

The background of the cover is an abstract, textured composition of blue and white. It features a central circular motif that resembles a vortex or a stylized eye, with swirling, brushstroke-like patterns radiating outwards. The colors range from deep, dark blues to bright, almost white highlights, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Theology of
Leadership

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Moriah Olmstead, a student at Toccoa Falls College, created the cover artwork. She explains that a wave is like a Servant Leader. Both are constantly changing with new tides of influence and resurfacing from depths that life passionately brings forth. Always seeking new horizons and growing in strength, Servant Leaders empower others by setting the example of what it looks like to remember hope. In the same way, a wave is powerful and graceful by its gesture of drawing its onlooker into its beauty. Life can become overwhelming when focused on the ever-present waves of chaos, but the very essence of becoming a Servant Leader is to hold fast and stand firm while focusing on, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable” (Php 4:8). There is a horizon to every ocean and there is a God whose greatness calms the sea. It is in this center of chaos that the Servant Leader displays a calm in the midst of the storm.

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FORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY IN TOXIC LEADERS

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Marcus K. Kilian. *Formational Leadership: Developing Spiritual and Emotional Maturity in Toxic Leaders*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publ, 2018. Pp. 190.

Leaders can inspire or destroy. Leaders can champion an organization or be preoccupied with self. Meanwhile, churches and Christian organizations long for healthy, fair, and mature leaders. The gradient between leaders and followers seems to furnish differentials without an end. A fresh approach has been provided by Formational Leadership, and its biblical confrontation to the psychological difficulties inundating leadership is insightful, pointed, and optimistic. Marcus Kilian counsels how leaders can become formational or remain toxic in this new work.

Dr. Kilian is professor of psychology at Toccoa Falls College and co-owner of the mental health and leadership development services of Paraclete Care. The author is advantageously trained with advanced degrees in theology, psychology, and leadership ethics. This training combines for a theological and psychological treatment of leadership. The comprehensive approach alone makes the work unique and a significant contribution to the vast field of leadership studies. The book has a Christian organizational audience in view, with analysis and application available for churches, para-church organizations, colleges, and any administration with a Christian ethos. Pastors, Christian leaders, executive coaches, spiritual directors, and seminary and graduate students are named as specific audience recipients (p. x). Each chapter has a set of reflection questions for individual contemplation or group discussion.

The layout of the book includes an introduction to the foundations and challenges of leadership, an identification of ideal and toxic leaders, a Wesleyan spirituality as a model for change, and three components for pursuit in transformational leadership. These ideals are orthokardia, “right heart” centering on spiritual and emotional maturity; orthodynamis “right power” centering on motives and affections; and orthopraxis, “right practice” centering on righteous and just leadership. The effect is a model of a well-rounded, mature leader. While one should not correspond each quality with the parts named by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thess. 5:13, the organic whole is captured there: “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete.” The hope of the author is that the biblical model of leadership would be realized for Christian leaders by the power of the Holy Spirit. On this hope, the author is unwavering.

Two types of toxicity are primarily identified and expounded. The narcissist operates to accomplish the leader's own agenda for the organization, particularly furthering his or her own position or standing within it. Communication can be weak, foundations for decision-making can vacillate, and recognition of others is eclipsed by the leader's self-appropriation of credit. The obsessive/compulsive or perfectionistic leader operates with excessive control and a preoccupation with orderliness. Micromanagement is common, over-precision is employed, and the inadequacy of others causes frustration to the leader. Throughout the work, both are diagnosed and explained consistently with accuracy.

The insights into the psychology of the toxic leader are accurate and perceptive. The scholarship is sound, drawing definitions and symptoms from the more recognizable authors in the field: Conger, Kets de Vries and Miller, Furnham, and Kernberg. The analysis of narcissists and perfectionists is fascinating, illustrating specific patterns of behavior in a variety of ways. A narcissist displays a grandiose sense of self-importance in the organization as he or she is preoccupied with a fantasy of success or popularity, believes self to be special, shows a sense of entitlement, is interpersonally exploitative, lacks empathy, is often envious, and epitomizes arrogance (p. 35). Meanwhile, a perfectionist displays obsessive control in the organization as he or she is preoccupied with order and control, focuses on details and rules, interferes with task completion, excludes leisure and friends for work, displays inflexibility about morality, is reluctant to delegate, hoards resources, and shows rigidity and stubbornness in work relationships (p. 38-39). Both can be destructive to an organization and demoralizing to its workers. Various causes to these behaviors find assessment from recognizable scholars like Riemann, Kohlberg, Goleman, and Greenberg.

The insights into the theology of spiritual transformation are sound. The Wesleyan values of sanctification undergird a practical theology with principles that are biblical, in turn corresponding to psychology: anthropology incorporates personality theory, hamartiology explains psychopathy, and soteriology includes developmental psychology and therapy (p. 43). Psychology becomes the handmaiden of theology, seeking to identify and heal the mind that expresses spiritual, emotional, and mental dysfunctions of the Fall in organizational leadership. For example, "The vision of a narcissistic leader, which is often compelling and inspiring, reflects the leader's selfish needs and seldom the needs of the organization" (p. 20). However, "If support and gentle confrontations are balanced, narcissistic leaders can learn empathy slowly, become more grounded in reality, and gradually become more attuned to the core values of his or her company" (p. 83). Kilian has a vision that the inward, outward, and corporate domains of one's spirituality can contribute to formational leadership (p. 112). He recognizes with Wesley how salvation is both personal and social (p. 130), so that brokenness and healing will interact with both spheres. While the practices of development are individually initiated, the expectation is that the process be inevitably communal. After all, relationship is at the core of leadership.

The hallmark of the work is its amalgamation of three disciplines that bear on leadership studies. Kilian is admittedly "passionate about integrative studies" (p. ix), and his advanced degrees afford him the credibility to do so. His relational leadership development model "can thus be considered trans-disciplinary in character by integrating Wesleyan spirituality with two different sub-disciplines of behavioral sciences, namely leadership studies and developmental/clinical psychology" (p. 6). Since he integrates three threads of disciplines, most readers will grasp parts easily and read others very slowly. As a theologian, I sped through the Wesleyan spiritual theology, I slowed down in the leadership analysis, but I skidded into a construction zone as I processed the psychology of

leadership. Moving across disciplines makes one appreciate the integrative treatment and the diverse training of the author, but it forces a reader to move between familiarity and unfamiliarity. Yet, this integrative reality makes the work profound and readers need to assimilate disciplines to understand the complex parts constructing a toxic leader. The integrative nature of the work is challenging but rewarding.

While the divine agent for this leadership transformation is the Holy Spirit, the human agency remains somewhat unresolved by the author. The teleology of the enterprise is clearly the development of formational leadership: displaying authentic leadership (genuineness), emotional intelligence (awareness), and primal leadership (competence). However, the means to the teleology is inexact and at times seems simplistic. The toxic leader is least likely to participate in the available transformation. There is the expectation that a protective leader will acquire a therapist or coach (p. 78). Perhaps there is hope that leaders will read the book with a teachable attitude of self-recognition, “becoming more interdependent by being open to influence from others” (p. 82). Yet, the author admits that the personality entrenchment addressed here is the same great obstacle to change. There seems to be a hopeful element that followers will recognize and boldly coach the toxic leader. Yet, the risk is high, the likelihood is low, and the image of sticking one’s hand into the mouth of the lion suddenly materializes. Most toxic leaders are not on the road to transformation to accept the available advice offered here, such as: “Journaling feelings can be assigned as homework to help the leader raise his or her emotional awareness” (p. 83). Still, the book is the perfect resource for the leader who is open to change, and followers can at least learn about the qualities of their leader for greater empathy and opportunity. This author-coach offers numerous practices towards developing a transformational leadership that are strategic and unassuming.

The range of leadership dysfunction treated in this book is narrow; the author has identified and treated two significant, typical types of toxicity. Kilian has momentarily toured two offices in a workplace of toxic leaders. Meanwhile, McIntosh and Rima identify paranoia, co-dependence, and passive-aggressiveness as dark leadership personalities (p. 33). Apathy, isolation, and denial are detachment coping mechanisms that can be toxic. The omission of a range of toxicity is not a criticism of the work but a reflection on the complexity of this seemingly universal problem of leadership. For the two types of caustic leaders that are presented here, the analysis and advice is sound.

The pastoral spirit and style of the work is evident. The author lacks hubris, the analysis is never reproachful, and the effect is promising for all leaders. The scholarship and bibliography are thorough. The writing, editing, and clarity are impeccable. Two diagnostic questionnaires close the work to help identify leadership toxicity. The citations feel densely replete and only singularly referenced in most paragraphs, but it constantly affords the author scholarly credibility in his claims. The exposition of orthopraxis could profit from a wider set of illustrations, as the leadership irresponsibility in racial issues becomes the central social ill. While the poor get some attention, the universal leadership neglect of the sick, imprisoned, disabled, maladapted, and other socially marginalized populations could enrich orthopraxis understanding.

Kilian has made a significant contribution to understanding and empathizing with the toxic leader that deserves wide recognition. As theological principles identify sin (toxicity) and affirm good governance (leadership), they can confront psychological disorders plaguing churches and Christian organizations. This evokes confidence that our leaders can personally and professionally be transformed. We long for healthy, fair, and mature leaders. This book offers that hope.

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