estimate they represent ninety percent of Evangelical Christianity in Bulgaria. Bulgaria, itself, is a robust story. This land in southeastern Europe has been a bridge between East and West and exhibits influences of both worlds. Bulgarians survived five centuries under Ottoman Muslim rule and in the last century decades of Communist suppression. The Christian message arrived in the present-day Bulgarian territories eighteen centuries ago and Christianity was adopted as the state religion in A.D. 864. Into this context, Islam entered the region seven
centuries ago. Communist atheism then pressed its hand on Bulgaria in the last century. The last three decades have seen the ushering in of Western democracy and acceptance into the European Union. The Bulgarian soul has been shaped by all of these historical realities. In this milieu, Pentecostalism has both survived and thrived.

Volumes could be written about the one-hundred-year journey of Pentecostals in Bulgaria. The focus of this qualitative research project is on the current state of Pentecostal leadership in the wake of the societal upheaval of the last thirty years with the collapse of Communism and the rise of the democratic state resulting in rapid cultural change. These changes have exacerbated significant generational differences among present-day Pentecostal leaders. The experiences of each generation conferred a unique set of leadership crises and cultural values. This project sought to categorize and identify characteristics of present-day Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders and explore the leadership development needs of young potential and emerging leaders who will initiate the next one hundred years of Pentecostal ministry in Bulgaria.

Research Design

Eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted with Pentecostal leaders in Bulgaria via Zoom between May and July 2020. Interviews averaged two hours in length. All interviews were conducted in English except one that used an interpreter. The initial set of questions was revised throughout the interview process as interviewees provided new insights to be explored by subsequent interviews. This article seeks to synthesize the perspectives of the Pentecostal leaders interviewed, examine cultural changes at work, and provide interpretation and possible application for Pentecostal leaders.

Quotations from the interviews are anonymous as a means of fostering open sharing in the interviews. Selection of the eighteen participants was achieved by snowball sampling beginning with Pentecostal leaders previously known to the researcher with each interviewee recommending other potential participants for the project. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 62 with average age of 44.94 and a median age of 45.5. Ages spread rather evenly across the age range by decade with two in their twenties, four in their thirties, five in their forties, four in their fifties, and three in their sixties. Interviewees included both male (fifteen) and female (three) participants. Twelve of the eighteen participants currently serve in local church leadership (nine as senior pastors and three as associate leaders) and twelve
of the eighteen function in a ministry role outside of the local church context (four in Christian academic leadership and eight in other parachurch ministries). Sixteen of the eighteen interviewees serve in a district, national, or pan-national leadership role (six as regional overseers of multiple churches and four in educational institutions) providing a context beyond the local setting. This diversity of interviewees in ministry role, gender, and age contribute to capturing a qualitative look at Bulgarian Pentecostal leadership.

The qualitative methodology as well as the ethnicity of the participants and the researcher placed curtain limitations on the study. Because this was a qualitative study, the sample size was relatively small (though appropriate for a phenomenological study) and consequently limited in its scope of representation of all Bulgarian Pentecostal leadership. Sixteen of the eighteen interviewees were ethnic Bulgarians. Consequently, the study provides particular insight into the ethnic Bulgarian perspective but not for other ethnic minority perspectives present in Pentecostal leadership such as the ethnic Romani (Roma) Pentecostal contingent, nor the ethnic Turkish Pentecostal contingent. The latest census in 2011 reported the ethnicity of Bulgaria to be 76.9% ethnic Bulgarian, 8% Turkish, 4.4% Roma, and 10.5% undeclared. The Roma population is estimated to be underreported and likely closer to 9–11%, making up much of that undeclared category as well. Further studies are needed to examine the particular leadership challenges and cultural realities of Pentecostal leadership in the Roma and Turkish ethnic minorities.

The researcher/author of this present study is not Bulgarian, nor from Bulgaria. As an American, he comes from a different cultural setting. He teaches global leadership in the College of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University, a school immersed in the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition. He met a variety of Pentecostal ministry leaders in his past three visits to Bulgaria. His observations are influenced by his studies in global leadership, his American cultural orientation, and his personal experiences in ministry leadership both in local church and parachurch settings as well as his travels to and work in a number of nations. In short, he is a cultural insider to American Pentecostalism, but a cultural outsider to Bulgarian Pentecostalism. This is both a limitation and potentially an advantage, bringing an external perspective to the Bulgarian Pentecostal setting.
The ebb and flow of the Pentecostalism in the last thirty years has been dramatic due to tumultuous events transpiring in the nation. For decades, Pentecostals (and other Christians) endured persecution under Communism, a political system that exerted its force on the country for forty-five years. Steadfast faith, holiness, and survival marked the Pentecostal church in that era. With the disintegration of Communism came massive revivals between 1989 and 1992/3 in Bulgaria, mostly led by Pentecostals. One of the distinctives of Pentecostals in Bulgaria, attested to by nearly all of the interviewees in this study, has been the Pentecostal passion for evangelism and soul winning. They were marked by action after the fall of Communism. Pentecostals were passionate to reach lost people. They actively shared Christ publicly in the streets and filled stadiums after the fall of Communism. They were the most evangelistically active Christians in that era and help flooded in from their counterparts in the West. American and Western Pentecostal evangelists along with Bulgarian Pentecostals held massive outdoor and indoor meetings. Thousands gathered in city squares, stadiums, and public halls to hear Pentecostals share the gospel and to experience supernatural healings and miracles. Young people flocked to these events, encountered God, and experienced transformation. New churches sprang up throughout the country and existing churches mushroomed in size. Young people in their twenties were thrust into leadership roles in order to shepherd these burgeoning new and growing churches.

This divine movement of responsiveness to Gospel proclamation, however, subsided in the mid-1990s. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church campaigned against other Christian groups, including Pentecostals, labeling them as sects, branding them as heretical religious groups. During this time churches declined, and many people did not take root in their newfound faith. One interviewee estimated a 500% decline in those years after the revival season. Of course, there had been a net gain overall from the end of Communism, but a psychological toll was deeply felt as churches struggled to keep their new congregants. Another deep disillusionment occurred twenty years later in 2012/13 when the secret files under Communism were opened and the names of well-known church leaders (both Orthodox and Pentecostal) were reported to be working in cooperation with the Communist Party decades earlier. These events from two different decades stymied the growth of ethnic Bulgarian Pentecostal churches. Not only did much of the growth of the

A Shrinking and Growing Church
revival fall away in the mid-1990s, today many churches are in decline and struggle to engage the surrounding culture.

There has been significant growth, however, among the Roma (Gypsy) populations in the Pentecostal tradition. In fact, one of the greatest strengths and most significant and perhaps underappreciated stories in Bulgarian Pentecostalism today is the impact Pentecostalism has had in Roma communities. Two of the largest Pentecostal denominations in Bulgaria have large Roma constituencies. The Church of God consists of between fifty to seventy-five percent minority churches (mostly Roma and some Turkish) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Bulgaria is one-third Roma.3 Roma people are typically very poor and Pentecostal work in Roma communities has brought social peace and change in a number of these communities and ghettos. Most Roma Christians are Pentecostal with estimates around ninety percent. The emotional, vibrant, experiential elements of Pentecostalism seem to connect well with the Roma soul and culture. After the fall of Communism, Bulgarian Pentecostals had new access to resources from the West and distributed food, clothing, and other help to Roma communities while sharing the Gospel with the Roma communities. Interviewees mentioned that Pentecostals “have helped lower the tensions between Bulgarians and Gypsies” and that the impact of Pentecostalism in Roma communities is actually “very advanced and frontier.”

Most Pentecostal churches in Bulgaria are either ethnic Bulgarian or Roma, but usually not both. The socio-cultural differences between ethnic Bulgarians and the Roma are significant, creating a cultural gap. Interestingly, one of the few multicultural churches in Bulgaria made up of both Bulgarian and Roma people (sixty percent Bulgarian and forty percent Roma) is one of the fastest growing churches in Sofia and is pastored by an ethnically Roma pastor. This pastor is very young at 27 years old and yet he has a national and international presence. Given his Roma background, he is gregarious and bold in his approach. He is a controversial persona among the larger Pentecostal community in Bulgaria. While there may be several theological and methodological factors for this lack of general embrace by the larger Pentecostal community, divergent cultural style and values should not be discounted as well.

The story of Bulgarian Pentecostalism mirrors what is happening in recent years in many parts of Europe. Churches of the ethnic majority in the nation are shrinking or stagnant in growth, whereas Christianity among minority populations is growing and often significantly. To the south of Bulgaria, Greece (also an Orthodox country) has experienced a doubling of Evangelical/Pentecostal churches in the last ten years in the capital of Athens, consisting of almost
entirely immigrant congregations. While Greeks remain resistant to Evangelical Christianity, immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere continue to respond to the Gospel (or come from Christian backgrounds in their homeland) and form new Christ-centered communities in Greece. In Bulgaria, it is the minority population of the Roma community that seems to continue to be the most responsive to the Gospel. Sixteen of the eighteen interviewees for this research project were ethnic Bulgarian and consequently the observations and findings of this project primarily address ethnic-Bulgarian Pentecostals. Additional research needs to be done on Roma Pentecostal leadership in Bulgaria.

Leadership Shifts

The political, social, and spiritual upheavals in the last thirty years in Bulgaria have shaped leadership and culture both in the nation and in the Pentecostal church. While cultures do change over time, the forces at work in Bulgaria appear to have sped up the change process and consequently deepened cultural differences among Pentecostal leaders along generational lines. This study began with an assumption of two generational categories of leaders: those born during Communism and those born after the fall of Communism. After a few interviews, it became apparent to the researcher that three categories were more helpful in understanding leadership dynamics. The first category consisted of those who pastored during Communism and are still alive and engaged in ministry today. These are few in number today, but the legacy and influence of their whole generation of leaders are the foundation on which the two subsequent groups stand. The second category is those who became pastors during or after the revivals of the early 1990s. Many of them were in their twenties in the 1990s and came to faith in Christ just before or during the revivals of that period. They were subsequently ushered into leadership roles in the spiritual harvest during those days. They are the bulk of Pentecostal leaders today across Bulgaria and are typically in their fifties and sixties. The third category is young emerging leaders or potential leaders who were born after the fall of Communism. Most of the interviewees affirmed this three-way demarcation of Pentecostal leadership and shared significant observations regarding these three groups that will be synthesized and reflected on in this article. Other valuable ways to categorize Pentecostal leaders could have been used, such as according to the ministry context of being in a large or a small city, according to the level of education (both general and/or theological) a
ministry leader possessed, according to the denomination, or according to the leadership style and philosophy. Additional studies are needed to examine leadership according to these alternative categories.

The Veterans

The first group of Pentecostal leaders were those who pastored under the harsh conditions of Communism who are still pastoring today in their old age. Persecution under Communism forged perseverance in their lives and a deep dependence on the Holy Spirit and on prayer. Their families faced pressure by the state, some were sent off to camps and endured forced labor, and they persisted in leading illegal church meetings. These leaders were characterized by Pentecostal leaders in this project with terms and metaphors denoting strength. They were labeled giants, heroes, soldiers, veterans, survivors, and martyrs.

They were a product of their time in leadership style as well. They exhibited an authoritarian leadership style and were suspicious of others (out of necessity). Lewin, Lippitt, and White classified communication styles in the three categories of authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership. Johnson and Hackman summarize the authoritarian leader as one who “maintains strict control over followers by directly regulating policy, procedures, and behavior. Authoritarian leaders create distance between themselves and their followers as a means of emphasizing role distinctions. Many authoritarian leaders believe that followers would not function effectively without direct supervision.”⁵ This authoritarian style fit the broader cultural context of Communism but became more problematic with younger generations as the decades passed under democracy.

Though their style was authoritarian, during Communism these leaders exhibited a deep sense of brotherhood among the faithful and ministry was shared with others in that season as they were not paid leaders. By necessity they had to be replaceable since at any time the pastor could be arrested and sent away. It seems that when they did find themselves in fulltime ministry after the fall of Communism, the authoritarian approach in which they were schooled under Communism and monarchy before that continued to dictate their leadership style. The strong hand approach also was demonstrated in their legalistic perspective on holiness. They held themselves to a high legalistic standard and required the same high standards of others.

Pentecostal leaders in Bulgaria before Communism had been well educated. Many went to seminary in Gdansk, Poland, before the Second World War. After
the rise of Communism, pastors were put on trial, imprisoned, and separated from
their congregations. Waves of arrests happened again in 1952 and in the 1960s.
New pastors did not have access to theological training. They had to rely on their
experiences, and many tended toward anti-intellectualism in the later years of
Communism. This may be in part a reaction to the state control of education and
being surrounded by Communist propaganda. Furthermore, living behind the Iron
Curtain, these leaders were isolated from the new evangelicalism that began to take
shape after WWII in the West among Evangelicals and Pentecostals who sought to
reengage in scholarship and to find ways to have cultural influence. Evangelists Billy
Graham and Oral Roberts led this charge in the 1950s. Schools were founded like
Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947 and Oral Roberts University in 1963,
demonstrating a revival in the pursuit of scholarship among Evangelicals and
Pentecostals in the West. But these were all a world away from the harsh
experiences of Bulgarian Pentecostals under Communism.

God rewarded the faithfulness and prayers of these Pentecostal giants in a
dramatic way with the fall of Communism. What had been unthinkable had
become reality and they were suddenly at the helm of a spiritual revival across the
land of Bulgaria. In the years following the fall of Communism, many of them
traveled abroad and raised funds for the work back home, including building
church buildings and doing outreach across Bulgaria. One metaphor used to
describe this group was to call them the “dinosaurs.” They were big and powerful,
enduring many things, though today they are dying out. Because the world has so
significantly changed from the times they grew up and from the season of revival
thirty years ago, their methods today are considered by younger generations to be
outdated and inadequate. However, their character and legacy stand strong in the
hearts of many Pentecostals. Unfortunately, that legacy was publicly defaced when
the Communist files were opened and some of the names of these spiritual giants
and heroes were named as Communist informants. Without due process, some
leaders in the Pentecostal world called for their immediate dismissal from ministry.
These files brought disgrace in society at large and disillusionment among some
Pentecostals. Another metaphor given to describe this leadership group was that
they were the foundation of the building. In truth they did lay the foundation that
has influenced Bulgarian Pentecostalism up to the present day. Some cracks have
become visible and in some places the foundation has crumbled. But this
generation was strong like concrete in many ways.
The Pioneers

Upon this foundation, the next generation of Pentecostal leaders stepped up and built the walls of the house of Bulgarian Pentecostalism over the last thirty years. The huge influx of people exploring and responding to the Christian message in the early 1990s required new structures and approaches to ministry. Many of the leaders in this second group were born into Pentecostal families in the Communist era and were young adults when the revivals swept across Bulgaria. Others in this leadership group did not have this Christian upbringing but discovered Christ in the revivals. One interviewee noted that in his fellowship of pastors in Sofia eight were from Pentecostal families and four of them were not. Interestingly, two of the four who did not have Christian upbringings were mentioned by other participants in the study as examples of innovating new ministry wineskins in the last ten years.

All of these new leaders in the 1990s were young and inexperienced but passionate and on fire in their new faith. They were in uncharted waters, which necessitated pioneer work. Everything was new from renting buildings, managing crowds, to changing laws. They needed organizational skills, which were imported quickly from the West. Internationally, the church growth movement was at its climax in the West in the early 1990s championing vision, business marketing tools, and a CEO leadership model in the church. In the new era of political freedom, Pentecostal leaders had access to models outside of Bulgaria and became imitators and implementers of those models. One interviewee lamented that this leadership group, as well as the third group of young leaders, even today too often envision church as a factory and the Sunday morning service as the product. This could also be said of the global church as well, perpetuated by the attractional model of the church growth movement.

With a value on numerical growth forged by the revivals and reinforced by the church growth movement, this generation of leaders lived with much disappointment. Ministry was easy in the early days, but over time some of the fruit of the harvest was lost and the culture hardened its heart toward the Christian faith. They became culturally marginalized as the Orthodox Church flexed its muscle politically and socially. Initially Bulgarian Pentecostalism experienced new prosperity with access to material goods as the country had access to Western resources as a church. But even this did not turn out as hoped, as the broader national economy struggled in this new era and external church resources from the West dwindled over time.
Furthermore, an unfortunate consequence of the spiritual revivals in Bulgaria was that finding ways to be culturally relevant to share the gospel was not necessary in those days. Young leaders found success without needing to try to relate to the culture as historical events naturally created a groundswell of spiritual hunger and interest in the culture. When that hunger subsided in subsequent years, a different approach of contextualization and building cultural bridges was hard to adjust to. The political upheavals of those days had formed a norm of political protest and action for that generation of young people. Demand for change, not diplomatic adaptation to the culture, was the zeitgeist that shaped these young leaders. The culture became resistant, not just neutral, to the gospel in the mid-1990s. It appears to have been a long difficult learning curve for the Bulgarian Pentecostal church to adjust over the last twenty-five years to a relational approach to evangelism and discipleship that is more incarnational and less attractional in methodology.

This generation forged in protest and action prioritized task over relationship. Many of the participants in this study observed that one of the most significant obstacles this middle generation of Pentecostal leaders encountered that shaped their leadership and hinders them even today with the next generation of emerging leaders was their own lack of relational connection to the first generation of Pentecostal leaders, the veterans. Yes, these pioneering leaders knew the veteran leaders and many worked for them. However, this second generation of leaders was not mentored by the older generation and felt they were not fathered by their spiritual predecessors.

Several interviewees used the metaphor of orphan to describe this generation of Pentecostal leaders. The first generation of leaders was focused on fulfilling the dreams they had for many years under Communism. They dreamed of revival. They dreamed of Pentecostal church buildings. When the doors of freedom opened, many traveled overseas to raise the funds to fulfill these dreams. The second generation of young leaders often served as associate pastors in their churches doing the local work while the older leaders of heroic stature traveled overseas and across Bulgaria. But they did not have relationship with these senior leaders. They were not mentored, encouraged, shown love, nor developed. Communism had broken everything including family relationships. Communism bred distrust and secrecy. Pentecostal leaders forged under Communism were predisposed to distrust and be suspicious of others. “We suffered from a lack of spiritual fathers to guide us, help us, and grow us,” observed one participant in this “orphan” leadership generation.
The authoritarian style of leadership in Bulgaria also fostered relational distance with the leader. Bulgaria is a high power distance culture. In high power distance cultures, there is an emotional distance between superiors and subordinates. Matilda Alexandrova called this “distance from authority” and discussed its prevalence in the national cultural environment of Bulgaria. She referenced four studies that “show . . . Bulgaria is a country with large authority distance.” While this gap exists in practice, the desire for Bulgarians is for that distance to shrink. Mariya Bobina found a significant gap between the practice of power distance and the value of power distance in Bulgaria. She explained that Bulgarians practice power distance because of their respect for authority conditioned by their “heritage of vertical hierarchies” from their Communist past as well as survival under centuries of foreign occupation. However, Bulgarians do not value power distance, though they practice it. Bobina attributed lower value score to “the higher levels of individual and economic freedoms and a striving for compliance with pan-European values” in recent decades in Bulgaria. This tension between higher practice and lower value for power distance was observed in the interviews with Pentecostal leaders. There was both a tremendous respect for one’s leaders as well as a deep longing for emotional connection and personal relationship with one’s superiors and predecessors.

This middle group of pioneers, currently the dominant group of Pentecostal leaders, was described by one participant as the seam between two pieces of fabric. They served as the stitching between the two worlds of Communism and democracy. It was natural that these pioneers exhibited a chaotic transitional mix of leadership behaviors and values. The tension for this generation can be seen in the Bulgarian scores for the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance compared to other European Union countries as well as their gap in scores between behavior and value. Geert Hofstede defined uncertainty avoidance as “the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. . . . Countries exhibiting strong UAI [Uncertainty Avoidance Index] maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior, and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. Weak UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles.” The behavior score in Bulgaria for uncertainty avoidance is lower than all other EU countries at 3.11 (the EU average score is 4.26). However, the value score in Bulgaria for uncertainty avoidance is actually the highest of all EU countries at 5.52 (the EU average is 4.36). The gap between Bulgarian behavior at 3.11 and Bulgarian value at 5.52 is huge especially given that these scores are the lowest as well as the highest of all EU countries. This dimension of uncertainty
avoidance correlates with risk-taking and innovation in a society. Bobino connected the low Bulgarian behavior score to “a search for entrepreneurship and innovation” and the high Bulgarian value score to “a search for a more disciplined socio-economic landscape.”

Uncertainty avoidance is also illustrative of the rapid cultural changes transpiring in Bulgaria. Uncertainty avoidance has not been a constant cultural dimension but rather has been changing over time in Bulgaria. Surveys conducted in 2001 and 2008 revealed a shift transpiring in just those seven years toward a higher tolerance of uncertainty. The behavior and value data discussed above was collected by Bobina and Sabotina in 2015 and 2017 following the methodology and categories of the GLOBE Studies and this data confirmed the trend toward a growing tolerance of uncertainty with Bulgarians having the lowest behavior score for uncertainty avoidance in the EU. Certainly, the difficult spiritual landscape of the past three decades necessitated the need for entrepreneurial approaches for ministry and yet this has been a very difficult struggle for this pioneer generation of leaders. While they had to pioneer, their approach reflected imitation of the West more than innovation. This cultural movement toward lower uncertainty avoidance in recent years also suggests that the third group of young emerging leaders should be more comfortable with uncertainty and likely better able to innovate.

The quest and struggle to adopt Western leadership practices in the Bulgarian ministry context can also be seen in the use of teams. Teams are seen as “central to organizational success” among Western leaders where work is typically accomplished through teams. While Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders have been implementing teams in their organizational structures, their understanding of team may still hinder the success of teams. An interviewee pointed out that Pentecostal leaders say they are team oriented, but they are not. They have a team of people, but their understanding of team is different than those who work in the West, according to this participant who had lived for an extended period of time abroad in a Western context. “Bulgarian leaders do not listen to others, nor do they see and value the contribution of others for the work.” For this particular research participant, this problem was inherited from the authoritarian style of Bulgarian Communism.

Leading the Pentecostal church in a new democratic society amidst the chaotic cultural changes has been a difficult work for these visionary pioneer leaders. When asked to provide a name or label for this group of leaders, interviewees used a diverse assortment of terms and metaphors: first generation immigrants; the imitators; the pioneers; orphans; the builders; the jackpot winners;
the seam; passionate; diverse; uncertain; and stuck and frustrated. Some of these terms express the discouragement bred by the relational disconnect with their predecessors and the years of struggle to minister in the tumultuous cultural context. This is a very diverse group of leaders. Many burned out and left the ministry. Some of the strongest leaders left Bulgaria to do ministry in other countries, being part of the emigration crisis in Bulgaria. There was a precipitous drop in population of almost two million people between 1988 and 2020 (from 8.9 million to 6.9 million).16 Those who stayed have often looked for ministry models outside of the country to follow. Many have become tired and worn out from the years of challenge and struggle. Others have found both fruitfulness in ministry and hope for the future. Those interviewed in this study who fall within this age category of leaders exemplify strong caring leaders who have persisted in ministry and have served as faithful shepherds for many years for numerous people.

The Restrained

In the long shadow of Pentecostal leaders who pioneered in the new world of democracy sits the next generation of young leaders. These emerging leaders were born in the new political and cultural era of Bulgaria. The pioneer generation discussed above was like the Hebrews in the Pentateuch who were born in slavery in Egypt and experienced the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea into freedom. They witnessed the great miracles in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and God’s supernatural provision in the wilderness. But the journey was long and tiring. The new generation of Bulgarian Pentecostals is similar to the Israelites born in the wilderness who were not shaped by slavery, but were shaped by the wilderness. While the previous generation crossed the Red Sea, they crossed the Jordan River, entered the promised land, and fought their own battles to settle in a new place. Like their biblical counterparts who did not have the mentality of Egypt, young Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders today were not shaped by Communism. According to one interviewee, they have “more freedom in their mentality.” Their upbringing has been very different. These emerging leaders will become the leaders who take the Pentecostal church into the future.

These young people in their twenties and thirties today were described by interviewees as very different from the other two groups of leaders. They are more relationship oriented who naturally prioritize people over programs. They desire ministry that is relational, authentic, and organic. They are more open to unity than their predecessors and have less allegiance to their particular local church with
more connections across denominational lines, enjoying personal relationships with people from other churches and denominations. This interconnectedness has been a natural outcome of multi-church and interdenominational youth gatherings (such as an annual event called New Wave) and the prevalence of social media. This generation of young leaders are digital natives and thrive in the world of technology. They are young professionals who are building their careers and their young families. Born into a period of insecurity, they are more comfortable with risk, more adventurous, more individualistic, and more entrepreneurial than previous generations. They value professionalism and competence and desire something authentic without propaganda. One interviewee remarked, “They are gifted and capable, but they are also disoriented from the example of the second group seeing that some of their methods are not working.” Another observed that they will center their ministry less on being the great preacher in the pulpit and more on relationships, care, and empathy.

They possess many positive characteristics, but there are concerns about this upcoming group of leaders and potential leaders. They seem to pray less than previous generations. Many of them are part of worship teams, and yet it is possible to lead people in worship through professionalism and not out of intimacy with God. They value solid teaching and an understanding of the Bible, but not many are pursuing theological degrees. They have a lot of knowledge in their profession, but not a lot of spiritual knowledge. Interviewees across the age spectrum suggested this generation needs to continue to press deeper in their character formation to become Christlike. Humility and not succumbing to the temptation of social media to be image-based are both vital for the next generation. Yet, there was genuine hope articulated among all the Pentecostal leaders interviewed about these young leaders.

A major crisis for Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders is looming on the horizon. Few young leaders are developed and given space to lead. Yet, many churches will undergo leadership transitions in the next ten years as current pastors face retirement age. If a Pentecostal pastor is forty, he is considered very young. The youngest fulltime pastor in one Pentecostal denomination is thirty-five. The irony is that while today’s dominant Pentecostal leadership group stepped into ministry in their twenties during the revival years, today they view the next as too young to lead. Consequently, most young adult Bulgarians are pursuing professional careers, while few are considering a call to ministry. Several personal stories were shared in the interviews regarding senior pastors not releasing young leaders into their own ministry calling. They may resist sending them for theological training or to serve
Too often the goal seems to be to have subservient volunteers that serve the vision of the senior leader instead of developing lifelong leaders for the body of Christ. Young leaders serving in churches are often overworked, underdeveloped, and denied the freedom to innovate. They are forced to live in the shadow of the old leaders. Unfortunately, they are too often restrained in their leadership. They need freedom and fathers to help them learn to fly.

Developing Emerging Leaders

In all of the interviews, there was a unified voice expressing the desperate need for developing emerging leaders in Bulgarian Pentecostalism. One leader bemoaned, “Most of the second generation of leaders want to develop helpers, not leaders. They are the genius with a thousand helpers. We do not see Jesus having this approach.” This sentiment was reiterated in other interviews. Too few young leaders ever consider a ministry calling or stepping into ministry and leadership. Many of the participants spoke of the need for pastors to champion the call to ministry and invest their lives in developing the next generation for ministry leadership. Interviewees identified problems plaguing leadership development among Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders and suggested important elements for developing healthy leaders.

At the heart of defective leadership development of emerging leaders in Bulgaria appears to be a dearth of healthy spiritual fathering/mothering for these young leaders. The goal of a father/mother should be to help children grow up in maturity and start their own families. A good father/mother has a close relationship with their children, nurturing, encouraging, mentoring, and drawing out the unique callings of each child. The goal in healthy parenting is for children to mature into adulthood and while they are still young to leave home, marry, and start their own families. To parent a twenty-year-old son or daughter like a two-year-old is toxic. The same is true with spiritual fatherhood and motherhood. Healthy spiritual fathering and mothering necessitates a focus on developing that son or daughter and releasing them into their own calling and ministry.

Participants spoke of the need for older leaders to develop close genuine relationships with young leaders. They need to dialogue with and listen to younger leaders, spending time with them to build friendships. Jesus developed his disciples by doing life together with them and allowing teaching moments to happen organically. Young leaders want to share their thoughts openly with their mentors in
a safe space of trust and love. They need to be invited to lead, to innovate, and be allowed to make mistakes.

Prevalent among the specific interviews with Pentecostal leaders in this young emerging age group was a deep and persistent feeling that established older leaders do not trust them, nor believe their methods are good. One young leader interviewed frankly stated, “We need people who believe in us and in our ways of doing ministry.” On the other hand, the established leaders interviewed spoke with words of hope for the future because of the potential they see in this next generation of young leaders. They bragged about the way young leaders are using and leveraging technology for ministry. They mentioned the giftedness, optimism, and entrepreneurialism of the next generation. Here was the disconnect between the generations in the interviews. The younger leaders somehow are not hearing the positive affirmations of older leaders. There appears to be a breakdown in communication. Perhaps a cultural characteristic is at play. One Bulgarian interviewee, whose age falls between these two groups of leaders and has spent time living outside of Bulgaria, mentioned that it is not a Bulgarian cultural norm to speak encouragingly to others. He illustrated this with his preaching experience. When he preaches in Bulgaria, no one says to him, “That was a really good message.” His observation is that Bulgarians “struggle to speak encouragement.” Yet, it was apparent in the interviews with young leaders that they desperately crave encouragement. When asked to describe the Bulgarian soul, one interviewee responded, “The Bulgarian soul is more negative and always complaining.” Geert Hofstede placed Bulgaria very low for his cultural dimension of “indulgence” (16 out of 100) suggesting Bulgaria is a very restrained culture with a tendency toward cynicism and pessimism. Interestingly, when interviewees were asked how this very low indulgence characteristic might be reflected in Pentecostal leadership, respondents typically felt it was often true for older Bulgarians, but it was not true for the younger emerging leadership group.

Cultural gaps exist between those born during Communism and those born after. Older Pentecostal leaders may need to recognize how this growing gap regarding the cultural dimension of indulgence is creating a fissure in communication between the groups. Gundling, Hogan, and Cvitkovich suggest two ways leaders can close a cultural gap between cultures. The first is by “building strong personal relationships and the second is frameshifting” (shifting communication style, leadership style, and strategies). Both of these cross-cultural leadership behaviors are crucial for leaders who want to mentor and raise up the next generation of leaders. As already mentioned, emerging leaders deeply
desire authentic, organic, close relationships with their models and mentors. Gundling et al. present four elements of being relational. Relational behaviors include “putting relationships before tasks, more interdependence or relying on relationships to get work done, leveraging relationship networks, and seeking cultural guides who can help to trace a path through new territory by providing trustworthy advice.” It may be difficult for the pioneer leadership group to put relationships before task because they did not have that relational connection with their predecessors and because of their event orientation in ministry. Gundling’s suggestion for more interdependence in work found expression in one participant’s opinion that this next generation in Bulgaria wants to do ministry together. The interviewee used the metaphor of cooking. Young leaders want to cook together with their mentors and leaders, not just be given the recipe and sent out to do it. Lastly, Gundling’s advice to seek out cultural guides may be very helpful for potential mentors. This could include both experts in sociology within the Bulgarian context as well as a learning approach toward one’s mentees.

The second vital behavior for Gundling et al. to close the cultural gap is what they call “frameshifting,” wherein leaders “must learn to shift their perspectives and leadership methods to better fit different circumstances.” They identify communication style as the first important component of frameshifting. The focus on negative critique in the Bulgarian expression of Hofstede’s low indulgence dimension does not appear to work for young Bulgarians. The power of leaders encouraging followers is illustrated in the counsel of King Rehoboam’s elders recorded in 1 Kings 12:7. Their counsel to him as the new king may be instructive: “If you will be a servant to this people today, and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever” (emphasis added). Rehoboam’s elders affirmed the power of speaking kind and encouraging words. Rehoboam ignored their advice and lost most of the kingdom.

Interviewees were asked to identify best practices for developing young leaders. Most failed to identify existing best practices, but all did suggest elements that should be important for raising up the next generation of leaders. These included having loving spiritual fathers/mothers, discipleship, training, and opportunities to do ministry with constructive supervision. First and foremost, these restrained leaders need spiritual fathers and mothers who have a close personal friendship with them expressing love, trust, and encouragement. Within this context of caring relationships, they need opportunities to do ministry with supervision that provides constructive feedback and encouragement as well as freedom both to innovate and make mistakes. Equipping for ministry should
include some form of Bible training and development in critical thinking skills. Finally, but not last in order of importance, an essential element of the leadership development process should be spiritual formation. Mentees need to be discipled by someone they trust and respect.

According to interviewees, the spiritual formation process in emerging leaders should include the development of a robust prayer life and Christlike character. Both younger and older participants pointed out that there has been a marked decline in the dependence on prayer since the days of Communism. One of the oldest interviewees remarked that the generation born after Communism is not a people of prayer. “They go to conferences and read books, but they do not have the habit of praying and really waiting on God.” One of the youngest interviewees confirmed this sentiment noting that his generation are not prayer warriors while the previous generations built their ministries in their prayer life. Likewise, another young leader stated, “We need to pray like our fathers and grandfathers.”

Specific attention was also drawn to character formation in the interviews. A young interviewee expressed concerns that in today’s culture “everything is about how you look and what image you have.” Another leader at the median age of the study (45), reflected on the outward activity orientation of the second group, the pioneer leaders. Their hyperactivity eventually resulted in the burnout of many and the fall of some into sin. He encouraged young leaders to work on their internal life and character development so as not to repeat moral failings of some who lacked that development. They “should be very careful with integrity,” the participant observed. Fortunately, the Pentecostal emphasis on seeking and listening to the Holy Spirit should contribute to character formation if young leaders can be humble and practice self-awareness.

Conclusion

Pentecostalism in Bulgaria has a robust one-hundred-year history. The last thirty years of that story have been shaped by the crucible of change in the country as a whole and by the changing dynamics within the Pentecostal church. Pentecostal leaders have had to navigate the radical cultural upheavals and transformations as well as the rise and fall of spiritual interest in the country. Furthermore, the particular sets of experiences for Bulgarian Pentecostal leaders continue to reshape their leadership values and practices. One interviewee summarized, “So you can imagine the kind of dynamics we have in Bulgaria: three types of ministers with three types of dynamics. In Western Europe, this kind of change would have taken
Yet, Pentecostals in particular should embrace change. The books of Luke and Acts described the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering change and guiding spiritual leaders through the change process. In his two-volume set of writings, Luke pointed out that the Holy Spirit “came upon” and “empowered” Mary to conceive (Luke 1:35), upon Jesus to proclaim and heal (Luke 4:18–20), and upon the disciples to witness (Acts 1:8). In Acts, the Holy Spirit “fell on” the uncircumcised Gentiles, and subsequently guided the council of leaders in Jerusalem to make seismic changes in light of this new manifestation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44–45; 15:28).

It seems that the Holy Spirit is orchestrating change again in Bulgaria. Established Pentecostal leaders should embrace the fresh work of the Holy Spirit in young emerging leaders. The council in Jerusalem sent out letters of support and guidance by the hand of trusted key leaders who believed in and embraced the new work the Holy Spirit was doing among the Gentiles. So, too, established Pentecostal leaders should show their support and offer their guidance, not control, to the next generation of emerging leaders. This may best be communicated by those established Pentecostal leaders who are already working among and embracing emerging leaders.

As Bulgarian Pentecostals cross the centennial mark in their land, a fresh look at the first Pentecost may be instructive. Peter reminded his audience of the prophecy in Joel: “And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). The Holy Spirit is empowering emerging young leaders to speak the words of God and to see the things of God through the Holy Spirit to their nation and beyond. And the Holy Spirit is giving new dreams to older leaders, not just in nostalgic remembrance of the past, but for a new and different work of the Spirit of God in the future.

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Notes

1 This estimate does not conform to the latest edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, which reports 146,000 Pentecostals/Charismatics and 118,000 Evangelicals. That would mean only fifty-five percent of Evangelicals are Pentecostals/Charismatics. However, the statistics listed in the *World Christian Encyclopedia* are unclearly reported. Referring to these two groups, an asterisk indicates, “These movements are found within Christian traditions listed above.” One of the categories listed above is “Protestants,” but the total number of Protestants listed was only 133,000. Confusingly this is less than either group. See Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 148.


3 These estimates were provided by research participants.

4 André Rocha counted 160 Protestant churches and 104 of them were immigrant churches started in the last ten years. Rocha is a researcher and developer of www.prayforgreece.net. Information was obtained in an interview with Rocha by John Thompson, Athens, Greece, May 2017. For further discussion of this trend in Greece see John P. Thompson, “Witness to Following Jesus in Athens, Greece,” *Witness: The Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education* 32 (2018), 10.


14 In contrast, Hofstede reported a high uncertainty avoidance score of 85 on his 100-point scale for Bulgaria. Geert Hofstede, “Country Comparison—Bulgaria,” *Hofstede Insights*, n.d., n.p., https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-
comparison/bulgaria/ (28 July 2020). Yet, these recent GLOBE studies point to this changing reality toward lower uncertainty avoidance behavior.


18 Two additional features of very low indulgence that in particular respondents felt were not true of young leaders in Bulgaria today were 1) not putting much emphasis on leisure time, and 2) feeling that to indulge themselves is somewhat wrong.


22 Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).
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Keywords Charles Stanley, Southern Baptist, Pentecostal roots, Atlanta First Baptist Church, Pentecostal Holiness Church

Abstract

Charles Stanley, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, is probably best known for his television program *In Touch with Dr. Charles Stanley*. Yet few know about Stanley’s early formation in Pentecostal circles. This article examines Stanley’s early formation in these circles and the role these Pentecostal roots have played in his ministry as a Southern Baptist minister.

Introduction

Charles Stanley, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, is probably the best-known Baptist minister in America since the death of Billy Graham. His television ministry, *In Touch with Dr. Charles Stanley*, is seen in nearly every major television market and viewed by millions of people each week. By 2006 *In Touch* could be heard in 107 languages worldwide. He has also authored over forty books, many which have been religious best sellers. His publisher, Thomas Nelson, estimates that over 3.5 million copies of his books have been sold. He also served two terms as President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Under his leadership Atlanta First Baptist Church has grown to over 15,000 members. With his strong Baptist identity, few people know about Stanley’s Pentecostal roots, which have deeply influenced his life and ministry.¹

Charles Frazier Stanley was born on September 25, 1932, in the rural farming community of Dry Fork, Virginia, near the city of Danville, Virginia. His parents, Charley and Rebecca Stanley, were members of the local Emmanuel Pentecostal Holiness Church, a congregation co-founded by his grandfather George
Washington Stanley. Since his father died when Charles was only nine months old, he never knew his father and was raised by his mother who later moved to Danville and worked in the Dan River Mills to support her family. Despite their poverty, Rebecca faithfully paid tithes to her church. Charles Stanley was deeply moved by his mother’s prayers and deep faith in God. As he grew up, Stanley delivered newspapers to 125 homes in Danville, both morning and evening editions, to add to the family income. He arose at 5:00 A.M. for his first deliveries. As a result he earned poor grades in school, which he deeply regretted. During this time Stanley suffered from severe loneliness since he was by himself at home much of the time.

Charles Stanley as a Young Pentecostal

In his teenage years, Charles was a member of the North Danville Pentecostal Holiness Church on Main Street, pastored by F. A. Dail, a pioneer Pentecostal Holiness minister. Here he heard sermons on the “cardinal doctrines” of the church, which included salvation, sanctification as a second blessing, the baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues, divine healing, and the imminent second coming of Christ. He also saw the fervent altar calls where people loudly sought for the “deeper experiences.” Dail was known for supporting the owners in the hard-fought Dan River Mills strike in 1930–1931 while pastoring the Schoolfield Pentecostal Holiness Church near Danville. Dan River Mills was the largest textile mill in the nation and a prime target for labor unions. The union lost the battle. Because of his outspoken sermons against the unions and the violence of the strikers, his church was dynamited. A few months later, after the 4,000 workers returned to work, the mill owners donated money for Dail to build a new church.

At the age of 12, Stanley was converted to Christ in the Danville Church and began a Christian life of deep prayer and devotion. Despite his active prayer life, he later confessed, “I spent the early years of my Christian life struggling. Call it carnal; call it fleshly; call it whatever you wish. It was anything but wonderful.” In spite of his struggles, young Stanley also felt a definite call to preach. It is not known if he experienced second blessing sanctification or the baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues, as taught by his church, at this time. The three most important influences in his life in this period were his mother, Rebecca, his Sunday school teacher, Craig Stowe, and his grandfather, George Washington Stanley.
Early Influences

Stanley’s mother, Rebecca, was a staunch Pentecostal woman who always led family prayer on their knees with young Charles. For the rest of his life, Stanley would always pray on his knees at bedtime. His mother worked hard to support him on her meager salary at Dan River Mills. As a child Charles and his mother lived in fourteen different rented houses in Danville. Another great influence on young Charles was his Sunday school teacher, Craig Stowe. A very kind and loving man, Stowe took an interest in Stanley and even bought newspapers from him on the streets although he already had the paper at home. Stowe was a prominent layman in the Western North Carolina Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church serving as Sunday School Director for the Conference. Stowe was the father figure and role model that young Charles never had at home. In later years Stanley said that Stowe was “an incredible man of faith whom I loved dearly and inspired me profoundly.” He also called Stowe his “spiritual father.”

His Grandfather George Washington Stanley

An even greater influence was his preacher grandfather, George Washington Stanley (1876–1965), who was born near Siler City, North Carolina. George was a pioneer Pentecostal Holiness preacher who was instrumental in planting eighteen Pentecostal Holiness churches in Virginia and North Carolina, including the Dry Fork church where Charles was born and the Danville church where he grew up. As an impoverished and illiterate young man, his grandfather was called to preach and learned to read by reading the Bible. George was raised and converted in a Baptist church, but was soon expelled when he began to preach the Wesleyan doctrine of “entire sanctification.” His first holiness influence was in a tent meeting with a Pilgrim Holiness preacher where he was sanctified in 1898. He never went to high school or college although he once considered attending W. B. Godby’s Pilgrim Holiness Bible School in Cincinnati, Ohio. George Stanley preached his first sermon in 1902. Later he was licensed to preach in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In 1906, George heard about the Pentecostal experience and soon was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Because of his tongues experience, he was excommunicated from the Wesleyan Methodist Church but continued preaching under his gospel tent. In time he came into contact with the
Pentecostal Holiness people in Mount Olive, North Carolina. He was ordained in the North Carolina Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in 1911 and became a powerful preacher, pastor, and church planter. In time he bought a larger tent and evangelized wherever he could find an opportunity. Among the other strong Pentecostal Holiness churches he planted were the Buena Vista Church and the Natural Bridge Church in Virginia.

Young Charles idolized his grandfather and loved to talk with him and glean wisdom from his years of ministry. He said of him, “[T]his is the most spiritual person I’ve ever talked to. He impacted my life profoundly. I was like a sponge soaking up everything he said.” Charles described his grandfather as a quiet and easygoing man, but when he got to preaching, there was no stopping him. He was absolutely on fire, bold, fervent, and courageous for the Lord. The Spirit of God shook that small Pentecostal church and the people prayed loudly and long after he was done preaching the message. God worked through him in an awesome way.

One thing his grandfather told him stuck with Charles Stanley for his entire life. It was, “Charles, if God tells you to run your head through a brick wall, you head for the wall, and when you get there, God will make a hole for it.” G. W. Stanley was a man who had dreams and visions and claimed the gift of healing. Once a girl born blind was healed after he said, “I demand that your eyes be opened.” They both began to speak in tongues. He also promised that he would “trust God with my body” for healing. Although he suffered many maladies, he refused to take medicine for forty-five years. Once, while trying to earn money to buy a tent, he had a vision of a town with a house on the corner. He was told to get on a train, go to a certain town, get off the train, and go to the south side of town. He showed me a house with rose bushes and trees in the yard. It was located on the corner of the street. The Lord showed me that I should go there, to go down the hall, and in the door to the left. There he showed me an old lady sitting in the corner, there was a handbag on the wall and there I would get the money to buy my tent.
G. W. Stanley followed the directions exactly and when he entered the door, a woman handed him a bag with 300 dollar bills inside. Just the amount he needed to buy his first tent.

Life Changes

Charles Stanley’s life changed drastically when his mother married John Hall when Charles was nine years old. Rebecca’s new husband was a rude, bitter, and abusive alcoholic. Charles said about this situation, “I never felt completely safe walking into our home. I was never sure what he might do or what would set off his uncontrolled anger. So when I was in the house I wanted to be out of it.” It was then that he would go down to the church basement where “I could pray all I wanted to—as loudly and for however long I needed to just as I learned to do in the Pentecostal Holiness Church. But down in that basement it was just me and God.”

After he was converted, young Charles definitely felt a call to preach, so he carefully studied and read his Bible looking forward to preaching his first sermon. That came when he was seventeen years old in the North Danville Pentecostal Holiness Church. He felt led to preach from Genesis 3 on the topic “Where Art Thou?” Before the service his mother noticed that he was concerned about speaking before such a large crowd, so she quoted a passage to him from Joshua 1:7–9 that was to follow him throughout his life. It ended with these words: “Be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” He remembered what happened next: “As soon as I walked up to the pulpit the message began to flow. God gave me the words to say in a manner that surprised and delighted me. I can’t express the absolute joy I felt knowing that the Holy Spirit was in control and the Father was speaking through me.”

Soon after this, Charles was influenced by his high school girlfriend, Barbara Ann, to attend the nearby Moffett Memorial Baptist Church pastored by David Hammock. He found many of his high school friends at the church and enjoyed the sermons of pastor Hammock. Charles explained his reason for becoming a Baptist: “[T]he Pastor of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, F. A. Dail, had retired and I was longing for a change. So I asked my mother if she approved, and she replied, ‘[I]f you can live as holy a life in the Baptist church as in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, then it’s all right with me.’”

Since he was called to preach Charles wanted to go to college to prepare for the ministry, but he had no money. The people in the Pentecostal Holiness Church
had shown little interest in raising money for him. However, the kindly Baptist pastor arranged for Charles to receive a full-ride scholarship to attend the Baptist-related university in Richmond, from which he graduated in 1954. Here, despite the extremely liberal professors, his reluctant conversion from Pentecostalism to Southern Baptist theology occurred.17

Later in seminary in discussions with a fellow student, Charles referred to the Holy Spirit as an “it.” He was sternly told that the Holy Spirit was a “He,” not an “it.” Later Stanley said, “I grew up in a church where He was never mentioned. My pastor didn’t explain who He was or preach sermons about Him. In seminary I learned that the Holy Spirit was a ‘He’ and not an ‘it.’ Having been raised in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, I had always heard the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost referred to as ‘it.’”18 Yet he remembered seekers at the altars fervently praying for the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the expected Pentecostal sign of speaking in tongues. Also at Richmond he met his wife Anna Margaret Johnson and they were married in 1955. Later they both attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.19

In time Stanley rejected his Pentecostal upbringing with the strong emphasis on second blessing sanctification and the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a “third blessing.” On the other hand he became a strong proponent of the Baptist view on eternal security and the teaching that baptism in the Holy Spirit came at conversion without the evidence of speaking in tongues. In fact he became a fervent cessationist despite his Pentecostal roots.20 To complete his transition, Charles Stanley was ordained into the ministry of the Southern Baptist denomination on August 19, 1956, at the Moffett Memorial Baptist Church in Danville, Virginia.21

Baptist Pastorates and Deeper Experiences

For the next few years, from 1957 to 1969, Stanley pastored four Baptist churches where he honed his preaching style. They were: the Fruitland Baptist Church in North Carolina; Fairburn, Ohio; and later in Miami and Bartow, Florida. In 1957 while in Fruitland, Stanley felt a need for a deeper work of God in his life and began earnestly seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Although he testified to being baptized in the Holy Spirit when he was converted, he believed that one could still be “filled” with the Spirit at any time. After much impassioned prayer while lying on his back, he suddenly experienced a “life changing moment” of being filled with the Holy Spirit. After “I had prayed, begged, bargained, and
pleaded, . . . I was overwhelmed with a sense of confidence and assurance. . . . I didn’t see stars or hear a voice, I didn’t speak in tongues.”22 He called it his “D Day.” “I wept, overwhelmed with joy that I no longer had to live the Christian life or do ministry in my own strength.” He added, “[B]ut from that moment forward, everything in my life was transformed—my preaching, service, leadership, problem solving—everything.” Even his wife noticed the difference. “It’s like my husband is a different man,” she said.23

Seven years later in 1964 while pastoring the Miami First Baptist Church, Stanley had another vivid spiritual experience that the Pentecostals would call a work of entire sanctification. He said, “For a long time I had a hunch that something was missing in my life but I couldn’t put my finger on it. I had a nagging suspicion that there was more to the Christian life than I was experiencing but I didn’t know where to turn for the answer.” He went on to say that there were “several secret sins in my life. Things that no one knew about. Nothing out of the ordinary. But things I knew were displeasing to God.”24

After reading a book by V. Raymond Edman, They Found the Secret, on how Hudson Taylor had an experience of “abiding in the vine,” he said:

When I finished the section on Hudson Taylor, I dropped to my knees there on the cold concrete floor and began to cry. . . . I was on my knees for almost three hours just crying and thanking God for opening my eyes to this wonderful truth. When I got up, I was a new man. . . . It was now Christ working through the Holy Spirit, producing character in me. What a relief! A huge burden was lifted off my shoulders that afternoon. And I walked out of my study a free man.25

**Atlanta First Baptist Church**

Armed with these deeper spiritual experiences, in 1969 Stanley reluctantly accepted a call to move to First Baptist Church in Atlanta to serve as the associate pastor to Roy McLain, a very liberal pastor by Baptist standards. He soon found that this church was a “hornet’s nest” of unrest and division. His reception was poor and cold. The “Executive Committee,” a group of seven lay leaders who had micromanaged the church for years, detested Stanley and was determined that he would not become the senior pastor when McLain retired. They particularly disliked his fervent conservative views and biblical preaching and pressured him to resign. When they learned of his Pentecostal roots they called him a “holy roller.”
They soon brought in other preachers to interview for the pastor’s position. Stanley called them the “gang of seven” that “made me feel like an outcast at the church.”

Things came to a head on a Sunday morning in 1971 when Stanley arrived at the church to find that his opponents had put anti-Stanley leaflets on each seat. After the sermon, Stanley gave an altar call. He was surprised to see 300 opponents heading for the exits while 2,000 Stanley supporters came forward to the altar. It was a stunning and overwhelming victory for the embattled preacher. In a later Wednesday night business meeting when the church gathered to vote for a new senior pastor, the chairman of the Executive Committee spoke against Stanley’s candidacy and used profanity in his speech. When Stanley intervened and said that this was improper language for the pulpit, the chairman sluged Stanley in the face. Stanley did not respond. Pandemonium broke out as strong men stormed the platform to defend their pastor. When the decision came, Stanley received sixty-five percent of the vote. His enraged opponents later left First Baptist to start another church after Stanley appointed new sympathetic leadership for the congregation.

If ever a church was divided and grievously wounded, it was Atlanta First Baptist Church. However, in a short time the newly-united church began to grow immensely and soon had to buy more property in downtown Atlanta to hold the crowds. In 1972 Stanley started a new television ministry in Atlanta called The Chapel Hour that attracted even more people to the church. In 1990 Stanley organized a new national television ministry called In Touch with Charles Stanley that made him a nationally and internationally important figure. When the church grew to over 15,000 members, the old downtown property was too small to hold the crowds, so a search was made to find a larger campus. In 1992 the church moved into the immense former Avon Southeastern Distribution Center in the Atlanta suburb of Dunwoody where a new sanctuary was remodeled to hold the huge crowds that came to hear him preach. It also became the set for the In Touch broadcasts.

With his ever-increasing load of preaching, teaching, and his television ministry, Stanley became overwhelmed with his work. He confessed that after moving to Atlanta “I became married to the ministry and began to neglect my family. It took me several years to get things back in order.” This involved problems with his marriage to Annie and his relations with his son Andy Stanley, who had become a successful megachurch pastor in his own right. His marital problems came to a head when Annie obtained a divorce from Charles in May 2000 despite his efforts to heal their marriage. Andy strongly opposed the divorce. Despite the divorce, Stanley remained as pastor of First Baptist and never remarried.
Retouching His Pentecostal Roots

With all his success as pastor of a megachurch and a major television personality, Stanley never forgot his Pentecostal roots. In most of his books he acknowledged his upbringing in the Pentecostal Holiness Church and wrote glowingly of his grandfather George Washington Stanley. In 2008 on the ninetieth anniversary of the Dry Fork Emmanuel Pentecostal Holiness Church, he came and preached in honor of his grandfather who helped found the church. He also visited the graves of his father and mother who lay buried in the church cemetery. Again, in 2018, he returned to celebrate the centennial of the church. Here he preached the Sunday morning sermon and renewed old acquaintances from his childhood days.31

Earlier, in 2017, he blessed Emmanuel College in nearby Franklin Springs, Georgia, a school he might have attended had he not joined the Baptist Church, by giving a large scholarship donation to the school. Also in 2017 he celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday with a gala party in Atlanta. Attending this event were Dr. Douglas Beacham, the Presiding Bishop of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and several other leaders of the denomination. As a token of appreciation for his courageous ministry, the Pentecostal Holiness Church presented pastor Stanley with a proclamation plaque recognizing his ministry at First Baptist Atlanta and showing support for his continuing worldwide ministry. In a rare stroke of ecclesiastical statesmanship, the tribute to Stanley was as follows:

International Pentecostal Holiness Church
Official Proclamation

WHEREAS, Today we celebrate the life of Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta, Georgia, the son of Charley and Rebecca Stanley and originally of Dry Fork, Virginia; who earned bachelor’s degrees from the University of Richmond and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and master’s and doctoral degrees in theology from Luther Rice Seminary, and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles F. Stanley accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, was born-again at age twelve, began his life of ministry at the young age of fourteen, and has faithfully preached the gospel for the past seventy-one years, serving in various national ministry positions, including twice as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and
WHEREAS, Dr. Charles F. Stanley has provided excellent leadership and vision by serving as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, for forty-six years, and is deeply devoted to his congregation, and provides stable, passionate, Christ-centered leadership, and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles F. Stanley is a New York Times best-selling author and is the founder and president of In Touch Ministries, an international ministry, which can be heard and seen on more than 2,600 radio and television stations and reaches millions of households around the world weekly with the mission “to lead people worldwide into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and to strengthen the local church,”

THEREFORE, the Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and its governing bodies mark September 25, 2017, Dr. Charles F. Stanley’s 85th birthday, as an official day of recognition and celebration of his life and significant achievements. Dr. Stanley’s living example demonstrates one can truly know the Father’s will, obey the Holy Spirit’s leading, and accept His sovereign plan for one’s life. This example is recognized by the International Pentecostal Holiness Church and is celebrated in the presence of Dr. Charles F. Stanley on this special day. We, the Executive Committee of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, extend our prayers and desire for God’s richest blessing on Dr. Charles F. Stanley, his family, and his international ministry.

Presiding Bishop Dr. A. D. Beacham, Jr., IPHC General Superintendent
Bishop J. Talmadge Gardner, Executive Director of World Missions Ministries
Bishop Thomas H. McGhee, Executive Director of Discipleship Ministries, IPHC Vice Chairman
Bishop Garry Bryant, Executive Director of Evangelism USA


4 Synan, *Old-Time Power*, 188.


7 G. W. Stanley, “My Life’s Experiences for God,” 4–8, 12.

8 See *Proceedings of the 12th Annual Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church of North Carolina, 1911*, 6. He was listed as pastor of the Star Mission and the Maple Springs Mission (8).


Vinson Synan was most recently Scholar in Residence and Director of the PhD Program at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, where he also served as Interim Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry in 2016–17. Previously, he was Dean of the Divinity School, Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA.


Charles Stanley, *Courageous Faith*, 34.


Charles Stanley, *Courageous Faith*, 70.


See Charles Stanley, *Wonderful Spirit Filled Life*. In quoting the list of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:1–4 he omits tongues and interpretation of tongues (127), and he agreed with Billy Graham that “there is only one baptism with the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer, and that takes place at the moment of conversion” (157–58)


Charles Stanley, *Courageous Faith*, 119–20


Charles Stanley, *Wonderful Spirit Filled Life*, 59–60. This testimony of an experience of victory over sin was typical of what Pentecostal Holiness people experienced as a “second blessing” of entire sanctification. The only difference was that it came after Stanley was “filled with the Spirit” but not as a “second work of grace.”


Charles Stanley, *Courageous Faith*, 161–70.


Charles Stanley, *How to Listen to God*, 41.

Charles Stanley, *Courageous Faith*, 204–12.

For photos of this event see, www.intouch.org/read/magazine/the-pulpit/enduring-witness.

Writing from a Wesleyan perspective, Marcus Kilian presents an eclectic model of leadership development that he describes as formational leadership. Designed to help toxic Christian leaders grow, Formational Leadership integrates concepts from various disciplines within the behavioral sciences such as Bowen Family Systems theory and Attachment theory, as well as the competencies of emotional and social intelligence, to provide a relational and developmental approach to forming leaders. He defines toxic leadership as the abuse of power that results in direct harm to followers and traces this toxicity to traits characteristic of certain personality disorders, especially narcissism and perfectionism. These traits are reflected in thought patterns dominated by pride, anger, and greed, and are expressed in behaviors such as manipulation, micromanagement, verbal aggression, and neglect of emotional needs.

Since narcissistic and perfectionist persons tend to seek positions of influence, they often end up in leadership roles. Narcissistic leaders face challenges in the areas of empathy, denial, rationalization, and compartmentalization, while perfectionistic leaders tend to have little awareness of feelings, have an identity based on performance, and lack compassion for self and others. Both tend to pressure followers into overemphasizing ministry to the point where it creates an unhealthy work-life imbalance. In contrast, Kilian’s model of formational leadership is informed by Wesleyan notions of Christian virtues and affections, which are assumed to emerge in leaders who cooperate with the Spirit’s sanctifying activity. The goal of his model is to produce effective leaders who exhibit spiritual and emotional maturity, especially during stressful situations, by practicing self-awareness and self-management informed by the qualities of humility, gratitude, and compassion.

Kilian organizes his formational model around three theological categories—orthokardia (right heart), orthodynamis (right power), and orthopraxis (right practices). Into these he integrates various psychological constructs in an attempt to demonstrate how emotional and spiritual maturity can be promoted in toxic leaders.
In a manner consistent with Scazzero’s premise that it is impossible to become spiritually mature without also being emotionally mature (Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, 2006), Kilian emphasizes orthokardia and describes it in terms of Wesley’s concept of entire sanctification. Having a right heart is the result of the Spirit’s sanctifying work that enables believers increasingly to love God, others, creation, and self with pure motives. This process is facilitated in part through the progression of self-differentiation, a concept Kilian borrows from Bowen Family Systems theory. In differentiating a self, persons assume increased responsibility for working out their values and defining themselves accordingly within their relational contexts, while also seeking to stay connected to others, even those who differ. Achieving this differentiated balance requires the emotional maturity to say “I” when everyone else is saying “we” and to resist the urge either to impose one’s will by demanding adherence or to compromise one’s integrity by passively complying. Maintaining such a stance necessitates secure relationship attachments, especially with God. In discussing Bowlby’s Attachment theory, Kilian emphasizes that the extent to which leaders feel secure within themselves determines their ability to set appropriate boundaries, provide helpful feedback, and act compassionately. In other words, secure leaders have the capacity to be respectful and affirming of differences rather than critical or defensive, as if those who differ are rejecting or invalidating them.

Under the category of orthodynamis, Kilian borrows from virtue ethics and the Wesleyan concept of religious affections to discuss the importance of having right motives in the use of power. He equates right motives with the qualities of humility, gratitude, and compassion, which he selects because they serve as the antidotes to the personality-disordered traits associated with narcissistic and obsessive-compulsive leaders. Humility is the opposite of narcissistic pride, gratitude the opposite of obsessive-compulsive greed, and compassion the antidote to patterns of anger, impatience, and aggression, which often characterize a toxic leadership style. To develop these virtues, Kilian recommends regularly practicing the spiritual disciplines, especially solitude, simplicity, and service, while emphasizing that mature leaders seek to empower others rather than exert power over them.

In addressing orthopraxis, Kilian discusses the Wesleyan concepts of social holiness and justice in the context of postmodern culture. He views Wesley’s focus on community as consistent with postmodernism’s emphasis on social context by calling attention to the social ethics of Wesleyan spirituality that prioritize showing mercy, acting justly, and living in mutual accountability. A mature leader’s responsibility to act rightly involves courageously addressing the social and political issues of the day in a manner that mirrors God’s passion for justice. Kilian asserts that organizational
cultures that are based on social holiness and justice will embrace diversity, encourage minority leadership, serve the needs of its community, and practice hospitality and inclusion. In other words, such organizations will reflect the (counter) culture of the Kingdom of God.

Kilian compares his formational approach to other models of leadership such as Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee’s primal leadership model expressed in Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence (2002). It exemplifies emotionally and socially intelligent leadership through the model’s integration of the concepts of differentiation, secure attachment, and emotional maturity that Kilian espouses. He also views Sashkin and Sashkin’s approach to transformational leadership (Leadership That Matters: The Critical Factors for Making a Difference in People’s Lives and Organizations’ Success, 2003) and George’s model of authentic leadership (Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value, 2007) as related through their compatibility with Christian values. In exploring their implications for leadership development, Kilian emphasizes several distinctive outcomes by noting that organizations in which these models of leadership are practiced create cultures where the ethnocentric tendency toward ethnic pride and superiority are replaced by humility and equality; the tendency toward entitlement and white privilege is transformed to reflect gratitude and inclusion; and the tendency toward control and rigidity is replaced by compassion and servanthood.

In addressing toxic leadership, Kilian has identified an important issue under which Christian organizations often chafe. His work is well-researched and thoughtfully organized. Each of his core chapters is outlined to discuss the relevant concepts first, followed by their implication for leadership development, and concluded with a reflection section in which questions and exercises provide for further discussion and exploration. But he may have attempted to include too much information in each chapter. Developing an eclectic model requires explaining a lot: each of the integrating constructs and the relevance of each to the model, quite a job for the author. As a result, the reading becomes a little dense at times, when he describes and then applies the array of concepts.

One challenge to Kilian’s aim of forming leaders is that of recruiting toxic leaders into the process he describes. He acknowledges that narcissistic and obsessive-compulsive leaders tend to resist help and suggests that the organizations in which they hold leadership positions need strong boards who can hold them accountable. While this structure sounds helpful and can be effective when in place, such arrangements seem to be more the exception than the rule. Since toxic leaders typically do not receive constructive feedback, especially when it requires them to
look honestly at their own attitudes and actions, they often keep primary authority and create boards who merely appear to hold them accountable. To suggest to such leaders that they would benefit from embracing such a formative process generally triggers their resistance, because it implies they need to grow in certain areas, a need they are reluctant to acknowledge. The grim reality is that if toxic leaders end up in a formative process it is generally only after they have hit bottom, which means that they have crashed and burned and often taken others down with them. While in such instances Kilian’s model would be helpful in restoring such leaders, it may better serve to prevent such failures. If leaders were formed with his approach early in their careers, they and those they lead might be saved from disaster.

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Rick Wadholm, Jr.’s *A Theology of the Spirit in the Former Prophets: A Pentecostal Perspective* is his doctoral dissertation published for a wider audience. Prepared under the direction of John Christopher Thomas and Leroy Martin at The Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, it was written for both professors and ministers who want more information about the “Spirit passages” in the Former Prophets. As opposed to the Latter Prophets (the biblical prophets, Isaiah–Malachi), the Former Prophets (FP) include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and, taken together, preserve the history of ancient Israel written from a prophetic perspective for subsequent generations.

In short order, chapter one (“A History of Interpretation”) demonstrates that previous scholarly work afford the Spirit passages in the FP only passing consideration as it focused on other pressing matters in the text. Little if anything substantive is said regarding the Spirit’s work in the ongoing narrative. The lacuna is surprising; even recent works like IVP’s *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (2005) does not contain an entry on “Spirit.” The copious data amassed by Wadholm in this chapter make one thing very clear: this portion of the Bible needs
more informed study from those who are concerned with “matters of the Spirit.” Wadholm’s text is an initial step in addressing this need.

Chapter two presents a thorough review of 125 years of scholarship on Spirit passages in the FP. Beginning with Gunkel (1888), and including Wood (1904), Scheepers (1960), Neve (1972), Montague (1976), and Horton (1976, 2005), to list a few, Wadholm summarizes the differences between the older “Historical Quest for the Spirit in the Former Prophets” and the “Theological Quest for the Spirit in the Former Prophets.” Wadholm observes that both trajectories scan for the Spirit as somehow outside or behind the biblical narratives and suggests that the time has come for Bible readers to stop looking elsewhere for the Spirit in the FP and attend to the passages where the Spirit is undoubtedly central to the narrative (43).

Wadholm’s hermeneutic is clear throughout the book: he offers readers a close analysis of the text or “hearing” the text (following Lee Roy Martin’s *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* [2008]). Recognizing that Pentecostal hermeneutics is in the developmental stages (cf. 202), Wadholm orders his study around three foci: (1) a close literary analysis of biblical texts, (2) a cacophony of interpretive approaches, and (3) the transformative experience of engaging the text (61). Since original biblical characters were transformed (or otherwise, when they resisted change), so too, subsequent readers may experience something similar as they read the Historical Books.

Although scholars, for the most part, have given FP Spirit passages only cursory reviews, early Pentecostals frequently were attracted to these passages as they tried to comprehend and express their perspectives of the new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. During those early post-Azuza Street Meetings, in which crowds of people began to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit for the first time, hundreds of journal articles and newsletters were produced that were essential in the development of nascent Pentecostal Christianity (66). In chapter four, “History of Effects . . . ,” Wadholm surveys nine periodicals that discuss the Spirit in the FP and other major biblical texts mentioned below (67). Together they offer a window, as it were, into early Pentecostal reflection at its earliest developmental stages. It was a populist hermeneutic fueled by literalist readings of the text and Spirit-inspired interpretation (47), and Wadholm’s *Wirkungsgschichte* approach (“History of Effects”; a modification of Reception History that emphasizes the history of textual influences on later readers) is well-suited to collect and examine these FP Spirit references in early Pentecostal literature. It is the longest chapter in the book and is an engaging read, full of the raw, life-changing inspiration overflowing at the time. I
could hardly put it down. It allows readers to “venture inside” the earliest shapers of American Pentecostalism, to see what challenged them, disturbed them, or gave them great joy. This movement and its earliest hermeneuts formed part of the foundation for the phenomenal, worldwide growth of Pentecostalism, and is well worth reading.

Chapters four through seven attempt a close literary and theological examination of the Spirit passages in the FP. Of the forty-four or so occurrences of רוח (S/spirit) in the FP, Wadholm focuses on the twenty where the רוח engages the people of Israel. (Passages where רוח appears in meteorological, anthropological, or attitudinal contexts are not covered in this study.) Chapter four covers Spirit passages in Judges, chapter five examines Saul and David, chapter six addresses Micaiah, and chapter seven focuses on Elijah and Elisha. The final chapters offer a constructive Pentecostal theology of the FP and a discussion of possible future research.

Although Wadholm gives a great deal of space to his earlier chapters, chapters four through seven comprise the core of the book; it is here that he offers a much-needed focus on the Spirit passages in the FP. For example, not everything in the Spirit passages is encouraging, and perhaps the most troublesome is the story of the Prophet, Micaiah ben Imlah, in 1 Kings 22 in which the Lord sent a “lying (or deceiving) Spirit” to the court of Ahab. It is an odd story and has proven troublesome for many Bible readers. Just as early Pentecostals utilized this text variously, so too, scholars have differing opinions regarding what actually happened. In this context, Wadholm calls for careful discernment regarding any message from God, past or present; careful interpretation is essential. These four chapters offer a wealth of nuanced biblical interpretation—a must read for anyone who wants to address the Spirit passages in the FP.

Wadholm’s book is well-documented with extensive footnotes and bibliography, and includes biblical reference and author indices. It is unfortunate that there is little to no engagement with Jewish or majority-world scholarship in his text. Moreover, although Wadholm chose a Jewish biblical division name in his book title, it is curious that he overlooks centuries of Jewish practice and vocalizes the tetragram. Why ignore this ancient practice? Additionally, as the book drew to a close, I expected Wadholm to bring chapter three and its massive quantity of populist biblical interpretation into dialogue with his exegesis of Spirit passages in chapters 4–7. This never happened, and I was left wondering why. Perhaps this was out of respect for the earliest leaders of the Pentecostal movement who, as non-biblicists, were working with the tools they had to read and apply what they read in
their Bibles and experienced in the early days of the Pentecostal renewal. Whatever the reason, Wadholm’s book left me wanting more. A follow-up volume would be welcomed by those who appreciate his fresh examination of the Former Prophets.

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Among thousands of leadership studies, including hundreds expressing a Christian view, Bobby Clinton’s *The Making of a Leader* stands in a class of its own. It established a new theory of ministry formation, one marked by leadership processes, patterns, and principles known as LET, or “Leadership Emergence Theory.”

Clinton defines a ministry leader biblically as a person with a God-given capacity and responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people toward his purposes for them (213). The leader develops through a lifetime of learning from critical incidents on which the leader reflects and through which God teaches them something important (25). Central to Clinton’s theory are the concepts of phases, processes, and principles.

**Phases of Emergence**

Phases are patterns or defined seasons of influence across leaders’ lifespans. When mapped on a timeline, phases help them see how God is working in and using them to influence others. In his 2009 *Strategic Concepts That Clarify a Focused Life*, Clinton simplifies the phases into four, with smaller sub-phases (9).
Clinton emphasizes that in Phases 1 and 2, God’s primary work is in the leader’s inner life, in contrast to Phases 3 and 4, during which God is working primarily through a leader’s life. In Phase 3, lasting perhaps two or three decades, leaders move from general to focused ministry, for which they draw upon their lives and gifts to establish ministries built upon discernment and competency. Finally, during Phase 4, God moves leaders into various roles that match their gift-mix, experience, and temperament, and they exercise spiritual authority beyond their own organizations, through thought and network leadership, and shape succeeding generations.

**Process Items**

One of the strengths of Clinton’s model is his identifying “process items” God uses to develop leaders. Process items refer to providential events, people, problems, and pressures God uses to develop a person’s inner calling to a ministry responsibility. Clinton names three process items God uses in the General Ministry Phase of emerging leaders to develop their characters: integrity checks, obedience checks, and word checks.

As a youth in training in King Nebuchadnezzar’s court, Daniel faced an “integrity check” when told to eat Babylonian food. He stayed faithful to his inner convictions. He kept a kosher diet, and God honored his unyielding character with a promotion in the king’s service.

Abraham experienced an “obedience check” when he heard and obeyed God’s voice in sacrificing Isaac. God rewarded Abraham’s obedience by sparing Isaac and otherwise blessing Abraham (Making 63). Clinton claims obedience to the voice of God is learned as part of our character, before it can be taught (66).

Leaders experience the “word check” when their leadership includes clarifying a scriptural truth that influences others. Clinton sees this process item as expressing Pauline “word gifts,” such as teaching, prophecy, and exhortation, and using the study of Scripture to feed leaders’ own souls, as well as helping others (66).

In addition to such process items that relate emerging leaders to God, Clinton identifies ministry-maturing process items that clarify and redefine one’s relationship to others. These include ministry tasks, divine contacts, isolation, conflict, organizational pressures, spiritual authority, instances of divine power, and divine affirmation. Paul’s relationship to Barnabas illustrates many of these:
from his isolation to discovery by mentor Barnabas and their ministry together, expressed with divine power but ending with conflict (104).

**Principles to Live by**

Finally, Clinton’s work guides mature leaders to develop a ministry philosophy to maximize their effectiveness. Clinton articulates principles by which he has operated, including these: ministry flows from character, the nature of ministry is service to others, effective ministry will require sacrifice, Jesus is the supreme model for ministry, and ministry must be empowered by the Holy Spirit (193).

The fitness of Clinton’s theory for Spirit-empowered leaders arises from four reasons: Leadership Emergence Theory . . .

1. is an authentic qualitative Christian research framework within which leaders may reflect on their personal development with full embrace of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit;
2. is easy to understand, given Clinton came from the Deeper Life or Holiness tradition, from which the Pentecostal movement emerged;
3. is scalable; it can be learned through simple practices, such as creating a personal timeline with post-it notes, and deeper study of biblical, historical, and contemporary leaders; and

Clinton’s body of work helps emerging leaders understand the spiritual, relational, and situational dynamics at play in their personal and professional development. As the Spirit-empowered Movement seeks to shape its own identity, practice, and influence in the twenty-first century, it will benefit from integrating “leadership emergence” into its educational and ecclesial life.

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Those most knowledgeable of New Testament studies are already keenly aware of the important contributions of Craig Keener. One expects focus on lively, relevant subject matter, exhaustive research, weighty analysis of varying viewpoints, and measured, balanced conclusions. Keener’s *Christobiography* evinces all these scholarly strengths and more. The burgeoning of background studies of the New Testament in recent decades finds Keener at the forefront in terms of wide, virtually exhaustive, reading of this ancient literature and evidence. In this volume, Keener explores what can reasonably be expected of the Gospels in terms of their historical and biographical value.

As massive as his presentation is, its actual purpose and focus is surprisingly narrow. He does not produce his own constructive portrayal of the historical Jesus (see his *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* [more than 800 pages] for more on this concern). He does not mount a rousing defense of the historical reliability of the New Testament (although there is much in this volume that would contribute toward that end). Rather, Keener attempts to evaluate the more modest, albeit foundational, issue of the appropriate approach to ascertaining the Jesus of history and scripture. He aims to “contribute to the epistemology of historical-Jesus research” (20). His findings in this regard are groundbreaking and are harbingers of future research.

Keener chose a rather odd title for his text in an attempt to encapsulate its basic thrust (1). He wanted to emphasize the insight that the Gospels are ancient biographies. Further, he proceeded actually to immerse himself in that literature, which few have even attempted, to determine whether this viewpoint is true and to ascertain precisely what insights can be drawn from it. In the final analysis, Keener seeks to determine whether the four Gospels, as we have them, merit the status of the primary sources for access to the historical Jesus. Thus, the subtitle of the volume, “Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels,” carries the more moderate intention of determining whether these writings are serviceable as primary sources rather than a tour de force defense of their infallible historical precision. The function of the Gospels, more than their content, is in purview here.
At the same time, the issue of reliability cannot be skirted since the ultimate goal for Jesus studies is a reliable historical portrait.

Keener places himself to the right of center among noted Jesus scholars, alongside N. T. Wright. He sees scholars such as E. P. Sanders, Gerd Theissen, John Meier, and Mark Allan Powell as centrists, with someone like John Dominic Crossan being left of center. All are basically “on the same map” in terms of the broad-stroke depiction of Jesus in the Gospels, but because of different assumptions and methods would differ on the details (8). Keener modestly concludes that we can derive substantive historical knowledge of Jesus from the Gospels, while at the same time acknowledging that all historical knowledge carries with it a degree of relativity.

But what precisely are the Gospels? The question itself bears a part of the answer: They are *Gospels*, accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry, generally couched in Jewish categories, announcing important news to humankind. Nevertheless, they have come down to us as *bioi*, in the form of ancient biographies with distinctive features. Perhaps modern New Testament scholars had to *rediscover* this truth because they tended to think in modern rather than ancient categories. Modern biographies differ widely from the Gospels. One will find no documentation in the Gospels with precise chronology and so forth. Ancient biographies were more precise about beginnings and endings in the lives of their subjects, but the life stories themselves were only in approximate chronological order and were arranged to reveal character traits and illustrate moral issues. “Ancient biographers and historians viewed historical intentions as fully compatible with edifying agendas” (37). Thus, Keener’s first task is one of placing the Gospels historically in their precise literary domain.

In this beginning section of the book, Keener provides perhaps the most extensive exploration of the relevant ancient literature ever attempted. In effect, he asks what ancient readers themselves expected of such literature and then follows with what we should expect. It is his extensive presentation of examples of ancient biographies that enables the reader better to place the Gospels themselves. The type of literature determines the method of interpretation; thus, grasping more precisely what we can expect the Gospels to provide, and in what form, goes a long way toward a thorough apprehension (and appropriation!) of their message. In the case of Jesus as a sage and public figure, ancient readers would expect reliable historical accounts, yet with some allowance for literary license (although extremes in this regard were eschewed). Neither was precise historical chronology expected. In the case of the Gospels, this insight helps immensely in terms of attempts at
harmonizing the Gospels. Keener’s examples from the Gospels themselves, distributed here and there, are quite illuminating (see 123, with analysis of several synoptic variances).

With regard to the historical information put forward in ancient biographies and in the gospel narratives, Keener evaluates the relevant literature, asking what would have been expected in that day. He uses helpfully Luke’s writings as an example, while coming to careful conclusions on the nature of the history displayed in the Gospels. Biographers and historians in the early Roman period would have been expected to be solidly grounded in the sources. At the same time, allowance was made for the rhetorical use of this information in the development of an engaging narrative. The Gospels evince these same characteristics, providing historical fact, not merely literary fiction. Although ancient writers were less inhibited in their sympathetic portrayal of their subjects than modern writers would be, they would at the same time attempt to ground their presentations on historical fact. Being focused on a singular subject, biography might be considered a more popular genre than history, but fidelity to sources was still highly valued. Finally, in this section, attention should be drawn to Keener’s masterful depiction of Luke’s historical and literary methods; few have as comprehensive a grasp of this subject matter.

Next Keener tackles the question of the range of deviation to be found in ancient biographies and histories, exploring their faithfulness to prior sources and their literary flexibility. One interesting exercise he includes is a comparison, in parallel form, of the accounts of the brief Roman emperor Otho found in Suetonius, Plutarch, and Tacitus. As one would expect, there are differences as well as similarities, with a certain range of flexibility. Their reading audiences would not expect absolute precision in terms of chronology, verbatim speeches, and minor points, but could still be confident that they were being given access to actual events. Then Keener draws the parallel to the Gospels’ accounts of Jesus. He tweaks the anachronism of modern scholars’ nitpicking the gospel narratives, expecting absolute precision, pointing out that, given this inadequate approach, no ancient documents could be considered historically reliable or serviceable (nor modern history or biography, for that matter!). One has to allow for a certain range of flexibility. Matthew and Luke, for example, would be found on the more conservative side (at least in their use of Mark), while John would be found on the more flexible side. Finally, he concludes that the “flex room” one encounters in the Gospels is comparable to their ancient counterparts (biographical and historical
materials), maintaining fidelity to the actual events narrated with minor variations in chronology, the combining and editing of materials, and the like.

Two brief chapters follow on objections to the Gospels as historical biographies, couched as the questions: What about miracles? and What about John? Keener explains his brevity on miracles by his having already published more than 1300 pages on the subject, including a section of his four-volume Acts commentary and his monograph on miracles. The mere fact that both the Gospels and the story of the contemporary church (primarily Pentecostal-Charismatic, though he does not mention these massive traditions by name) are replete with eyewitness accounts of miracles prevents one from writing off the authenticity of the Gospels as history and biography.

On the question of John, Keener acknowledges that he basically set aside John in his (Keener’s) Historical Jesus of the Gospels. He also defends his brevity on this subject in the present volume by making reference to his 1600-page commentary on John. What he says about John is helpful, concluding that, even with John’s wide flexibility, he still remains within the biography genre. Nevertheless, one could hope that one day Keener will take on the task of integrating all four Gospels more fully, tracing out in more detail what we actually have in John’s nonpareil narrative. Since rhetoric and theology loom larger in John’s presentation, could this prompt us to examine more thoroughly what we mean by the term Gospel? Could it be that a gospel (euangelion) is a literary genre of its own, albeit couched as bios, as James D. G. Dunn has argued? Thus, John could be simply taking greater liberty in announcing the good news of Jesus, including even the ethos of encomium! As Dunn has also argued, a scholar labors in vain to discover a “non-impactful” Jesus in the gospel narratives. In any event, Keener effectively displays both the overlap and the differences between John and the Synoptics, demonstrating that in spite of the liberties John takes, all four Gospels share the same basic genre of ancient biography.

Finally, Keener addresses the issues of memory and oral tradition with relation to the etiology of the Gospels’ production. This is one of the most fascinating and promising sections of the book. First, the author deals with personal or psychological memory. Utilizing insights from the growing body of scholarship in this arena of study as well as personal reflections on his own processes of memory, Keener provides an intriguing analysis of the role and function of memory as the backdrop for historical and biographical writing. The frailties of personal memories, including limitations, biases, suggestibility, chronological displacement, and conflation, must be acknowledged. Nevertheless, the actual events upon which
these memories are generally based, when personally impactful and often rehearsed, can last indefinitely (five-year-old memories, for example, persisting for decades).

In the case of Jesus and his disciples, the role of memory is key. Placed in the ancient Middle Eastern context, the reliability of the accurate transmission of essential content is clearly strengthened. Keener’s discussion here is thorough and helpful. First, the role of eyewitnesses is examined. In terms of the content incorporated into the New Testament documents, both individual and collective recall of events and sayings would play a key role. Jesus was a teacher with disciples, and there is copious material of this practice from this time period. Confidence in oral transmission and remembrance was much higher in these ancient cultures than it would be in our own. Keener’s description of these practices vividly demonstrates this dynamic. Personal memory can often be strengthened by collective memory as well. But the question remains whether oral history and transmission can be seen as serviceable for reliable history.

Keener’s command of the literature on oral tradition is impressive and lends credibility to his conclusions. We have come a long way since the days of Bultmannian form criticism! The study of memory dynamics, both personal and communal, was already becoming available in Bultmann’s day, but unfortunately it would be decades later before a more solidly based analysis of oral tradition would become available. All personal and social memory is fallible, but is also based on actual experiences and events. For communities to preserve their founding traditions, some adaptations and alterations of original memories would be expected. Nonetheless, this process does not preclude the transmission of reliable tradition. Given the relatively close proximity of the writing of the Gospels to the sayings and events that were being transmitted, confidence in the trustworthiness of what was reported is further bolstered. Actual living memory can therefore be seen as partly forming the gospel narratives themselves. Clearly, the Gospels were not novels, but rather faithful reports evincing a solid core and expected variances.

Keener concludes by saying that scholars of both the far left and the far right have essentially committed the same error: “judging the Gospels by standards foreign to their original genre” (497). Steering a middle course, the author sides with those who derive confidence in the memories, traditions, and sources undergirding the New Testament as they continue exploring these majestic texts. Much work remains to be done, Keener would add. For example, source, redaction, and narrative criticism must still be employed to ascertain more precisely the content and dynamics of a given pericope. Scholars should continue to evaluate the sources of variances—be they in the oral transmission process or the result of
redaction, for example. But as James D. G. Dunn echoes in his recommendation of Keener’s volume, “the Gospels compare well with the other biographies of the time as to their historicity, and there is strong historical probability that the Gospel memoirs have preserved the content and character of Jesus’s ministry and teaching.”

Perhaps Keener could combine his previous work on biblical hermeneutics with the results of this present project, in another (probably 700-page) volume, to describe how canonically, theologically, and spiritually the Gospels can and should function in the ongoing life of the church! Given the church’s historical belief in the authority, inspiration, and trustworthiness of the Scriptures, a more complete appropriation of the Bible’s message demands this additional step. But then, hasn’t Keener already done this in his massive commentaries! Profound gratitude for Keener’s faithful scholarly labors is in order.

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