

Theology of
Leadership
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Abigail Boggan, a student at Toccoa Falls College, created the cover artwork. She explains that Christian leadership is learning to sit in the hurt and brokenness of our lives and to embrace the changing of the seasons. In doing so, we see new life blooming as we rejoice in the brokenness, knowing that the Father is at work in our lives. Christian leadership is learning to step into the process of mourning, reflecting, and growing over and over again so that we can lead others through the same process. She hopes we never forget that our role as a leader is one of loving others deeply as we seek out the new growth that comes from seasons of brokenness.

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A NOTEWORTHY MILE-MARKER FOR THEORY AND PRACTIS

H. David Schuringa

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The publication of this issue marks the third year since Dr. Russell Huizing's vision for a scholarly journal on leadership sprung into reality. No matter how optimistic the launch of a new business, church plant or ministry, by year-three you will know, humanly speaking, whether it will succeed or fail.

So as TLJ launches its third volume, there is cause for solid hope that we have struck the right chord among scholars of leadership. The journal has been blessed with over 600 readers, over 80 of whom have offered to serve as Reviewers. The site attracts over 200 users a month on average. But why is it gaining such traction in academic circles? I think one part of the reason is our deliberate attention to the theory-praxis relationship.

When this continuum is visualized mainly as deductive—from theory to praxis—dangers of traditionalism or radicalism lurk. This is when the theory is formulated in isolation and willy-nilly applied to the praxis, come-what-may, since it's "right." Scholars, regardless of how much ministry experience we have under our belts, are essentially self-quarantined in the Ivory Tower, making it impossible to anticipate perfectly how our ideas will float in a fluid praxis. So, top-down directives risk being more like tossing hand grenades than life-rafts.

That said, when the T-P relationship only bubbles up inductively—from praxis to theory—pragmatism or chaos rears its ugly head. This is when theory formation is shelved for bottom-up tossed-salads of "what seems to work" (for the moment). However, while the praxis uncovers rich and vital information, lack of rigorous study perilously ignores necessary processes such as data collection, analysis, outcomes evaluation and reflection. At its worst, it scurries for proof-texts to justify action after the fact always falls flat or, at least, appears contrived.

Consequently, how should theory-formation and praxis-activation relate when seeking to make scholarly contributions from a Christian perspective within this *spaningsveld* for effective Christian leadership?

To present it succinctly: A Biblical approach is that theological theory-formation takes a faith-precedence, but never in a solely deductive manner. Such requires that when theory has projected a model, it must be tested in real life for feed-back into the next round of theory-formation and model production. This binary and interdependent tension ignites a kind of potency for empowering praxis and enlightening theory.

In other words, rather than top-down or bottom-up, this spirited, circular process never ceases due to the constantly-shifting praxis, which invariably sparks εὐαγγέλιον insights from God's Word forging the way for re-formed models. In this manner, practical theology comes into its own.

A well-known, long-popular Bible handbook poses the question as to why there are four gospels. Answer: because the story must be so important that it had to be told four times.

Unquestionably, the story is important.

However, we know that the evangelists (compare also Samuel-Kings to the Chronicler) demonstrate an inspired, thus prescribed, harmonious interplay between theory and praxis. The quartet of gospel writers is singing from the same hymn book, in perfect harmony, but with voice types and ranges that differ somewhat due to particular audiences and situations, and thus creating unique and targeted impact.

In this special issue of TLJ (as in those that have preceded), on the one hand, you will find articles that lean into the theory-formation end of the spectrum, such as the contributions of DiVietro, Cushman, Simon and the pair of book reviews. On the other hand, you will discover insightful praxis analyses such as the sharp and detailed research of Butler and Senses-Ozyurt, Mizzell and Henson, as well as that of Dunaetz and Bock.

All said, as we learn from leadership models past and present, and formulate new ones for the future, this lively, deductive-inductive interchange best operates in full-gear, ever-committed to the *weltanschauung* of God's Word for today's church, academy and society in organic wholeness. We seek truth for this truth in rapidly changing times; times that still leave me a little shell-shocked as just this past weekend I received blank stares when asking my tween and teen grandchildren whether they knew what a phone booth was. Or not.

If the Apostle says we now see but through a glass, darkly, needless to say, we do not claim to have all the answers. But we pray that TLJ will continue, in unwavering dependence upon God, to hit the right notes for actual formulation and application of a biblical theology for leadership. In so doing, as an editorial team headed by Dr. Huizing, with our gifted contributors, we seek to embody grateful followers of our Chief Shepherd, humble servants of our Faithful Leader.