Table of Contents

Editorial: Leadership Within the Glory Story: Hamstra........................................... Page 3

Nicodemus, An Exemplar of Courageous Followership: Bell......................................... Page 6

From the Pulpit to the People: A Comparative Survey of Jonathan Edwards’ Pastoral Leadership in Northampton and Stockbridge: Easterling....................... Page 30

The Value of Wisdom: Contemporary Leadership Principles from a Brief Inner Texture Analysis of Proverbs 4: Serrano........................................... Page 40

Operant Conditioning Theory and Courageous Followership: A Donkey’s Perspective: Rolle............................................................... Page 48

Understanding the Importance of Genuine Inclusion in Leadership: An Ideological Analysis of the Interaction of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch: Jones-Carmack........................................... Page 64

The Search for Effective Church Senior Leadership During Organizational Transition: Parishioner Perceived Qualifiers for an Effective Senior Pastor: Fowler ........................................... Page 76

To Speak or Not to Speak? 1 Corinthians 12 Ideology and Tongues in Ecclesial Leadership: Cavins......................................................... Page 96

The Character Development and Spiritual Disciplines Required for Christian Leaders of Secular Organizations to Transform Organizational Culture: Halverson........................................... Page 110

Church Size, Pastoral Humility, and Member Characteristics as Predictors of Church Commitment: Dunaetz, Cullum & Barron .......... Page 125

Contributors...........................................................................................................Page 139

Front Cover: The cover artwork is a stylized photo by Steve Buffington. “An image of a Christian leader is the rope braking device used in repelling. If its integrity is compromised, your life could be in danger. However, a braking device that functions as its creator intended allows risks and activities unable to be experienced in any other way.”

Theology of Leadership

Volume 1, Issue 2, 2018
All material licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 theologyofleadership@gmail.com

Editorial Team
Editor: Russell L. Huizing, Ph.D.
Content Editor: MaryJo Burchard, Ph.D.
Production Editor: Chris Hamstra, Ph.D.
Theology Representative: H. David Schuringa, Ph.D.
Leadership Representative: Artem Kliuchnikov, Ph.D.
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF GENUINE INCLUSION IN LEADERSHIP: AN IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION OF PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Joy Jones-Carmack
Stockton University

ABSTRACT: Acts 8:26-40 illustrates a partial fulfillment of the Great Commission as Philip follows the directive of the Holy Spirit to witness to an Ethiopian eunuch. Although some biblical scholars focus solely on the significance of the Ethiopian’s race and nationality, this paper takes the position that the significant factor is not merely the eunuch’s ethnicity but also his status and the demonstration of the importance of genuine inclusion in leadership. Social rhetorical criticism, specifically an ideological analysis, is used to provide a deeper understanding of the significance of the interaction between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. After synthesizing information gained from the ideological analysis, this paper uses the framework of Acts 8:26-40 to discuss all-inclusive multiculturalism (AIM) as a key leadership strategy in contemporary organizations. This paper provides suggestions for how organizational leaders can transition diversity and inclusion programs from a focus on numbers and surface-level diversity to a focus on genuine inclusion in all phases of organizational membership.

KEYWORDS: Liberation Theology, Diversity, Communication, All-Inclusive Multiculturalism
Understanding the Importance of Genuine Inclusion in Leadership: An Ideological Analysis of the Interaction of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40 illustrates a partial fulfillment of the Great Commission (Acts 1:8, Matt 28:19) as Philip follows the directive of the Holy Spirit to witness to an Ethiopian eunuch. Although some biblical scholars focus solely on the significance of the Ethiopian’s race and nationality (Felder, 2002; Martin, 1989), this paper takes the position that the significance of this pericope is not merely the ethnicity of the eunuch but the demonstration that Jesus came for all people. Through social rhetorical criticism, specifically an ideological analysis of the text, this paper examines Acts 8:26-40 and the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit empowering leaders to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). After synthesizing information gained from the ideological analysis, this paper uses the framework of Acts 8:26-40 to discuss all-inclusive multiculturalism as a key leadership strategy in contemporary organizations. Therefore, ideological analysis serves as the foundation for exploring the partial fulfillment of the Great Commission, via the Holy Spirit’s empowerment of leaders to witness to the ends of the earth, while also serving as the foundation for helping contemporary leaders embrace the benefits of diversity and to successfully implement diversity initiatives.

IDEOLOGY IN TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TEXT

In the current study, social rhetorical criticism was used as the method of interpretation and analysis (Robbins, 1984). Social rhetorical criticism challenges interpreters to explore human reality and religion through multiple approaches to understanding and dissecting discourse in the text. This systematic approach requires the interpreter to read a text from different angles, hence, allowing the interpreter to extract meanings out of the text (exegesis) rather than to interpose meanings into the text (eisegesis) (Robbins, 1996). Primarily, social rhetorical criticism was selected as the mode of interpretation in this analysis because of its focus on rhetoric and language. As Goodwin (1993) explained, “Rhetorical criticism helps to explain and evaluate speakers’ motivations, audiences’ responses, structures of discourse, and the developments within an environment of communication (p.177).

Although socio-rhetorical criticism offers a five-layer multidimensional approach for interpreting texts, this analysis focuses only on the ideological texture of Acts 8:26-40 (Robbins, 1996). Davis (1975) defined ideology as an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions, and values, which reflect the needs or interest of a group or class at a particular time. Robbins (1996) noted that ideology includes biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a person or group. Elliot (1990) clarified ideology further when he stated, “ideologies are shaped by specific views of reality shared by groups-specific perspectives of the world, society and man, and on the limitations and potentialities of human existence” (p.268).

According to Robbins (1999) ideological analysis “focuses on three places: writers and readers, the text that is the guest in our interpretive conversation with each other, and other people’s interpretations of texts” (p. 1). In relation to the latter, some biblical scholars, including Felder (2002), view contemporary interpretations of Acts 8:26-40 as examples of secularization. Felder (as cited in Martin, 1989) defined secularization “as the process by which the socio-political realities of the...
secular framework of the Christian authors in the New Testament led to a marginalization of the darker races” (p.120). Black New Testament scholars have argued that Euro-centric interpreters have marginalized the significance of the Ethiopian in this passage (e.g., Myers, 1991). However, Felder (2002), in his interpretation of Acts 8:26-40, noted that he was not suggesting that Luke, the implied author of this pericope, was racist or prejudice against darker skin races. Felder explained:

The racial implication that I do wish to highlight is that Luke’s editorializing results in a circumstantial de-emphasis of a Nubian (African) in favor of an Italian (European) and enables Europeans thereby to claim that the text of Acts demonstrates some divine preference for Europeans. (p.40)

The suggestion that Luke would marginalize or “secularize” the importance of any person contradicts the overall intent of Luke’s writing. In discussing secularization, Felder (2002) noted, “The socio political realities of the secular framework tend to dilute the New Testament vision of racial inclusiveness and universalism” (p.36). Luke acknowledged the cultural, social, and national identity of the Ethiopian eunuch, not to point out his differences, but to illustrate the importance of cultural pluralism in the realm of Christianity (Williams, 1957). Luke’s writing illustrates the significance of inclusiveness and universalism (Felder, 2002). Desilva (2004) noted, “We look at Acts for reflection and theology in the form of histography, telling the Gentile church how it fits in with the people of God’s own choosing” (p.349). Therefore, if biblical interpreters focus solely on the race or ethnicity of the Eunuch, they may modify Luke’s intent. In Luke’s narrative, the Ethiopian’s national origin was acknowledged. Furthermore, his status as a government official, a Gentile, and a eunuch informed the story, but Luke’s primary focus was that Christ came for everyone.

IDEOLOGY IN THE TEXT

The power relations that reside within Acts 8:26-40 significantly inform the ideological texture. Power relations can be understood by examining the ideology of the two major characters in the text, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The Philip discussed in Acts 8:26-40 is not the apostle Philip (Arnold, 2002). This Philip is one of the seven men chosen to look after the food distribution for the Hellenist widows (Acts 6). Arnold (2002) suggested that the seven chosen men not only needed to excel in natural administrative and leadership abilities, but they also needed to demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

In Act 8:26-40, presence of the Holy Spirit was demonstrated when Philip allowed the Spirit to guide his evangelism on a wilderness road. As Pohill (1992) explained, an angel of the Lord came to Philip in a vision and called him to witness in the most unlikely place. Philip had been witnessing to many people in Samaria. In fact, Philip is the only man in scripture given the title of evangelist (Acts 21:8; Macarthur, 1994). Marshall (1980) noted, “The angel’s command to Philip takes him away from a scene of successful evangelism and leads him to a place which must have seemed wholly inappropriate for further Christian work” (p.161). Philip would have had reason to question God’s directive. The Greek phrase “to go toward the south” (mesebrian) can be translated to mean at noon or midday (Strong, 1990). As Marshall suggested, the term at noon makes God’s command even more unusual. Noon would have been the hottest part of the day. Most likely, the road was scarcely traveled. Nevertheless, the road did contain the last watering hole before the
desert (Pohill). The water not only offered a place for the eunuch’s baptism but also served as a symbol of purity and renewal. Therefore, the scripture illustrates that Christians may not understand God’s plan, but He always has a superior purpose.

Perhaps the angel of the Lord is used for the first directive in order to capture Philip’s attention. Using the angel of the Lord to send the directive as well as the timing determined for the mission, indicates urgency. Despite being directed to travel in the hot, midday sun, Philip could not waste time or he would miss an opportunity to witness. Although the angel of the Lord gave the first directive, the Holy Spirit offered the second directive to approach the chariot of the Ethiopian. The narration indicates that Philip approaches the chariot and finds an Ethiopian eunuch inside. The eunuch is a court official of the Candace, Queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27). According to this pericope, the eunuch was in charge of the Candace’s treasury. Martin (1989), a renowned Black liberation theologian, indicated that a number of interpreters refer to the eunuch as a chamberlain, a steward of a king or queen. Eunuch comes from the Greek word ennochos meaning "keeper of the bedchamber" (Smith, 1986). Smith suggested that the more relevant meaning of the word eunuch is someone who can be trusted to watch over the inner household. However, eunuch is also translated from the Hebrew word cariy or caric, which means to castrate (Strong, 1990). Therefore, the use of the term chamberlain minimizes the fact that the Ethiopian was a eunuch. According to Jewish law, because he was an emasculated man, the eunuch could never be fully vested in the Jewish faith. Although Isaiah offered hope for inclusion in the future (Isaiah 56:3-8), Deuteronomy 23:1 explained that the eunuch was not allowed in the temple even though he had social and financial status. Therefore, the term chamberlain, although linguistically correct, mitigates the importance of the eunuch’s spiritual oppression.

Clearly, understanding the personal characteristics (i.e., social, sexual, racial) of the Ethiopian eunuch in contrast to Philip’s characteristics allows for deeper analysis of the power dynamic and communication interaction in this passage. Although a high-ranking official, the eunuch’s physical emasculation and spiritual oppression should not be ignored. In a like manner, without God’s specific instructions, Philip, an ordinary man, would not have approached an official of a Candace’s court. Yet, when Philip approached the eunuch and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” the eunuch humbled himself and asked for help from an ordinary man. The status of these two individuals is significant in this story. God knew the hearts of these men. As Marshall (1980) noted, “We can indeed see the hand of God throughout this narrative in the way in which Philip is guided to the right place and met a man who was also being prepared by God for the encounter” (p.163).

The Holy Spirit continued to guide Philip by taking him away immediately after the eunuch is baptized. Then, Philip appeared in Azotus and traveled throughout the region witnessing to others. Immediacy is implied at the end of this passage. After the eunuch is baptized, the Lord whisks Philip away to continue his evangelism. Through careful examination of the ideology in the text, the story reveals a blatant demonstration that God is at work in the world. The precisely timed interaction between Philip and the eunuch, demonstrates that God is in command. He is directing, and His timing is impeccable. In Acts 8:26-40, Philip presents a story of conversion, which at first seems simple, but after careful analysis, is an example of the partial fulfillment of Jesus’ command to spread the Gospel to “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
“Martin suggested that one of the most fully explored aspects of the text [Acts 8:26-40] is its ‘theological’ dimension” (Robbins, 1996, p.107). Martin discussed four major theological trajectories: (a) the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching and evangelism, (b) the witness of early Christians to the significance of the events in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, (c) the prophecy fulfillment or proof of the prophecy, and (d) the joy of the Ethiopian in relation to his conversion experience.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PREACHING AND EVANGELISM. Acts 8:26-40 illustrates the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching and evangelism as the Holy Spirit provides Philip with three directives. First, the angel of the Lord directed Philip to “Get up and go…” (v.26). Although the first directive is provided by the angel of the Lord rather than the Holy Spirit, Marshall (1980) suggested that in Jewish law the two are closely associated. Marshall explained that the shift from the angel of the Lord to the Holy Spirit is not important, stating, “What is important is that in this way Philip’s journey and the subsequent action are seen to be instigated by God and thus to have been part of his intention” (p.161). Second, the Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it” (v.29). This directive provides guidance that is more specific. Finally, after the eunuch is fully vested in baptism, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away to continue evangelism. The ideology of this pericope indicates that the Holy Spirit is at work spreading the gospel to the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Certainly, Acts 8:26-40 exhibits a partial fulfillment of the Great Commission, illustrating that the Holy Spirit empowers and guides those anointed to spread the word. Several passages in Luke and Acts (Lk 4:18; 24:44; Acts 1:8; 4:8-10; 7:55; 10:11-12; 13:4-10; 16:6-7) demonstrate the Holy Spirit is directing the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles. In Lk 4:18, Jesus proclaimed, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to bring good news to the poor…to let the oppressed be.” Although the eunuch was not financially oppressed, he was spiritually oppressed. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Philip’s witness and resulting salvation freed the eunuch from the oppression of sin and illustrates a partial fulfillment of the Great Commission.

THE WITNESS OF EARLY CHRISTIANS. Martin (1989) suggested that “Philip’s preaching to the Ethiopian highlights a second recurrent Lucan theme: the witness motif” (p.107). Luke provided evidence (Lk 1-4; 24:48; Acts 1:21-22; 4:33) that God’s anointing of the Holy Spirit provides power to witness. God’s first directive merely deals with the logistics of getting Philip on the road. However, the true witnessing begins in Acts 8:30 when Philip approached the chariot and asked the eunuch, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip’s evangelism continued as the Holy Spirit took him away in Acts 8:39 to witness to others. The passage in Acts 2:21-22 illustrates that Jesus came for everyone, even an Ethiopian eunuch on a deserted wilderness road. Philip left an opportunity of successful evangelism in Samaria, for an opportunity to witness to one. For God to call Philip from a thriving ministry in Samaria to a deserted road to preach the gospel to one Ethiopian, eunuch indicates that God’s goal is to reach all people and to create a diverse body of Christ (Rev 5:9). This passage sends a clear message that Christians should be willing to go to unlikely and remote places and to engage in unlikely communication interactions in order to save the lost sheep (Lk 15).
PROPHECY FULFILLMENT OR PROOF OF THE PROPHECY. After the eunuch invited Philip to join him inside the chariot, Philip saw the eunuch reading a prophetic verse in Isaiah. Isaiah 53:7-12 compares the nation of Israel to wandering sheep that stray from God. Certainly, Isaiah offers a prophetic story. As Marshall (1980) pointed out “The eunuch does not ask what the verses mean; he begins by asking whether the prophet is describing his own experience or that of somebody else” (p.163). In Acts 8:35, Philip explained to the eunuch that the sheep has come and the sheep is Jesus. As Isaiah prophesied, like the sheep, Jesus was led to slaughter and he suffered without opening his mouth to make all people acceptable to God. Luke only uses Ethiopian to describe the man in this passage one time. In subsequent mentions of the Ethiopian, Luke refers to him as a eunuch. This identification of this man as eunuch is significant and strategic. Luke is saying that this man is defined by his sterility and the ostracism and spiritual oppression he may have experienced as a result. The eunuch is reading a description of someone who knew the pain of ostracism and isolation because of his identity. The interaction between Philip and the eunuch presents an example of the prophecy outlined in Isaiah as Philip took the directive of God and baptized an individual who had been seen as unworthy under Jewish law.

THE JOY OF THE ETHIOPIAN IN RELATION TO HIS CONVERSION EXPERIENCE. Martin (1989) mentioned the theological trajectory of the joy of the Ethiopian after conversion. In Acts 8:39, the eunuch leaves rejoicing. The eunuch most likely felt a feeling of freedom as the chains of spiritual oppression were lifted. With Christ in his life, the eunuch was relieved from spiritual oppression and the emptiness he felt when searching for God. He understood true joy; a joy that power and authority cannot provide. Several verses in Lk (1:1-4; 2:10; 15:4-7; 24:41) illustrate the joy of salvation. Although scripture states that the eunuch rejoiced, Philip most likely also felt joy. Undoubtedly, the eunuch’s salvation brought rejoicing in heaven (Lk 15:6).

IDEOLOGY IN INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

Using a model of discourse called liberation theology, Martin (1989) focused on the significance of the Ethiopian’s race and ethnicity. In describing Martin’s interpretation, Robbins (1996) noted, “Her Interest lies in an aspect of his identity that extends beyond his being a eunuch. He is an Ethiopian, an issue of special importance for an African American interpreter of scripture” (p.217). Martin concludes that previous studies either ignore or deny the importance of the eunuch’s identity as an Ethiopian. Dahl (as cited in Martin, 1989) argued:

What made his conversion to be remembered and told as a legend was neither his African provenance nor his black skin. ...In the Lucan composition, this story has been placed between the evangelization among the Samaritans and the vocation of Paul, preparing for the mission to the Gentiles. Thus, we get the picture of a progressive widening circle reached by the gospel; but the question of nationality has no special importance. (p. 110)

According to Martin (1989), Dahl not only cautioned the reader from concluding that the Ethiopian was black, but Dahl also concluded that the Ethiopian’s nationality is not significant to the passage. Martin rightfully questioned interpretations that suggest the insignificance of the Ethiopian’s race and ethnicity. According to Marshall (1980), the eunuch came from the country now known as the Sudan rather than modern Ethiopia. Polhill (1992) suggested that the Hebrews described this area as Cush. Snowden (as cited in Martin) suggested, “Blackness and Ethiopians were
in many respects synonymous” (p.111). Martin explained that the term Ethiopian may have been used to describe the dark color of a person’s skin. Although Martin’s interpretation of the eunuch’s skin color appears to be accurate, the question of skin color is not the most pivotal issue in this passage. Although Dahl’s statement that nationality has no special importance is incorrect, skin color and nationality are important only in that the eunuch’s race, nationality, and social position are symbolic, representing that Jesus came for everyone.

Acts 8:40 suggested that the Ethiopian eunuch may have had an opportunity to spread the good news to the continent of Africa. History explains that the area Candace ruled was Nubia (Rushmore, 2001). Thus, the eunuch’s ability to spread the gospel to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47) is significant. Enis (2005) explained:

In classical antiquity, the inhabited earth was pictured as a disc surrounded by the ‘Outer Sea.’ ‘The ends of the earth’ referred, as W. C. van Unnik has shown, to the most distant points on the rim of the disc …, the Arctic on the North, India on the East, Ethiopia on the South, and Spain on the West. (p.125)

Ideological analysis of this passage indicates that the eunuch would have been traveling back to Nubia. Therefore, interpreting the Ethiopian’s journey back to his homeland as a partial fulfillment of Acts 1:8 is valid. Furthermore, the prophecy is still being fulfilled today as leaders, evangelist, and missionaries travel to remote regions of the world teaching and preaching the gospel.

SYNTHESIS: INDIVIDUAL LOCATION ANDIDEOLOGICAL SUSPICION

Segundo (1976) observed that our way of experiencing reality leads us to ideological suspicion as we approach and interpret Biblical texts. In response to Segundo’s assertions, Martin (1989) wrote, “…No interpretation or scholarship is ‘objective,’ ‘intellectually neutral,’ or ‘value free,’ for the exegete always brings his or her own presuppositions, assumptions, and subjectivity to the interpretive process” (p.124). Certainly, Martin’s essay offered an Afro-centric view of the narrative in Acts 8:26-40. For instance, Martin suggested the absence of Nubia on Biblical atlases is “politics of omission.” Politics of omission, when used in the context of ideological texture, refers to what biblical scholarship has chosen to leave out. Robbins (1999) explained that the interpreter’s omissions often “reveal the biases and political agendas of scholars” (p.1). Although Martin was correct in concluding that Biblical maps and atlases often omit Nubia, she failed to acknowledge her own politics of omission. For instance, Martin failed to acknowledge that the Ethiopian was a eunuch. More importantly, Martin failed to discuss the significance of the eunuch’s spiritual oppression. Perhaps Martin felt that the important factor was the eunuch’s race and purposefully chose to omit that he was an emasculated man and a servant.

Undoubtedly, Martin’s (1989) interpretations or ideological suspicions are justified. After all, as a female, I may choose to see 1Tim 2:12, which suggests that women should not teach or have authority over men, as referring to the patriarchal society in which it was written. As a woman, I often interpret from a feminist theological mode of discourse. In other words, I have a feminist ideological suspicion, and I should not judge or oppose Black New Testament interpreters (Martin, 1989; Felder, 2002) for seeking their truth in this pericope. A basic principle of communication is
that meanings are in people not in messages (Devito, 2015). Therefore, when reading the sacred texts or receiving messages from any source, individuals are often unable to remove their cultural frame or perceptual bias. An awareness that messages are constructed through a receiver’s unique cultural frame may better prepare the interpreter/receiver to offer an accurate and balanced interpretation of the text. Martin (as cited in Robbins 1996) stated, “In order for the interpretation of Biblical traditions to be ‘interpretation for liberation’ of people it must be as balanced and open as possible to all nationalities, races, and marginalized people who come into view in Biblical texts” (p. 117). Although Martin’s point is valid, biblical interpreters should not change or alter stories to center on their ideological suspicion. For instance, as a woman, I am not pleased with several passages used to marginalize or oppress women. Nevertheless, I understand that in Mediterranean society women were oppressed. I cannot change scripture, but I focus on the messages of empowerment contained in the scriptures. For instance, as a female leader, I often focus on the message contained in Joel’s prophetic passage spoken by Peter in Acts 2:17, “In the last days it will be, God declares that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy” (emphasis added). Similar to the pericope in Acts 8:26-40, Acts 2 illustrates that Jesus came for everyone. Biblical interpreters may be drawn to a specific ideological suspicion, but they cannot forget the Lukan message of inclusiveness and universalism. We are all lost sheep, women, and men of all races. Thus, no responsible quest of ideological interpretation will marginalize the importance of all humankind. The color of skin and gender will not be important in the sight of God. As Lk 16:5:15 states, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.” God knew and loved the heart of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, and the meeting and subsequent communication between these two men was purposeful.

APPLICATION TO CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP

Acts 8:26-40 illustrates a partial fulfillment of the Great Commission as Philip follows the directive of the Holy Spirit to witness to an Ethiopian eunuch. Although some biblical scholars focus solely on the significance of the Ethiopian’s race and nationality (Felder, 2002; Martin, 1989), this paper takes the position that the significant factor is not merely the eunuch’s ethnicity but also the revelation that Jesus came for all people. Thus, an ideological analysis of Acts 8:26-40 not only serves as the foundation for exploring the partial fulfillment of the Great Commission but also provides opportunities for practical advancement in contemporary leadership theory.

For organizational leaders, diversity and inclusion programs must move from a focus on numbers and surface-level diversity to genuine inclusion in all phases of organizational membership. Researchers in social psychology have reported a strong link between demographic similarity of organizational members and affective relationships (Harrison, 1976). Furthermore, Bauer and Green (1996) reported that members of dyads who are similar tend to like (Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989) and trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995) each other more than those who are dissimilar. Demographically similar individuals may have a higher level of attraction based on perceived similarity in attitudes, values, and experiences as indicated in the similarity attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971). Byrne, Clore, and Worchel (1966) reported that people tend to be drawn toward individuals who are similar to themselves in terms of demographic characteristics, activities, and
attitudes. Therefore, demographically dissimilar individuals may perceive one another as less compatible, which in turn may inhibit leader-follower communication or team member communication (Dienesch & Liden, 1986).

Devito (2007) posited that, when individuals feel they have little in common with their listeners, they are more likely to feel anxious about communicating with those listeners. Due to the similarity-attraction paradigm and communication-related anxiety, leaders may not engage in communication interactions with individuals who they perceive as different, and they may not trust those who are demographically dissimilar, leading to lower quality relationships between these leaders and followers (Jones, 2009; Madlock, et al., 2007). Perhaps even more importantly, due to the similarity-attraction paradigm, individuals making hiring decisions may not actively seek employees who are different than they are.

Research has been inconsistent regarding the effects of diversity within organizations (Choi & Rainey; Kochan, et al., 2003). Some studies have concluded that more heterogeneous work groups may consider more perspectives and produce better group decision making than homogeneous groups. Cox (1994) reported that diversity improves decision making, creativity, and problem solving by allowing members to take advantage of a broader range of alternatives and new ideas. Greater heterogeneity may reduce consensus in decision making, but in turn this may lead to consideration of more alternatives and less groupthink (Choi & Rainey, 2010). Furthermore, racial diversity and gender diversity have been found to be associated with increased sales revenue, more customers, greater market share, and an increase in profits (Herring, 2009). In contrast, some researchers have found an insignificant relationship between diversity and organizational performance. Heterogeneous groups may experience problems in integration, coordination, motivation, and conflict management and have higher levels of dissatisfaction and turnover than more homogeneous groups (Jones & Fields, 2013). These problems of integration are more likely to occur in early stages of relationship development when relationships are based on surface-level demographics or when leaders and organizations are not fully vested in diversity initiatives. Diverse work groups may require more energy to accomplish tasks than homogeneous work groups, and leaders must omit tokenism and the insider-within phenomenon that undermines many diversity initiatives.

As Devito (2015) suggested, language is not reality; language merely symbolizes reality. In other words, individuals construct meaning according to their unique cultural frame. Messages originate from specific and unique cultural contexts. Furthermore, cultural context influences the message’s content and form, as well as the receiver’s understanding. Although all communication interactions involve some degree of uncertainty, cross-cultural communication (i.e. both oral and written) generally produces greater ambiguity and uncertainty. Therefore, in cross-cultural and multicultural leadership, leaders must take precautions to ensure clarity and inclusive communication. Leaders can embody genuine inclusion by shifting the mindset from managing diversity (i.e., something that is a burden and has to be dealt with) to celebrating diversity (i.e., viewing diversity as an opportunity for growth and innovative ideas). Top management must embrace a true commitment to diversity and encourage a cultural shift within the organization. If the focus is merely on the color of an employee’s skin and quota, organizations will not fully capitalize on the benefits of diversity and heterogeneous teams.
In rectifying pitfalls of previous approaches to organizational diversity, including the colorblind approach, Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks (2008) recommend the AIM (all-inclusive multiculturalism) approach to organizational leadership. The AIM approach recommends inclusion of all employees in diversity discussions, minorities as well as nonminorities. Furthermore, the AIM approach recognizes the value of differences instead of seeing differences as obstacles to overcome. As stated by Davidson and James (2006):

The foundation for developing an all-inclusive organization is in focusing on the formation of high-quality relationships among dissimilar others that encourage ongoing learning and create the capacity for individuals to engage, challenge, and support one another with clarity and confidence. (p. 139)

Leaders should begin by shifting the language patterns and communication within the organization. Mission and vision statements as well as communication messages that illustrate the inclusion of all organizational members exemplify an ideological stance that will appeal to diverse internal and external audiences. Furthermore, organizational leaders should ask for volunteers based on interest and expertise rather than demographic characteristics. In one of my first teaching positions, I was asked to teach a class in human resource management, although at that time, I had never taught an HR class and had very little expertise in that area. Alternatively, an African American male faculty member was asked to teach a class on diversity, for which he had very little interest or expertise. The allocation of teaching assignments resonated with me because I immediately recalled the stereotypes of women working in the field of human resource management as well as the misconception that minorities want to serve as the voice for all diversity and equity programs. In this case, the Department Head would have better managed the situation by adopting an AIM approach of all-inclusive multiculturalism, where she looked at faculty interest and expertise over skin color or biological sex.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch sends a powerful message to Christian leaders about the importance of modeling genuine inclusion and acceptance within churches and Christian organizations. However, this passage serves as a reminder to leaders in all types of organizations of the importance of not merely managing diversity initiatives but celebrating the benefits and possibilities of diversity in organizations. Luke’s portrayal of cultural pluralism in Acts 8:26-40 illustrates the importance of allowing all followers opportunity for membership and genuine inclusion in the “in groups” of organizations. The role of Christian leadership is to communicate the message that God came for everyone. The role of the organizational leader, in both secular and non-secular organizations, is to relinquish ideological suspicion and bias, to engage in communication interactions outside of the immediate network, and to embrace genuine inclusion as a key leadership strategy. As indicated in Philip’s interaction with the Ethiopian eunuch, genuine inclusion not only leads to organizational growth but also growth of the leader and follower. Workforce diversity, if approached in a way that maximizes inclusion and minimizes resistance, presents leaders with opportunities to create change and foster the potential of all employees.
REFERENCES


THEOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP JOURNAL


CONTRIBUTORS

Edgar D. Barron (Ed.D., University of Southern California) is an Assistant Professor of Leadership and Organizational Psychology at Azusa Pacific University. His research interests focus on the academic outcomes and social experiences of underrepresented students at historically White institutions. He spent 16 years in the Aerospace industry as an industrial engineer and he was the vice president of Communications and U.S. Ministries for Promise Keepers for 6 years. Email: ebron@apu.edu

R. Mark Bell currently works as an independent researcher and serves as an adjunct professor. Mark holds an M.B.A. and a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership. Mark’s research interests include effective followership and ineffective leadership. Email: rmarkbell@gmail.com

Andrew Levi Cavins is a U.S. Navy submarine veteran and active duty U.S. Coast Guard member. He is currently an instructor in advanced electronic systems in Northern California. He holds a B.A. in Government from Regent University and a M.A. in Public Policy from Liberty University. He is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership at Regent University. Email: andrew@mail.regent.edu

Melody Cullum (M.S., Azusa Pacific University, CLI-CA) is an Organizational Development Specialist at TurningWest, Inc. She has spent nearly 15 years researching curriculum and developing educational plans. She is passionate about helping organizations become healthier with practical tools and assessments to facilitate change and growth. Email: mcullum@turningwest.com

David S. Fowler, Ph.D., M.B.A. is an assistant professor of business management at Newberry College in South Carolina. He also instructs culinary, hotel, and restaurant management classes at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh Online Division and is a ten-year veteran of managing organizational transitions and deployments in a global corporate environment. He holds a Ph.D. in Human Resource Development: Organizational Development and Change from the University of Texas at Tyler, and an M.B.A. from Mississippi State University. Current research interests include religious leadership, organizational transitions, human resource development, and religious organizational shifts. Email: david.fowler@newberry.edu

David R. Dunaetz (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University) is an Associate Professor of Leadership and Organizational Psychology at Azusa Pacific University. His research program focuses on interpersonal processes in Christian organizations, especially churches and mission agencies. He was a church planter in the eastern suburbs of Paris, France, for 17 years with WorldVenture where he and his wife started two churches and helped a third move beyond missionary dependence. Email: ddunaetz@apu.edu
Joe Easterling completed an M.A. in Christian Education, an M.Div., and an Ed.D. at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Theology and Apologetics from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. He has served as a pastor since 1995, currently serving at Northside Church in Wilmington, NC. Aside from pastoring, Joe also teaches at a local community college and at Liberty University. He and his bride have been married for 23 years, and they have two girls who all live in Wilmington. Email: jeasterling2@liberty.edu

Jon Halverson is Partner at Talanton Advisors and the Talanton Impact Fund. The impact investment and advisory services firm focuses on Kingdom impact investing, strategy development and leadership development. Having spent more than 20 years at two of the world’s leading food and agricultural multinationals, and four years living and working in Africa, Jon possesses a deep understanding of international business investment and development. At Cargill, Inc. Jon served as a Director of Mergers & Acquisitions in the Strategy & Business Development group. In addition, Jon served as a Regional Investment Advisor for the United States Africa Development Foundation (USADF). He has also served at Land O’Lakes as the Vice President - International Development. Over the course of multiple moves around the world, Jon and his family have had the privilege of assisting in the launch and establishment of four start-up churches, including The Fellowship of the Woodlands in Texas and the Ocean Church in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Jon has a B.A. from Wheaton College and an MBA from Regis University. Currently, in addition to serving clients and organizations with a deep commitment to financial inclusion, leadership development and impact investing, Jon is pursuing a D. Min. with a focus on Transformational Leadership at Bethel University. Jon is based in Minnesota. His wife of 25 years is Kara and they have 4 wonderful children. Email: Jon@Talantonllc.com

Joy Jones-Carmack, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Business Studies-Management at Stockton University. Her recent publications include “Relational Demography in John 4: Jesus Crossing Cultural Boundaries as Praxis for Christian Leadership,” published in Feminist Theology. Her work and current research focus on diversity and inclusion, leadership in the context of feminist and liberation theology, organizational communication, and political communication apprehension. Email: joy.jones@stockton.edu.

Sarah Rolle serves as a police officer in local law enforcement. Sarah has had tremendous support from her family as she obtained a M.A. in Management and Leadership from Liberty University and is currently seeking a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership at Regent University. Sarah hopes that her research can benefit the law enforcement community. Sarah would like to dedicate this article to her parents who were her first exemplars of Courageous Followers. Email: sararol@mail.regent.edu

Carlo Serrano has a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership from Regent University. He is currently the teaching pastor for oneChurch.tv in Clarksville, TN and an adjunct professor for Regent University and Grace College of Divinity. Email: carlo@onechurch.tv