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ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN COMPLEX TIMES

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Róbert Kovács, Wessel Bentley, Balázs Siba

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PREFACE

Dear Reader,

A great deal of work has gone into this volume, which we are extremely proud to place in your hands. After several years of preparation, the exceptionally successful *Christan Leadership Conference* was held in Budapest and some of the speakers were invited to have their papers included in this volume. The conference was both a precursor and a vehicle for the volume, insofar as it provided the forum where the ideas presented could be heard and tested in the discussions. The authors revised their thoughts based on their experiences in giving the presentations and the ensuing discussions. There was an opportunity for ideas to be matured and clarified. The conference also produced another volume: Volker Kessler, Angelika Marsch & Hans-Georg Wünch (eds.): *Leaders between role model and idol*. Zurich: LIT, 2025. This volume is a kind of twin publication, although by different authors.

The conference focused on a comparison and dilemma of two leadership patterns of leadership theory, idol and role model. This problem is therefore at the heart of this volume. Idol and role model-based leadership questions the nature, ethics, and the Christian character of leadership. Christian Leadership sees Jesus as a role model, a servant leader, and an understanding and inclusive leader – "… the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve…" (Matthew 20:28) – who sets a moral and spiritual example, but also as a visionary, transformational leader. These are the questions addressed in our volume.

We have divided the volume into three sections on ethical models: church organization, business/organizational aspects, and higher education. This book therefore covers different areas of theology, academia and business leadership. (1) In the section on church organizational models, the authors describe the workings of individual congregations, providing positive and negative examples that may be instructive for a wider audience. Authors such as Ghada Barsoum and Márk Birinyi are renowned and experienced practitioners. In a synthesis of theology and psychology, Rosalind Sigamoney offers a holistic and practical framework for training Christlike leaders who are both spiritually grounded and emotionally competent. (2) The business or management section focuses on an ethical approach to management. Susanne Thyroff and Volker Kessler write about silence as a neglected virtue of Christian leaders, the other authors in this block address issues such as the impact of the legal environment on

management (József Lugosi) or the specific management situation in medium-sized enterprises (Gyula Pulay). (3) The section on ethical models and education discusses, e.g., trustworthy leadership (Aaron Crabtree), the question of values (János Fehér), and the implications of church teachings for public finance education (Csaba Lentner and Katalin Bella).

This book is an international compilation of works by authors from multiple countries and continents. As such, it offers multiple viewpoints. The authors form a highly diverse community from Hungary, Germany, the United States, South Africa, and Egypt. The stories and cultures differ, but the Christian leadership approach is the same.

We are grateful to all our collaborators who made the realization of this book and previously the *Christian Leadership Conference* possible, especially to Barbara Dorogi, who was the heart of these projects.

We hope you find the papers interesting.

Róbert Kovács, Wessel Bentley and Balázs Siba
Editors

CHURCH MODELS

LEADERSHIP DURING A LOCKDOWN: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MAINTAINING CHURCH SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown have been a true test of leadership in different corners of the globe. This paper looks at the leadership approach of the Coptic Church in Egypt during this difficult time. While the Coptic Church has a hierarchical structure, the lockdown opened the way for innovative context-specific responses that varied across communities. This paper utilizes data from a survey of 68 Coptic priests in 48 churches throughout Egypt and nine case studies. The strategies adopted involved the then novel use of digital communication in offering spiritual service and the creation of new social, medical and economic support channels to congregants. The study concludes that organic "quiet" leadership approaches were present during the lockdown in order to continue service and to adapt to the lockdown situation.

Keywords: *Christian Leadership, COVID Pandemic, Coptic Church*

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Introduction

"Leadership is not a thing to hold, but a journey through the winds of time.
It is not a goal to reach but a bending towards the sun."[1]

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown were a historical moment of great intensity and magnitude. The pandemic was not only a medical and economic crisis, but also a psychological crisis due to the decline in people's wellbeing.[2] Research has documented how the pandemic impacted some of the factors which have long been considered to have an effect on subjective well-being: income, healthy life expectancy, social support, prevalence of generosity, and freedom of choice.[3] This has prompted the need for spiritual and pastoral services in different contexts. The pandemic has placed significant demands on all churches and spiritual leaders, namely through the closure of churches, a high volume of funeral services in many places, loneliness, and the impact of the lockdown. The Coptic Church in Egypt was no exception.

This paper aims to address the approach of the leadership of the Coptic Church in Egypt to service arrangements during the pandemic-induced lockdown. The Coptic Church is one of the oldest churches in the world, established in Egypt after the apostolic visit by St. Mark to Egypt in the first century. In terms of leadership structure, the Coptic Church is governed by a Holy Synod, composed of bishops and archbishops and headed by the Coptic Pope. The Coptic Church places particular emphasis on its history and its contributions to early Christianity, including the introduction of the monastic tradition.[4] The Church's history is marked by its separation from the Greco-Roman Byzantine world in the fifth century over theological schisms, and a legacy of subjugation under Arab rule.[5,6] The Coptic population of modern-day Egypt is estimated at fifteen million.[7] In recent decades, the Church has built a

[1] M. E. Moore: Leading Toward Excellence … But Whose Excellence?, *Religious Education*, 118(3), 2023, 181–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2023.2219382

[2] H.Zacher – C.W. Rudolph: Individual differences and changes in subjective well-being during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Am. Psychol. 76*(1), 2021, 50–62, https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000702; G. Barsoum – M. Majbouri: COVID-19's gendered effect on subjective wellbeing in MENA countries. *Scientific Reports*, *15*(1), 2025, 1574.

[3] Helliwell et al.: Social environments for world happiness. *World Happiness Rep.* 2020, 13–45, 2020.

[4] O. Meinardus: *Two thousand years of Coptic Christianity.* American Univ in Cairo Press, 2002.

[5] Aziz S. Atiya: *The Copts and Christian civilization.* Annual Frederick William Reynolds lecture; 42. Salt Lake City, Utah: Published by the University of Utah Press, 1979.

[6] Angaelos (Coptic Bishop of the UK): *The Altar in the Midst of Egypt. A Brief Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church.* Coptic Orthodox Church Center, Stevenage, U.K., 2000.

[7] *Egypt Today.* April 29, 2023. https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/124041/Pope-Tawadros-II-Number-of-Copts-15-million-in-Egypt

transnational presence with a large number of Coptic migrant churches in North America, Europe, and elsewhere.[8]

This paper shows that while the Coptic Church has a hierarchical structure, the lockdown opened the way for innovative context-specific responses that varied across communities. The analysis shows that church leaders played a pivotal role in: 1) transitioning to digital platforms for spiritual and pastoral services, including online prayer meetings, Bible studies, and Sunday school classes; 2) expanding community support initiatives, such as food distribution, financial assistance, and medical care for vulnerable parishioners; and 3) maintaining a spiritual connection with parishioners through innovative pastoral care methods, including tele-counseling and online support groups. The study underscores the importance of effective leadership in guiding religious institutions through crises, fostering resilience, and ensuring the continued spiritual and social well-being of their communities. The study concludes that the diversity of the experience and its context-specific nature constituted an organic "quiet"[9] leadership approach that was clearly manifest during the pandemic lockdown.

The study utilizes data from a survey of 68 Coptic priests in 48 churches throughout Egypt and five case studies. Data was collected using digital technology. As the study progressed, the role of leadership emerged as a significant and unanticipated theme. Leadership within Coptic churches proved to be a central factor in influencing how effectively these communities managed the difficult challenges of the pandemic. Pastoral leaders, clergy, and church administrators were often at the forefront of decision-making, guiding their congregations through a period marked by fear, isolation, and shifting public health mandates. These leaders were tasked with making difficult decisions, such as transitioning to virtual service, implementing safety protocols, and finding ways to maintain spiritual and emotional connections within their communities despite physical distancing. The emergence of leadership as a theme highlights its critical role in fostering resilience and adaptability within the Coptic Church during the pandemic. Leaders had to balance their traditional roles as spiritual guides with new responsibilities as crisis managers and innovators. This involved not only responding to immediate logistical challenges but also addressing the emotional and spiritual needs of congregants, many of whom experienced anxiety, loss, and disconnection.

By documenting the experiences of Coptic churches and recognizing the pivotal role of leadership, this study contributes to a broader understanding

[8] G. Botros: Religious identity as an historical narrative: Coptic Orthodox immigrant churches and the representation of history. *Journal of Historical Sociology,* 19(2), 2006, 174–201; M. Miličić: Rooting the Coptic Diaspora: Mediating Familiarity and Adapting Churches in the Netherlands. *Etnofoor, 35*(2), 2023, 67–83.

[9] D. Rock: *Quiet leadership*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006.

of how religious institutions can navigate crises and highlights the importance of leadership development tailored to the unique needs of faith-based communities. Regarding leadership, this paper highlights the role of "quiet" leadership[10] during the pandemic. The Coptic Church, though a hierarchical Church, gave its dioceses space to make decisions on opening and closing churches as the situation in each diocese allowed. Additionally, each local church responded to the needs of its congregants in a way that reflected the nature of the local community and its unique capacities.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The following section discusses the conceptual framework of church leadership and how COVID-19 was a true test of leadership. This is followed by a discussion of methodology. The findings of the study are divided into four subsections and are followed by the conclusion.

Conceptual Framework: Church Leadership and the Pandemic

The development of leaders in government, business, and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) has been the subject of extensive research, resulting in a robust body of knowledge that explores leadership theories, strategies, and practices. However, this depth and breadth of analysis have not been equally applied to the development of pastoral leaders, creating a significant gap in the literature. McKenna, Yost, and Boyd[11] argue that while other sectors benefit from well-established frameworks and empirical studies on leadership development, pastoral leadership remains underexplored, despite its critical role in guiding faith communities, fostering spiritual growth, and influencing social and cultural dynamics. This imbalance suggests the need for greater academic attention to the unique challenges and contexts of pastoral leadership, which differ significantly from those in other fields. Addressing this gap could enrich the understanding of leadership development in religious settings and provide more tailored approaches to support pastoral leaders in their multifaceted roles.

This context-specific nature of leadership[12] makes it challenging to directly borrow theories or models from fields like business, government, or nonprofit

[10] Rock: *Quiet leadership.*

[11] R.B. McKenna – P.R. Yost – T.N. Boyd: Leadership development and clergy: Understanding the events and lessons that shape pastoral leaders. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *35*(3), 2007, 179–189.

[12] E.g. D. Belchetz – K. Leithwood: Successful leadership: does context matter and if so, how?. In *Successful principal leadership in times of change: An international perspective*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2007, 117–138.

management to apply them in pastoral or religious contexts. Rojas and Alvarez[13] argue that while these fields share some features, such as the need for vision, influence, and decision-making, their foundational goals, values, and operational dynamics are fundamentally different. For instance, managerial leadership often emphasizes metrics, performance outcomes, and organizational growth, whereas pastoral leadership may prioritize relational depth, spiritual care, and the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership. Leadership and spirituality have often been treated as distinct and independent areas of academic study, with only limited exploration of their interconnectedness. Bindlish, Dutt, and Pardasani[14] highlight this separation, noting that leadership research tends to focus on concepts such as influence, decision-making, organizational effectiveness, and the development of skills and strategies to achieve specific goals. On the other hand, spirituality is generally studied in the context of personal growth, values, inner meaning, and the transcendental dimensions of the human experience.

Barentsen[15] highlights hybrid professionalization in pastoral leadership, with the religious leader acting as entrepreneur, sense-making guide, shaper of culture, and identity artist; this illustrates models of modern and postmodern leadership. Barentsen's hybrid model reflects both modern leadership, with its focus on structure, strategy, and tangible outcomes, and postmodern leadership, which emphasizes adaptability, relational dynamics, and meaning-making. This perspective underscores the unique and complex challenges faced by pastoral leaders, requiring them to blend traditional spiritual responsibilities with the adaptive skills of contemporary leadership. It also calls for a reevaluation of leadership development in religious contexts to prepare leaders for this diverse and dynamic role.

The concept of quiet leadership has gained traction in recent decades[16], with works emphasizing the power of subtle, thoughtful influence rather than loud, directive authority. Badaracco[17] argues that effective leadership is often demonstrated through small, incremental decisions that align with ethical integrity and long-term organizational success. Quiet leaders operate with pragmatism, recognizing the constraints of complex environments and the need for careful,

[13] R. Rojas – J. Alvarez: *The challenges of pastoral leadership: Concepts and practice*. AuthorHouse, 2012.

[14] P. Bindlish – P. Dutt – R. Pardasani: From growing convergence of spirituality and leadership towards a unified leadership theory. *Journal of spirituality, leadership and management*, 6(1), 2012, 3–23.

[15] J. Barentsen: Practicing religious leadership. In *The Routledge companion to leadership*, Routledge, 2016, 282–299.

[16] E.g. J. Badaracco: *Leading quietly: An unorthodox guide to doing the right thing.* Harvard Business Press, 2002; Rock: *Quiet leadership*; and A. Mahadevia: Quiet Leader, Loud Results: How Quiet Leaders Drive Outcomes that Speak for Themselves. *Post Hill Press*, 2022.

[17] Badaracco: *Leading quietly*.

strategic action.[18] Similarly, Rock[19] underscores the power of encouraging better thinking in others by improving the quality of conversations to create sustainable behavioral change in their teams instead of imposing solutions. This line of research challenges traditional notions of leadership as an extroverted or forceful endeavor, instead positioning it as an exercise in patience, deep listening, and guidance that fosters self-discovery and growth in others. Quiet leadership is, therefore, not about passivity but about thoughtful action, deep engagement, and long-term impact.[20]

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a surge in research on leadership responses across various sectors that was not matched in the field of religious leadership. There was a notable focus on the study of leadership in politics and government[21] and in government.[22] However, this rich body of research in the fields of politics and government contrasts sharply with the relative scarcity of studies on how leaders in other sectors—such as religious institutions, nonprofit organizations, or smaller community networks—responded to the pandemic. Pastoral leaders, in particular, faced unique challenges during COVID-19, such as maintaining spiritual connections in the absence of physical gatherings, addressing the emotional and psychological toll taken by the pandemic on their communities, and adapting traditional practices to virtual or socially distanced formats. The limited focus on these areas highlights an opportunity for future research to explore how leadership in faith-based and community organizations adapted to the pandemic and the lessons their experiences offer for navigating crises in contextually specific ways. This is but another reflection of the dearth of research on Christian leadership.

Writing during the lockdown, Pillay[23] emphasizes the need for churches to go beyond short-term adjustments and instead embrace long-term transformative practices that enable them to thrive in an increasingly uncertain and rapidly changing world. Adaptation, as highlighted by Pillay, refers to the capacity of churches to modify their structures, practices, and strategies in response to new challenges, such as the pandemic's disruption of traditional worship formats. Resilience, on the other hand, focuses on the ability of churches to withstand and recover from crises while maintaining their core identity and purpose. Pillay's work challenges churches to view crises not merely as obstacles to overcome but as opportunities to grow, innovate, and better align their

[18] Badaracco: *Leading quietly*.
[19] Rock: *Quiet leadership*.
[20] Mahadevia: *Quiet Leader*.
[21] E.g. S. Wilson: Pandemic leadership: Lessons from New Zealand's approach to COVID-19. *Leadership*, *16*(3), 2020, 279–293.
[22] E.g. P.H. Huang: Put more women in charge and other leadership lessons from COVID-19. *FIU L. Rev.*, *15*, 2021, 353.
[23] J. Pillay: COVID-19 shows the need to make churches more flexible. *Transformation*, *37*(4), 2020, 266–275.

missions with the needs of their communities. By emphasizing adaptation and resilience, Pillay shifts the focus from describing what churches did during the pandemic to exploring how they can leverage lessons learned to build a sustainable future. This perspective invites further research into how churches can develop leadership frameworks, community engagement strategies, and organizational models that are better equipped to navigate ongoing and future challenges.

Study Methodology

The study was designed as a descriptive investigation to document the experiences of Coptic churches in navigating the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its primary goal was to capture how these churches adapted their practices, maintained their communal and spiritual life, and responded to the disruptions brought about by the global health crisis. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by the Coptic community during an unprecedented period of uncertainty and change.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach. Its qualitative component focused on ten case studies with large notable services in the Coptic Church including the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Service and the Anba Abraam Service along with a number of churches. The quantitative analysis relied on responses from a survey conducted electronically with the help of the Church leadership. Questions focused on spiritual support, social and economic support, and organizational changes. The study was conducted by COPTICAD, one of the research arms of the Coptic Church.[24] The questionnaire was distributed with the help of the office of the Papal secretariat. Data was collected virtually in July 2020, at a time when the lockdown's restrictions were first easing.

The final sample included responses from 68 priests, reflecting the experience of 48 Coptic churches in Egypt. The majority of responses came from priests in urban areas (76%), with the rest (24%) coming from rural areas. In terms of geographic distribution, the urban sample was mainly drawn from the governorates of Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said. The rural sample was drawn from the governorates of Beni Suef, Menya, and Qena. All of them are in Upper Egypt.

[24] https://copticad.institute/

The Findings of the Study

Quiet Leadership at the Top

A close review of the chronology of the lockdown shows that despite the hierarchical nature of the Coptic Church, many decisions were left to the diocesan level, according to the discretion of the designated bishop or metropolitan. As in many other parts of the world, the week of March 21, 2020 was pivotal. On March 21, the Holy Synod's Permanent Committee met and called for churches to be closed for two weeks. Given the dioceses' different natures, with some being urban and others rural, and their varying socio-economic status, a follow-up decision was made on June 27, 2020 to delegate the decision about opening churches to different bishops. As the Pope is responsible for the churches of Cairo and Alexandria, the experiences of the various churches differed significantly. Churches under papal pastoral care re-opened with the exception of Sundays and Fridays – no other services were held. Another example is that of a bishopric where churches were opened on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays with social distancing; Sunday School was resumed. On September 11, 2020, churches in Cairo and Alexandria re-opened, including the weekends.

When strict lockdown resumed later in the year, H. H. Pope Tawadros II closed churches in Cairo and Alexandria, which are directly under his pastoral care, on December 6, 2020. However, and similarly to earlier decisions, the decision regarding the level of strictness of the lockdown was left to the bishops in other dioceses. This delegation of the decision, which stands against the tradition of a hierarchical church, represents the first form of a quiet organic approach to leadership that was manifest during this time of profound uncertainty.

Spirituality Going Digital

A defining characteristic of service during lockdown was the use of digital technology in reaching out to locked down congregants. As shown by Figure-1, 59% of the priests surveyed highlighted the use of technology as an opportunity that was created during the lockdown. In one case study, the priest noted:

21 WhatsApp groups were created for all categories of the church congregants, so we could follow up on them daily. We held a daily competition that included questions from the Bible. A Sunday school activity was held for primary and preparatory school children daily through social media. Additionally, we held an online preaching festival in which the children participated and excelled. They were honored and prizes were distributed to them through the church

(Abu Sefein and Martyr Wanas Church, Madinat Al Salam, Cairo; interview, July, 2020).

Case studies abound with similar quotes of church leaders who leveraged technology to continue the service. This, however, was not an option in villages where internet access is not commonly available, particularly to poor congregants.

The second highlighted issue was labeled as discovering new talent, which referred to efforts to increase the pool of servants to include unconventional groups. The two key groups were primarily drawn from the youth. The first was composed of those who could help with ICT training and support and the second included youth who could help in the delivery of food and basic necessities for those locked down due to illness or need.

The third highlighted opportunity was the updating of the congregation database. Updating the roster of families is a common concern of church leaders given the fact that some families can move in or out of the community. Generally, family registration is made using a paper-based method. A few churches, mainly those in upper-middle-class-areas, could have systems for online registration as shown by the data.

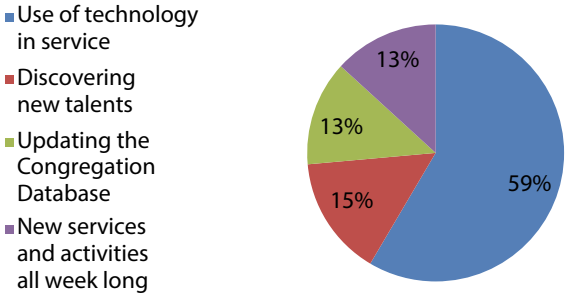

Figure 1. Opportunities Created During Lockdown

Figure 1 indicates that church leaders were keen to highlight the introduction of new services into the congregation. A follow-up question highlights the key newly introduced services. These are shown in Table 1. As multiple answers were allowed, Table 1 shows that 64% highlighted the introduction of remote medical services through volunteer doctors. These doctors provided multiple services that are further highlighted in Table 2. Other newly introduced services included reliance on ICT-savvy youth who could help in setting up new systems (selected by 34% of respondents) or training others (highlighted by 15% of respondents); reliance on youth to take part in the delivery of meals to the sick (selected by 32% of respondents) or to drive sick people to clinics (highlighted by 18% of respondents). Additionally, a quarter of the respondents (26%) viewed meal preparation as a key service for the sick.

Table 1. Types of newly introduced services

Newly Introduced Services	Responses %
Remote medical service through volunteering doctors	64%
ICT-savvy youth helping in setting new systems	34%
Youth taking part in delivery of meals	32%
Meals prepared for people who were sick with COVID-19	26%
Volunteer Drivers to take COVID-19 patients to clinics	18%
ICT-savvy youth training others on technology	15%

Providing medical support to congregants was another key service, to be discussed in more detail below. Summarizing the services offered, the following quote lists all the approaches adopted by one church in the governorate of Bani Suef. The priest notes:

> All services continued (during the pandemic) except for Sunday school for the primary and preparatory levels, and there are two priests, the number of families served is 500 families. We had a medical service, where we brought oxygen devices and medicines to quickly deal with patients in the area. The pandemic also allowed for the discovery of new servants, making good use of the tremendous energies of young people (St. Mark's Church, Beba and Fashn District, Beni Suef Diocese).

This quote puts, in a nutshell, the details of the service in one church as its leadership sought to adapt to the pandemic-induced situation. The survey's data also shows that 82% of the participating priests stressed the importance of spiritual pastoral care and prayer meetings using digital technology. One respondent noted in explanation that "prayer is the key to heaven and the door of hope for everyone." Regarding the frequency of prayer meetings, survey data showed that 32% met with the congregation for prayer once a week, while 22% indicated that they met with the congregation for prayer daily (at a fixed time agreed upon). This demonstrates that the church's spiritual focus is on reaching out to congregants, "as one heart to commune with God, fulfilling God's promise that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is in their midst," as one priest put it. Another priest also emphasized the continuous encouragement to pray at all times "because it makes individuals feel the peace of God that fills their hearts to face any crisis."

Given the importance of focusing on children and youth, a large number of priests (87%) reported that their churches continued to provide Sunday School service remotely. This highlights the Church's concern for all age groups and that they did not leave children to face their fears alone during this time. Communication with the served individuals included social media, phone calls,

and conducting "competitions" for Bible studies that were sent to homes, mostly in a digital format as the data shows.

The Service Going Medical

As medical needs were central during the pandemic, the survey tool included questions on the specific services offered by the church servants. An overwhelming 90% of respondents highlighted raising awareness of the pandemic and prevention of its spread. The organization of the service of medical consultation was highlighted by a large majority (68% of church leaders). More technical medical services were also organized, including the provision of support in finding beds for patients in hospitals (mentioned by 44% of respondents) and the task of making oxygen cylinders available to very sick people (mentioned by 32%). This data can be understood in light of the pressure exerted on the healthcare system at the time and the unavailability of services to many people, particularly to those from a lower socio-economic background. Churches and church leaders leveraged all possible resources to support those in need in this difficult time, as shown by Table 2.

Table 2. The Introduction of Medical Services

Service	Responses %
Health education and awareness about the pandemic	90%
Made oxygen cylinders available to patients	32%
Provided medical consultation remotely	68%
House visits	18%
Referred patients to hospitals	44%

These results can be understood in light of the health care situation in the country, which was severely tested by the pandemic.

Addressing the Economic Challenges

The economic impact of the lockdown and the pandemic was felt by many people. Almost all church leaders noted that their churches had to provide temporary financial assistance to people who were economically affected (91%). This was followed by the service of providing guidance and support to find work for those who lost their jobs (highlighted by 37% of respondents). The third approach was to provide food boxes, which was highlighted by 11% of

church leaders. The level of support was naturally determined by the church's capacity to provide support to these families.

Table 3. Services targeting those economically affected

Service	Number of churches provided
Providing temporary financial assistance	91%
Guidance and assistance in finding a job opportunity	37%
Distributing in-kind assistance "food boxes"	11%

Table 3 highlights the severity of the economic situation during the pandemic. These local churches had to respond to the people's real needs at a time of great hardship.

Concluding Remarks: What Leadership Lessons Can Be Learned from the COVID Experience?

The leadership approach during the COVID-19 crisis postulated an organic "quiet" leadership approach that was manifest at two levels. At the level of the Pope and the Holy Synod, the decision to open, partially open, or close churches in different dioceses was left to be made by each metropolitan or diocesan bishop based on the local situation. This delegation of the decision allowed for a more localized response to be made to the needs and situations of different congregations. The decisions made at the level of the Pope and the Holy Synod, such as changes in communion methods and adjustments to face-to-face Sunday School meetings, were not uniformly implemented but rather were adapted to the specific contexts of each diocese. This approach acknowledged the diversity of experiences among congregations, allowing bishops to evaluate their local conditions and the needs of their communities.

At the level of the local church, another form of leadership was evident, as marked by a number of characteristics. There was a clearly organic approach to the formulation of service, determined by the talent within the community and the available resources. As is common in the Coptic church, the service relied on the labor of the laity, whether in providing medical care, support to the needy, or support with the adoption of technology. The very unusual nature of these services opened the door for a stronger presence of youth and women. New and innovative services were developed, emphasizing a partnership model within church communities. The empowerment of lay members allowed for a more inclusive participation in the church's mission and activities. With this

empowerment came new ideas that were closely responsive to the needs of the members of the community.

Rather than centering on a singular leader's role, the services introduced during the pandemic and the initiatives taken in response to it highlighted collaboration among members, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

The experience of the lockdown highlighted the adoption of an organic "quiet" leadership approach within the context of the Coptic church. This form of leadership allowed individuals within the different communities to take the initiative and continue church services in creative ways, demonstrating resilience and adaptability.

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ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICES IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH: ELDERS AND DEACONS AS ROLE MODELS OF SERVANTHOOD

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Abstract

This paper explores the historical development and theological significance of the ecclesiastical offices of elder and deacon in the early Christian church. Drawing on biblical texts such as 1 Peter 5:1–2, Acts 20:28, and Acts 6:1–6, and incorporating insights from Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and ecumenical scholarship, the study demonstrates how these offices functioned as models of servant leadership. It places emphasis on the dual responsibilities of spiritual oversight and practical service—with elders providing pastoral care and deacons addressing material needs. Its analysis shows that true leadership is measured not by the accumulation of power but by humility, mutual accountability, and selfless service, offering enduring lessons for contemporary ministry.

Keywords: *elder; deacon; church leadership; ecclesiastical offices; servant leadership*

[1] The author utilized the DeepL online translation tool during the translation of the study from Hungarian into English.

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Introduction

The early Christian community, emerging in a complex socio-religious environment marked by both profound spiritual challenges and urgent material needs, was compelled to devise innovative models of leadership that deviated markedly from prevailing hierarchical systems. In the context of its rapid expansion, the nascent church faced the dual imperative of nurturing the spiritual well-being of its diverse adherents while also addressing the practical exigencies of a growing community, such as the distribution of resources and care for the vulnerable. Rather than instituting offices solely for the purposes of centralizing authority—an approach characteristic of the imperial structures of the Roman world—the early Church deliberately established the offices of elder and deacon as complementary, service-oriented roles. The office of elder was primarily designed to safeguard and disseminate apostolic teaching, ensuring that the community remained doctrinally sound and spiritually vibrant. In contrast, the office of the deacon emerged to manage the community's logistical and charitable functions, thereby allowing the elders to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Rooted in New Testament tradition (cf. 1 Peter 5:1–2; Acts 20:28; Acts 6:1–6), these offices were conceived not as instruments of autocratic control but as models of servanthood—designed to reflect the radical ethos of Christ's own ministry, which emphasized humility, mutual accountability, and selfless service (cf. Mark 10:45). Over the subsequent centuries, these roles have been rigorously examined and continually refined across a spectrum of theological traditions, including Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and broader ecumenical scholarship. Contemporary academic discourse affirms that true ecclesiastical leadership is measured not by the accumulation of power, but by the ability to serve as a living embodiment of Christlike humility. This study examines the biblical foundations, historical evolution, and contemporary relevance of the offices of elder and deacon, drawing on an extensive array of scholarly sources to demonstrate that these roles continue to offer enduring insights into the practice of servant leadership in the modern church.

The Biblical Foundations of Ecclesiastical Offices

The New Testament provides explicit instructions regarding the qualifications and responsibilities of elders. In 1 Peter 5:1–2, elders are exhorted to shepherd the flock "not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly," while Acts 20:28 implores them to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock." These passages stress the need for personal integrity and a deep commitment to the community's spiritual welfare.

Protestant scholars such as Stott and Fee[2] argue that the biblical elder is fundamentally a spiritual overseer whose primary function is to nurture, protect, and guide the community in faith. This view was reinforced by reformers such as Luther and Calvin,[3] whose writings emphasize that true pastoral leadership stems from a personal relationship with God and is expressed through servant leadership rather than authoritarian command. Catholic and ecumenical sources—including the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*[4] and the *Catholic Encyclopedia*—consistently describe early church elders (or presbyters) as shepherds entrusted with the spiritual care of the faithful. Ware[5] explains that in the Orthodox tradition, the elders' pastoral role is seen as an extension of the priesthood, characterized by communal participation and mutual accountability.

The appointment of deacons is recorded in Acts 6:1–6, where the apostles selected seven men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" to manage the distribution of food to widows—thus enabling the apostles to devote themselves to prayer and preaching. The qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 emphasize personal integrity, self-control, and a good reputation, reinforcing that the deacon's ministry is as much about character as it is about competence in service. Protestant commentators such as Marshall and Lloyd-Jones[6] point out that the deacon's role mirrors Christ's own ministry of service (cf. Mark 10:45). Calvin[7] asserts in his *Institutes* that every ecclesiastical office, including that of the deacon, is established for the common good, with service as its defining feature. Catholic sources, notably the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), describe deacons as ministers of charity and service, a tradition reinforced by scholars such as Küng and Kasper, who link early deaconal ministry with both liturgical practices and modern social outreach. Ecumenical works, such as *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,*[8] portray the deacon as a servant leader who bridges the gap between the clerical hierarchy and the lay community, while Zizioulas[9] emphasizes that in the Orthodox tradition the diaconate serves as a living witness to the incarnational reality of Christ's ministry.

[2] J. Stott: *The Message of Acts.* InterVarsity Press, 1990; G. Fee: *1 Timothy / Titus* (New International Commentary on the New Testament). Eerdmans, 1987.

[3] M. Luther: *Small Catechism.* Concordia Publishing House, 1983. (Original work published 1529); J. Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Westminster John Knox Press, 1960. (Original work published 1559).

[4] P. Quinn – E. McCloskey (eds.): *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary.* Prentice Hall, 1990.

[5] B.K. Ware: *The Orthodox Church.* Penguin Books, 1993.

[6] I.H. Marshall: *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary.* InterVarsity Press, 1978; D.M. Lloyd-Jones: *The Church According to Scripture. Banner of Truth,* 1991.

[7] Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion.*

[8] L. Cross – E. Livingstone (eds.): *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd edn.). Oxford University Press, 2005.

[9] J. Zizioulas: *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church.* St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.

The Office of the Elder as a Model of Spiritual Leadership

Elders are tasked with a dual responsibility: to serve as exemplars of personal holiness and as stewards of the church's spiritual life. The directive in Acts 20:28—to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock" encapsulates this dual mandate. Beyond administrative oversight, the elder's role is intrinsically pastoral, involving the guidance, teaching, and correction of the community with humility and love. Fee and Stott[10] contend that pastoral care is the primary function of the elder, a task that requires both spiritual depth and humility. Bavinck[11] emphasizes that this pastoral function is inseparable from the communal nature of the church, where every member is called to mutual service. From a Catholic perspective, documents such as *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1968) stress that authentic leadership involves serving the people by modeling the life of Christ.

A recurrent theme in both biblical and historical texts is the warning against idolizing church leaders. Elders must guard against transforming their office into an object of veneration; instead, their leadership should be characterized by transparency, accountability, and service. Scholars such as Wright and Wells[12] have noted that excessive veneration of leaders disrupts the essential dynamics of mutual accountability within the church. This concern was echoed by reformers such as Luther and Calvin,[13] who insisted that ecclesiastical authority must always be exercised within the framework of communal accountability.

The Office of The Deacon: Practical Service and Humility

The origin of the diaconate, as recounted in Acts 6:1–6, represents a pivotal moment in early church organization. Delegating practical tasks to deacons not only relieved the apostles of administrative burdens but also established a model of distributed ministry that addressed both spiritual and material needs. Marshall and Moo[14] argue that the establishment of deaconship was a deliberate strategy designed to embody the values of the gospel by attending to the needs of the vulnerable. Greenleaf[15] reinforces the view that effective leadership is best demonstrated through service instead of through the exercise

[10] G. Fee: *1 Timothy / Titus*; Stott: *The Message of Acts.*

[11] H. Bavinck: *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1: The Christian Faith.* Baker Academic, 2004.

[12] N.T. Wright: *Scripture and the Authority of God.* SPCK, 2004; D. Wells: *No Place for Truth: The Challenge of Orthodoxy.* Eerdmans, 1999.

[13] Luther: *Small Catechism;* Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion.*

[14] Marshall: *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*; D.J. Moo: *The Book of Acts.* Eerdmans, 1996.

[15] R.K. Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (25th Anniversary edn.). Paulist Press, 2002.

of power. The Catholic Church continues to honor the diaconate as a distinct ministry, as evidenced in *Lumen Gentium* (1964), which reaffirms the critical role deacons play in charity, the liturgy, and pastoral care.

The practical manifestation of the deacon's role is a vivid expression of the call to serve. Whether managing benevolence programs, organizing social outreach initiatives, or assisting in liturgical functions, deacons consistently model a lifestyle that prioritizes the needs of others. Lloyd-Jones and Keller[16] have demonstrated that effective deaconal service not only meets material needs but also inspires the broader congregation to adopt a culture of service. Furthermore, scholars such as Küng and Kasper have documented the evolution of the deaconate while affirming its foundational calling to serve the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable. Zizioulas[17] observes the same attitude to the diaconate within the Orthodox tradition, where it serves as a vital bridge between the divine and the human.

Complementary Roles and Historical Context

The early Church's dual leadership structure—where elders provided spiritual oversight and deacons managed practical matters—was a strategic response to the diverse needs of a growing community. This balanced division of labor ensured that neither the spiritual nor the material aspects of ministry were neglected. Early church sources such as Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the writings of Origen and Cyprian establish the foundational roles of both offices in maintaining the health of the church. During the Reformation, figures such as Luther and Calvin revitalized these roles by emphasizing the "priesthood of all believers" and challenging any concentration of power. Contemporary scholars including Packer, Keller, and Bavinck[18] continue to affirm that this model of distributed ministry remains highly relevant for addressing modern ecclesiastical challenges.

Modern congregations face a host of challenges—ranging from declining membership and shifting demographics to rapid cultural and technological changes—that demand leadership approaches which are both adaptive and distributed. In this context, the model of the early Church offers a rich repository of insights, as it seamlessly integrated spiritual leadership with practical service. By studying this model, contemporary ministries can learn to balance

[16] Lloyd-Jones: *The Church According to Scripture*; T. Keller: *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City.* Zondervan, 2012.

[17] Zizioulas: *Being as Communion.*

[18] J.I. Packer: *Knowing God.* InterVarsity Press, 2001; Keller: *Center Church*; Bavinck: *Reformed Dogmatics.*

the nurturing of spiritual life with the need to address everyday practicalities, thus ensuring that all aspects of church life are well-managed.

In today's dynamic environment, relying on a single leader or a rigid hierarchical structure can lead to bottlenecks in decision-making and an increased risk of burnout. Distributed leadership involves the delegation of responsibilities among various leaders, each bringing their unique skills and perspectives to the table. This approach allows for more agile responses to the multifaceted challenges facing modern congregations. It echoes the early church's practice of sharing responsibilities among elders and deacons, which not only optimized effective leadership but also fostered a sense of collective ownership and accountability.

The early Church's organizational structure was characterized by a dual focus: spiritual oversight was balanced with practical service. This model ensured that the community's spiritual needs were met while also attending to the tangible aspects of daily life, such as resource management and social outreach. By integrating these two dimensions, early church leaders created a robust framework that promoted resilience and sustainability. Modern congregations can benefit from this historical precedent by incorporating similar practices—where spiritual guidance and practical service are not seen as mutually exclusive but as complementary pillars of ministry. Effective leadership in any context requires a foundation of rigorous training and mentorship. Comprehensive educational programs, as advocated by influential voices such as Stott and Fee,[19] are crucial for preparing both elders and deacons. These programs provide the necessary theological grounding, practical ministry skills, and ethical frameworks for leaders to be able to navigate the complexities of contemporary ministry. Moreover, mentorship programs create supportive networks that help emerging leaders develop resilience, thereby reducing the risk of burnout. Clear definitions of roles are equally vital. When responsibilities are well delineated, each leader understands their unique contribution within the larger organizational framework. This clarity minimizes overlap, reduces internal conflicts, and ensures that every aspect of the ministry—from spiritual care to administrative duties—is addressed efficiently. Such an environment not only fosters individual accountability but also enhances overall team performance, leading to a more sustainable and mission-focused ministry.

A concept of servant leadership central to this discussion is Greenleaf's,[20] which continues to shape contemporary ecclesiastical practice. Greenleaf's model emphasizes that true leadership is defined not by the accumulation of power, but by the ability to serve others. In modern congregations, this means that leaders are called to prioritize the needs of their community, cultivating

[19] Stott: *The Message of Acts*; G. Fee: *1 Timothy / Titus.*
[20] Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership.*

a culture of empathy, humility, and mutual respect. By placing service at the forefront of their leadership style, church leaders can create environments that are inclusive and responsive to the evolving needs of their congregants.

The enduring relevance of ancient ecclesiastical models is further underscored by ecumenical resources such as The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church[21] and the seminal works of John Zizioulas.[22] These texts provide a broader historical and theological context, illustrating how early church practices can inform modern ecclesiology across various traditions. They offer valuable insights into the ways in which ancient leadership models can be adapted to address contemporary challenges—bridging the gap between historical wisdom and modern innovation.

In summary, modern congregations require leadership that is both distributed and adaptive—a model that draws from the dual legacy of the early Church, where spiritual oversight was harmoniously integrated with practical service. By investing in effective training, fostering mentorship, and establishing clear definitions of roles, church leaders can build resilient and sustainable ministries. Influential scholars such as Stott (1990), Fee (1987), and Greenleaf[23] (2002), along with comprehensive resources like Cross & Livingstone and Zizioulas,[24] provide a robust foundation for reimagining ecclesiastical leadership in today's complex and rapidly evolving context.

Within the specific context of the Hungarian Reformed Church, ongoing social challenges and evolving cultural dynamics call for a renewed emphasis on servant leadership. By embracing the historical model of distributed ministry—where elders provide spiritual guidance and deacons address practical needs—the Hungarian Reformed Church can strengthen both its internal cohesion and its public witness. Drawing on insights from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions, church leaders in Hungary are encouraged to develop innovative training and mentorship programs that foster humility, accountability, and effective service.

Conclusion

As this study has demonstrated, the early Christian offices of elder and deacon offer a leadership model that is not only historically significant but is also profoundly relevant to today's ecclesiastical challenges. The offices of elder and deacon were established not to assert dominion, but rather to serve the

[21] Cross – Livingstone: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.*
[22] Zizioulas: *Being as Communion.*
[23] Stott: *The Message of Acts*; Fee: *1 Timothy / Titus*; Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership.*
[24] Cross – Livingstone: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*; Zizioulas: *Being as Communion.*

multifaceted needs of the community. In doing so, they laid a foundation for leadership that is deeply rooted in servanthood, humility, and the strategic delegation of responsibilities—a model that remains profoundly relevant for contemporary church governance. Christian leadership is fundamentally anchored in theological principles that emphasize service over authority. As illustrated in Mark 10:45, where Christ declared, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," the model of leadership advanced in the early Church stresses self-sacrifice, humility, and relational discipleship (Holy Bible, New International Version). According to this theological foundation, leaders should remain accountable, ethically driven, and committed to the well-being of the community. Modern church governance can benefit from such a paradigm by ensuring that leaders are, first and foremost, servants—a principle echoed in Greenleaf's seminal work on servant leadership.[25] In contemporary church administration, the roles of spiritual oversight and practical governance often intersect. The clear division made by the early Church between the roles of elders and deacons offers a valuable framework for addressing this intersection. Elders were entrusted with preserving doctrinal integrity and providing pastoral care, tasks which required not only theological depth but also the capacity to mentor and inspire their communities. Conversely, deacons managed practical concerns such as resource allocation and community welfare, which necessitated robust administrative skills and a sensitivity to social outreach. This dual structure promotes balanced leadership by reducing burnout and enhancing overall efficiency, which suggests that modern ecclesiastical structures might benefit from a similar delineation of responsibilities.[26] One of the enduring lessons of early Christian leadership is the importance of accountability. The communal decision-making and mutual oversight observed in the early Church, notably during events like the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), underscore the necessity of transparency and ethical conduct in leadership roles. Contemporary church governance must prioritize transparency in decision-making processes, ethical financial stewardship, and the active prevention of autocratic practices. By fostering a culture of accountability, modern church leaders can maintain the integrity of their institutions, build trust among congregants, and mitigate the risks of institutional corruption.[27] The servant leadership model, as demonstrated by early church leaders, presents a robust alternative to hierarchical or power-centric leadership structures. In today's context, this model calls for leaders who place the needs of their community above personal ambitions.

[25] Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership.*
[26] M.J. Wilkins: *Church Leadership in the Biblical Tradition.* Oxford University Press, 2006.
[27] G. Barna: *The Power of Vision: How You Can Capture and Apply God's Vision for Your Life and Ministry.* Zondervan, 2002.

Servant leadership encourages collaboration, inclusivity, and empathy—qualities that not only enhance internal community relations but also resonate with a broader societal shift toward participatory and ethical leadership. This model has been extensively articulated by Greenleaf,[28] who posited that true leadership emerges from a commitment to serving others rather than accumulating power or status. Such an approach is particularly crucial as churches seek to engage a diverse and often skeptical modern audience. Contemporary churches confront a host of challenges including declining membership, generational shifts, and evolving societal attitudes toward religious institutions. A leadership framework based on biblical servant leadership can counter these challenges by promoting an environment that values engagement, innovation, and relational ministry. By investing in comprehensive mentorship programs, dynamic leadership development initiatives, and fostering cross-generational dialogue, churches can build resilient and adaptive leadership structures. Integrating modern organizational theories with these timeless biblical principles offers a pathway toward sustainable growth and mission-oriented governance.[29]

In sum, the leadership principles derived from the early Christian offices of elder and deacon remain vital for contemporary church governance. Embracing a model that harmonizes spiritual oversight with practical service, emphasizes accountability, and champions servanthood can transform modern ecclesiastical leadership. As churches navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing global landscape, the lessons gained from early ecclesiastical leadership provide a robust framework for cultivating resilient, ethical, and Christ-centered governance. The continued study and practical application of these principles will be critical to shaping the future of Christian leadership, ensuring that it remains both theologically sound and operationally effective.

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[28] Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership.*

[29] D. Willard: *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship.* HarperOne, 2006.

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EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP IN DISCIPLESHIP: EXPERIENCES FROM AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract

In the Evangelical-Lutheran Theological University (Budapest), the idea of participatory action research and the concept of intentional discipleship and small discipleship groups have converged, suggesting a new type of leadership behavior within the Church. The combination of theological reflection and empirical research can be effectively translated into practice through participatory action research conducted in an interdenominational context, thereby assisting Christian congregations in striving for relevant and vibrant Christ-like leadership and discipleship in a changing world. The concept of empowering leadership is a key term in both modern social sciences and the field of discipleship. This paper aims to examine the practical aspects of empowering leadership within the realm of discipleship, based on experiences from the participatory action research group "Banding Together", with a particular focus on leadership behavior.

Keywords: *empowerment, discipleship, small groups, participation, action research*

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Introduction – What is Discipleship?

The practical foundational question of Christian discipleship – "How does one become a disciple of Christ today?" – explores the nature of the disciple's life and its practical realization in a modern context. It thus falls under practical theology, specifically missiology and congregational pedagogy. Based on research addressing the future of Christianity from the perspectives of congregational pedagogy and missiology, it can be determined that two opposing processes are occurring within Christianity. In the Western world, one can observe that the Church is struggling significantly to engage the younger generation and contemporary communities, showing signs of decline.[1] In contrast, in Africa, South America, and Asia, Christianity exhibits a picture of dynamic development, typically characterized by a Pentecostal and charismatic emphasis.[2] Predictions suggest that Christianity will remain dominant in these areas over the coming decades and will even experience substantial growth that is not due merely to demographic characteristics.[3] This implies that there is still potential within Christianity to reach new people; however, essential characteristics that would unlock this potential are missing from current European and Western practices.

Leaders belonging to various denominations have recently started seeking ways to change church practices in light of these processes. Feeling the necessity for a cultural shift, new community forms are emerging, and a reimagining of older forms has begun to foster a sense of community among those entrusted to our churches.[4] This development points toward the concept of intentional discipleship. In addition to the existing thinking present in historical Christian churches, which labels every program and activity of the Church under the concept of discipleship,[5] one can discover pathways that consciously focus on the practical realization of discipleship, reaching and teaching new individuals entering the community.[6] Upon examining the biblical and

[1] Research on the situation of Christianity in Western Europe and Central Europe. Conrad Hackett – Alan Cooperman: *The Changing Global Religious Landscape*, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/ (accessed 2 September 2024).

[2] Research on the religious habits of young people. Stephen Bullivant: Europe's Young Adults and Religion 2018, https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf (accessed 3 September 2024).

[3] Key findings from the Global Religious Futures Project. Pew Research Center 2022. December 21, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/12/21/key-findings-from-the-global-religious-futures-project/ (accessed 5. September 2024).

[4] Pángyánszky, Ágnes: Kontextuális kérdésfelvetések a gyülekezetpedagógiában. *Lelkipásztor*, 2020/5. sz. 173.

[5] Debra Dean Murphy: Discipleship, in. G.T. Kurian – M.A. Lamport: *Encyclopedia of Christian Education.* 2015. Rowman & Littlefield, http://site.ebrary.com/id/11054927 (accessed 15 May 2024).

[6] The work of Christian Schwarz, Rick Warren, and Timothy Keller, among others, and the movements that have developed around them, are of particular significance.

church-historical roots of intentional discipleship and modern practices, an interesting conclusion can be drawn: something is fundamentally missing from today's congregational practice.

Realms of Discipleship: Jesus, John Wesley, and Modern Practice

The master's footsteps: the realms of discipleship of Jesus the Nazarene

Jesus and his disciples turned the ancient world upside down. In examining communal and relational functioning in the Gospels, it may be noted that, alongside personal relationships (e.g., Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman) and public preaching (feeding the five thousand), the uniqueness of Jesus' ministry lay in his wandering together with his disciples in a larger group of friends, consistently investing time in them for three years. An assessment of communal forms shows that the broader circle of disciples included 72, while the narrower circle contained 12 disciples, in addition to an internal group of four including Peter, James, John and Jesus himself. One study notes, based on the lists in the Gospels, that the 12 disciples can also be categorized into smaller groups of four.[7] The New Testament provides other examples of various sizes of small communities functioning and cooperating together.[8]

John Wesley's overlapping system of groups

If one examines the operations of the 18th-century Methodist movement and revival in England, one finds a fairly similar structure there as well. John Wesley's Methodist revival movement was built upon the dynamic cooperation of different types of communities.[9] 18th-century Methodists practiced four kinds of community beyond intensive personal relationships (see detailed correspondence): they revolutionarily reinstituted public outdoor worship, and organized societies, class meetings, and bands. This fourfold community operated in an overlapping system, from addressing interests to organizing groups, extending to deep personal character development.[10] The smallest was the discipleship

[7] Carl W. Wilson: *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building*: *The Ministry Methods of Jesus*. Oviedo FL, Andragathia Books, 2012, 144–145.

[8] As an example in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the home churches, the Antioch circle, and the circles of the disciple of Paul: Acts 13:1–3, 20:4–5.

[9] D. Michael Henderson: *John Wesley's Class meeting: A model for making disciples.* Wilmore, Rafiki Books, 1997, 81–122.

[10] Robby Gallaty: *Rediscovering Discipleship*. Zondervan. 2015. https://www.perlego.com/book/558341 (accessed: 22 March 2024).

group containing 3-5 members, the band, which sometimes functioned as a confessional community, acting as a catalyst for personal faith experience and formation. The class consisted of 12-15 members and was organized locally as a place to learn about Christian living. The societies were larger worship communities where classes organized in one area held joint meetings, listened to preaching, and sang together. Two other types of groups were also established by the Methodists, the selected society, which served as a leaders' training group, and the penitential band for individuals struggling with addictions and behavioral issues. Continuously practiced public preaching represented the form that most effectively reached the uneducated masses. The bands were those small groups where the proclaimed "message transitioned from printed text to living speech, from personal to communal, and from cognitive to emotional levels, transforming private matters into communal issues."[11] These groups focused on attuning each participant to the heart of Christ, meaning the group members experienced how much Christ loves them through the recognition of their own brokenness, thus becoming capable of change. The requirements of the groups were quite strict by today's standards, but participation was voluntary. These were always gender-segregated groups, and they met at least once a week, although many gathered multiple times a week for personal accountability and encouragement. In these small discipleship groups, honesty, loyalty, and reliability were emphasized as core values.[12]

Contemporary practice

Today's congregational practice is characterized by personal relationships; in general, there is a type of group functioning, and there is the worship community and some kind of public service or social presence. What is typically lacking in organized congregational practice is conscious, structured small discipleship groups of 3-5 people. In addition to one-on-one connections or connections on large community platforms, there is an opportunity to consciously promote small group connections for the purpose of building faith. This is what is missing in today's congregational practice. A discipleship small group in congregational life is a small group that has a conscious goal of personal faith growth and spiritual formation.[13] In these groups, the level of commitment and the boundary of inclusivity are determined by the personal decisions of the group members. Discipleship groups connect individuals into

[11] David Hempton: *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005, 79.

[12] Gallaty: *Rediscovering* D*iscipleship.* n.p.n.

[13] Roger L. Walton: *Disciples Together: Discipleship, Formation and Small Groups*. SCM Press, London, England, 123.

a transformative community along the lines of self-directed learning and transformative learning concepts, which include some form of transparency and accountability.[14]

Multiple Perspectives of Empowerment

Empowerment in the Discipleship Small Groups Model

Mike Breen's model signifies the discipleship model represented by Jesus and Christianity as a culture of empowerment, which presumes high levels of involvement and challenge. A community or group cannot call its members to change if it only focuses on serving their needs and ensuring their comfort. For a culture of discipleship to be established, the community must learn to be inclusive while continuously inspiring people to learn and grow.[15] In this model, the congregation or group is not a service or therapy but a form of community in which individuals are active participants in their own personal growth and engage personally in shaping others. The culture of discipleship is a dynamic community-building tool created by congregations through their practices and habits. One can speak of an empowering atmosphere in a congregation when this culture is characterized by a high level of inclusivity yet also invites individuals to change. Starting from Breen's model of a culture of empowerment, a developmental path is outlined that invites people in the Christian community to become active participants in this development across personal growth, deep and balanced relationships, rhythm of life, multiplication, personal calling, prayer, community life, and service to others.[16] Therefore, from the perspective of discipleship, empowerment means inviting individuals to a change that is brought about by their own decisions in the context of an inclusive environment and the acquisition of the appropriate knowledge.

Empowerment in a broader perspective of leadership

Empowering leadership constitutes a global paradigm shift in organizational management, moving away from traditional hierarchical control structures towards fostering autonomy, responsibility, and shared decision-making among

[14] Gyurkó, Donát Sámuel: A közösség ereje – egy felekezetközi részvételi akciókutatás tapasztalatai, in Bácskai et al. (eds.): *Teológia és hűség.* Budapest, Luther kiadó. 2023. 44.

[15] Mike Breen: *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People Like Jesus Did.* 3DM Publishing. 71.

[16] Breen: *Building a Discipling Culture.* 71–73.

fellow employees.[17] This approach is predicated on the understanding that employees, when given the appropriate latitude and support, are capable of contributing significantly to organizational goals and objectives.[18] Empowerment, in this context, transcends mere delegation; it encompasses the creation of an environment where individuals feel valued, trusted, and equipped to make decisions that directly impact their work and the organization as a whole.[19] Implementing self-directed teams represents a tangible step toward cultivating an empowered culture, enabling those closest to the job to make critical decisions about their work and interactions.[20]

Levels of empowerment in Sociology

Examining the culture of empowerment is valuable in assessing the levels of empowerment and participation in the model of sociologists Arnstein and Chanan. The work of these two sociologists has resulted in a complex model that examines community processes from the perspective of individual involvement.[21] It is worth examining our communities from this perspective as well. The key question is who makes the decisions in a group.

The first two levels in Arnstein's model indicate manipulation and therapy, denoting the complete absence of genuine participation. At the third, fourth, and fifth levels (information, consultation, and reconciliation), participants have some limited ability to influence processes. The top three levels define the levels of genuine community governance (partnership, delegated power, and community governance). In Chanan's model, the lowest level of participation is information, the second level is consultation, the third level is

[17] Julian Barling – Amy Christie – Nick Turner: Pseudo-Transformational Leadership: Towards the Development and Test of a Model. *Journal of Business Ethics* (2008) 81:851–861. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25482259?seq=1 (accessed 20 March 2024).

[18] Okunbanjo Olajide – Adewale Noah – Wasiu Kehinde: Influence of Leadership Approach on Employee Empowerment: A Study of Selected Small-Scale Businesses in Nigeria. *Management and Economics Research Journal.* 2016/08/01 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307141760 (accessed 18 March 2025).

[19] Drita Kruja – Huong Ha – Elvisa Drhisti – Ted Oelfke: Empowerment in the Hospitality Industry in the United States. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management.* 25. 25–48. (2016.) 10.1080/19368623.2015.976696. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273677386_Empowerment_in_the_Hospitality_Industry_in_the_United_States/citation/download (accessed 18 March 2025).

[20] Wellins, Richard – Sykes, Peter: How to Build Self-directed Teams. *Executive Development.* 7. (1994.) 25–28. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247624480_How_to_Build_Self-directed_Teams/citation/download (accessed: 21 March 2025).

[21] Jonathan Tritter – Alison Mccallum: The Snakes and Ladders of User Involvement: Moving beyond Arnstein. *Health Policy* 76 (2) 2006. 156–168.

involvement, the fourth level is collaboration, and the highest level of participation is empowerment.[22]

Empowerment in congregational practice

When examining congregational practice, one can see that participation levels in congregational events and programs are largely characterized by the lower two-thirds of Arnstein's ladder. Most community events proceed in a therapy-like, predetermined manner, where individual decisions or expressions are given only limited roles. The community typically strives to involve congregational members in organizing programs or in the liturgy of worship; however, the state of complete empowerment, where congregational members initiate and lead a process or define the course of a worship event, is quite rare. Congregations also include a layer of power dynamics; therefore, the exercise of power on the participants' level is not fully realized. In contrast, smaller groups work consistently well only on a partnership basis. In the long term, a group can function effectively only if participants feel they can be involved in the decision-making process and if they can have a sense of ownership of the community. Many painful experiences, injuries, and conflicts in congregational practice stem from the unidimensional and non-communal exercise of power. Community governance requires time and assumes an investment of quality time. It follows that the greater the burden on a leader, the less they will be able to operate decision-making processes at higher levels of participation.[23] That those small groups are missing from the congregational practice where community leadership could be effectively realized has already been shown. Regarding participation and empowerment, we assume that this occurs within the Christian community in a pragmatic and not a critical sense.[24] The condition for the existence of small discipleship groups is partnership and empowering leadership towards a common goal. The guiding principle of the discipleship groups is the development of faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, rather than commitment to social development, deconstruction, or the redistribution of power. Based on this, our hypothesis is that the culture of empowerment in congregational groups, when used properly, leads to the practical realization of their multiplication and promotes the rise of independent, mature leaders. Partnership and empowering leadership are necessary for the functioning of discipleship small groups, where the leader transfers the leadership role to the

[22] Reisinger Adrienn: A társadalmi részvétel a helyi fejlesztési politikában Magyarországon – fókuszban a civil/nonprofit szervezetek. *Civil Szemle, 1.* 2012. 23–44.

[23] Robert Adams: *Empowerment, Participation and Social Work.* 4th edn. Red Globe Press. https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/2995889/48 (accessed 4 September 2024).

[24] Gyurkó: *A közösség ereje*, 46.

group, encourages, and supports the members in their faith development. According to the hypothesis based on personal experiences, these group connections promote faith development, personal unfolding, and connections to the Christian community and congregation. Observations show that personal commitment is more likely to develop in such small group environments.

Participatory Action Research on Small Discipleship Groups as a Model of Empowering Leadership

In 2019, John Wiest's handbook "Banding Together," which deals with small group discipleship, was published in Hungary, offering a method that can easily be adapted for cooperative, transformative, self-organizing small discipleship groups.[25] During the preparation of the Hungarian translation, a community emerged among pastors who used some form of conscious discipleship model in their own communities. John Wiest's method is based on empowering existing congregational members. This emerging movement encouraged congregational members to form self-organizing small communities where they read the Bible together, share their experiences, acknowledge their weaknesses before one another, and pray for one another. The five principles of the method are the simplicity of the process, the Bible as study material, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, voluntary obedience, and multiplication of the community as an outcome.[26] The three practical tools used in small groups are interactive Bible reading, accountability, and prayer for others.

Overview of the methodology

In the "Banding Together" research group, we researched this small discipleship group method involving active group leaders over a 10-month participatory action research process. The research group consisted of six diverse Adventist and Methodist group leaders with high commitment and at the highest level of participation.[27] During the research process, while operating at the highest level of participation, the group conducted 18 in-depth interviews, and 70 small group participants completed the questionnaires. The research group then analyzed the data from the questionnaires and in-depth interviews together.

[25] John Wiest: *Banding Together. A Practical Guide for Disciplemakers.* Fishers, Indiana, Wesleyan Publishing House, 2018. 10–18.
[26] Wiest: *Banding Together,* 21–37.
[27] Gyurkó: *A közösség ereje*, 47.

Data on our discipleship small groups

Of the group members completing the questionnaire, 59% were women and 41% men. The ages of the respondents ranged from 15 to 73, with an average age of 44.6 years, which is close to the average age of 44.2 in Hungary. More than 55% of the respondents had a university degree. 70% were Adventist, 15% Methodist, 4.5% Reformed, and 4.5% non-Christian. 82% of group participants had a high level of religious commitment. 44.3% of the groups consisted of four members, meeting weekly in 90% of the cases, with 67% operating online and group meetings lasting about one hour 60% of the time. A large majority of respondents, 55-67%, reported growth in trust in God, sharing struggles, personal Bible reading, and applying what they read in the Bible during group activities. Two-thirds of the respondents also experienced growth in self-awareness, struggles with bad habits, and being more attentive to God in their daily lives. In 54% of closed groups, the decision to end the group activities was made collectively by the group members. 22.4% of respondents indicated that new groups were formed.[28]

Key findings

Based on the main research question of the group (How does an effective small discipleship group operate?), the study revealed three factors to be crucial to the effective functioning of a small group.

1. The first is that the effective functioning of a group is primarily determined by the organizational efficiency of the group meetings. At the start of the group, it is vital that the group receives proper information about the method and that commitment happens freely, without any coercion. According to our research findings, the operation is most effective when the group can meet regularly with 3-4 members, flexibly find meeting times, manage their time well, and remain together for at least a year.
2. Another area affecting the effectiveness of such a group is the effectiveness of interactive Bible reading. In our research, we found that a group operates most effectively and can exert a truly positive impact when the majority of group members read the Bible at least 3-4 times a week and take notes on their experiences. This maximizes the effectiveness of sharing and collective learning. We also collected numerous creative ideas to motivate Bible reading. Accountability and the use of monitoring

[28] Gyurkó, Donát Sámuel: Tanulóközösségek a gyülekezetben. A tanítványi kiscsoportok és a tanítványság gyakorlati koncepciójának kérdései. in: *Teológia és tanulás*, Budapest, Luther kiadó, 2024. 287.

questions are crucial for the effectiveness of the group. It is important that the depth of sharing naturally develops within the group without any coercion. A key aspect of effectiveness is that natural topics of life be shared freely in a safe community space. In this regard, balance, honesty, and freedom are key concepts.

3. A third factor which influences the effectiveness of the method is service to external individuals. The group can function effectively only if it does not remain self-serving but also supports its members in service towards others. Effectiveness increases when we pray for specific things and receive confirmation on those topics week by week.

Experience from the Research

Participatory action research in this area provides congregations with the opportunity to critically reflect on and develop their discipleship practices to better meet the needs and expectations of today's believers. A community knowledge base is created through direct observations, interviews, group discussions, and the journal entries and notes of the participants. The findings of the research can lead not only to theoretical conclusions, but also to concrete practical steps to increase the effectiveness of community life and service.

1. The strength of participatory action research lies in the sharing of experiences and the learning process.
2. Empowerment creates a sense of uncertainty and alienation.
3. Experiencing community and shared results alleviate uncertainty.
4. Community motivates and inspires individuals in their personal lives.

In connection with this, an empowering leadership style emerged from practice and from observations of decision-making mechanisms during the study that support the functioning of groups and the development of discipleship. Within the framework of empowering leadership, leaders' main role is to assist members' growth, encourage their self-organization, and motivate them to actively fulfill their roles in the community. Participation and empowering leadership fundamentally involve the leader. This ensures that group members receive what is necessary for successful, independent functioning while also creating an environment where the contributions of the community are treated as real values along clearly communicated organizing principles. This leadership approach significantly contributes to the growth of congregations and the formation of new communities.

My personal experience is that over the course of five years, in the three small discipleship groups in which I personally participated, the attrition rate

was one-third, and the remaining group members innovatively created new groups in a self-organizing manner, while remaining strongly committed to their larger community.

Characteristics of Empowering Leadership in the Community Research Group

During the research period, ten leadership traits were identified that promote the development of a well-functioning community in groups and in leadership behavior in general.

1. Trust and delegation: One key to empowerment is trust in group members. The leader trusts that group members can act independently and responsibly. This is based on a shared commitment as leaders of disciple groups. The collaborative work of the research group deepened this trust during the process.
2. Sense of mission: The leader helps group members see the broader context of their work and its connection to the organization's goals, increasing their motivation and commitment. The main driving force of our research group was that we all saw the positive impact of this work on our larger community.
3. Providing autonomy: The leader respects the autonomy of group members and allows them to make independent decisions during joint work. We paid great attention during the research process to having group members make independent commitments and contribute to the process.
4. Participation in decision-making: Defining the entire process together and shaping it as we went along increased the commitment within the research group. Involving group members in the decision-making process not only increases acceptance of the decisions but also provides opportunities for contribution and commitment.
5. Encouraging participation: We aimed to create an atmosphere where everyone feels that their contribution is important and is encouraged to communicate openly and participate in essential activities organized by the team or organization.
6. Sharing resources: We shared all available information with the group about participatory action research, the group method itself, conducting in-depth interviews, methods of recording interviews, and data analysis, enabling them to make informed decisions and perform their tasks effectively.
7. Delegating responsibility: An important part of empowerment is that the leader can delegate certain responsibilities to group members, thereby

increasing their participation and commitment to the success of projects. Group meetings and research sub-tasks were realized in this way.

8. Developing competencies: We actively supported the personal and professional development of group members, providing necessary training in participatory action research and grounded theory, and ensuring they had access to the ATLAS.ti program for data analysis and joint coding.
9. Access to problem-solving: The leader creates an environment where employees can easily access problem-solving tools and resources, and are able to initiate change or improvement.
10. Feedback and reinforcement: Throughout the research process, we regularly provided constructive feedback, recognized each other's work, results, and efforts, and encouraged each other for the sake of further development.

Summary and Questions

The potential for enhanced organizational performance via empowerment, coupled with opportunities for participation and continuous learning, is increasingly recognized by numerous organizations.[29] It also offers new ways of leadership in ecclesiastical contexts. The implementation of empowering leadership necessitates a multi-faceted approach that incorporates various organizational, leadership, employee, and work-related characteristics.[30] Empowering leadership departs from the traditional hierarchical model, where leaders retain decision-making authority, instead distributing responsibilities to individuals closest to the operational realities.[31] This approach not only enhances individual capabilities but also cultivates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among team members.[32] The decentralization of authority, a core tenet of empowering leadership, allows individuals to exercise autonomy and discretion in their roles.[33] This autonomy, in turn, fuels intrinsic

[29] Penny Gardiner: "The Case for Employee Empowerment as a Means of Enhancing Organisational Performance", *Management Research News*, Vol. 19 No. 4/5, 68–69. https://doi.org/10.1108/eb028467 (accessed 21 March 2024).

[30] Gary Yukl – Wendy S. Becker: Effective Empowerment in Organizations. *Organization Management Journal. 3.* (2006.) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32034337_Effective_Empowerment_in_Organizations (accessed 18 March 2025).

[31] Wellins-Sykes: How to Build Self-directed Teams, 28.

[32] Quiang Wang – Hong Hou – Zhibin Li: Participative Leadership: A Literature Review and Prospects for Future Research. *Frontiers in Psychology Volume 13.* 2022. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.924357/full (accessed 21 March 2025).

[33] Hendrik Hütterman – Stefan Berger – Max Reinwald – Heike Buch: Power to the People—And Then? A Multilevel Leadership Perspective on Organizational Decentralization. *Human Resource Management* Volume 63 Issue 2, 2024. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/hrm.22203 (accessed 21 March 2025).

motivation, as individuals feel a greater sense of control over their work and its outcomes.

Empowering leadership in the field of discipleship implies a new way of functioning in the community, which has two important components. One is a strong commitment to conscious discipleship grounded in Jesus Christ, while the other component is an equally strong commitment to the freedom and free choice of individuals. These two components carry various tensions. This freedom raises the issue of inclusivity in the context of small discipleship groups: How can one handle individual personal choices while considering the limits of the group's and the larger community's capacity to be inclusive? The decision regarding the extent to which someone participates and their level of openness to certain elements of the disciple group both raise fundamental questions for church groups about the empowerment of members and community dynamics. Is it possible for small groups to function in a way that encompasses the entire community? How can group members be motivated while maintaining their individual freedom of choice and autonomy?

In his book *Gemeinsames Leben* (*Life Together*), Dietrich Bonhoeffer expresses this as follows:

> The community can only be advanced through communal work. It is not about private groups, but about the task of the church; it is not about more or less arbitrary individual solutions, but about the responsibility of the whole church. The task, though by no means new, is often approached with understandable reluctance, but over time this must give way to a willingness to cooperate within the church.[34]

Three fundamental conclusions can be drawn from these statements. Firstly, the strength and effectiveness of a community are determined by the work individuals do for the community. Secondly, the Christian community is created by the shared calling received in Jesus Christ, which can be realized in many diverse and unique ways; yet it remains a common cause and shared responsibility. Thirdly, individuals always tend to evade the responsibility of building a community, yet cooperation and the development of community within the church remain possible. One tool for this may be empowering leadership behavior.

[34] Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Közösségben*, Budapest Harmat/Luther 2020, 8. Translation mine.

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SITUATIONAL HOLISTIC PASTORAL MINISTRY (SHPM) APPROACHES TO EMPOWERING CHURCH LEADERS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Abstract

The empowerment of church leaders has drawn global attention in both ecclesiastical and secular institutions. Model leaders are formed by empowerment while idol leaders assert themselves through manipulating their membership. The paper discusses the complex socio-economic, political, and religious challenges faced by churches in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the necessity of empowering church leaders who need to develop others for service. The primary objective of this paper is to examine how the Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry (SHPM) paradigm may help empower African church leaders to change their churches and communities. This is done in a context where both church and political leadership enjoy being idolized instead of creating role models that inspire their followers to serve. The paper concludes that there is a need for empowering church leaders to be informed role models instead of self-serving idols. An empowered leadership will transform the Church and community in Africa. This is largely based on an analysis of the literature using books, journal articles, reports, and newspaper articles.

Keywords: *empowerment, leadership, Idol, role model, transformation*

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Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa is predominantly a Christian region. Galal found that in 2020, while 30% of the population in the region were Muslims, about 60%, approximately 650 million people, were Christians.[1] It is projected that by 2050 the number of Christians in SSA will increase to over a billion people.[2] Consequently, the Church is one of the most revered institutions that influence the lives of many people in SSA. But it should be noted that many distinct branches and denominations of Christianity exist. Church leaders from different traditions have different leadership philosophies. The political climate, the emergence of modern African Christian movements, and African cultural origins all have an impact on church leaders and society. Leaders need to be empowered in order to be contextually relevant to addressing challenges and transform the church and society. Empowered church leadership is ready to serve and remain models of future generations of leaders. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the empowerment of leaders diffuses the spirit of idolization of political and church leadership. The goal of empowering church leaders is to help them transform into role models who will encourage and motivate people to support sound leadership practices for future church and community leaders. The difficulties facing Sub-Saharan Africa and the factors influencing church leadership are covered first, followed by a discussion of strategies for creating role models rather than idols using the SHPM approaches. This paper argues that empowering church leadership is essential to promote abundant life in the context of the poverty created by natural disasters, unemployment, corruption, and the rise of neo-Pentecostalism.

Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry (SHPM) theory

SSA's socioeconomic and political challenges and the change in religious terrain needs leaders who are equipped to address them in a more progressive manner. The key role of church leadership is to promote church life and ministry in society, hence the need to empower them to serve with relevance. The chapter utilizes Herbert Moyo's situational holistic pastoral ministry theory.[3] The SHPM approach to church leadership and ministry enables church

[1] Saifaddin Galal: *Share of Christian population in Africa 2024, by country (2024)*, n.p.n. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1239389/share-of-christian-population-in-africa-by-country/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20Christians%20accounted%20for,over%20one%20billion%20by%202050 (accessed 20 August 2024).

[2] Ibid., n.p.n.

[3] Herbert Moyo: The Lutheran Church and situational holistic pastoral ministry in Africa, in H. Taruona – S.R. Kumalo – H. Moyo (eds.): *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership.* Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2023, 15–33.

leadership to address the complex contextual issues faced by Sub-Saharan Africa. Church ministry should not only be attuned to spiritual and church-related matters. The issues of society should also be prioritized. The role of the church and its leaders includes human development and addressing societal situational needs.[4] The nature of church ministry is determined by its mission and contextual issues. The SHPM approach means taking the situation of the people seriously.[5] According to Buffel, "Pastoral care must cease to only concentrate on 'the ambulance ministry' with the sick and the troubled, while ignoring the social, economic and political causes of poverty and all that make them sick and troubled."[6] For this reason, churches' pastoral care ministry ought to have a comprehensive approach to meeting human needs and addressing societal challenges. To be relevant, the church should be able to address situations from an informed position.[7] Church leaders can only be knowledgeable and skilled to analyze and understand the African challenges through empowerment. This enables them to deliver the gospel that speaks to the socio-economic and political situations in Africa.[8]

The four tenets of SHPM are relevant Christian education, diaconal ministry, holistic pastoral care, and collaboration. The SHPM form of Christian education concentrates on political participation and elections, engaging with political parties' manifestos and human rights issues.[9] Church leaders need to be enlightened on political and election matters to help their congregants to be equipped to participate in elections in a progressive manner. Church leaders require the knowledge and skills of handling scripture and applying it to various contextual challenges without compromising the gospel of Christ. This goes hand in hand with holistic pastoral care and counselling seeking to accompany, comfort and heal the sick and suffering as well as broken relationships. According to Moyo, "SHPM proposes that the church make reconciliation within the socio-economic and political situation central to its pastoral ministry."[10] In addition, Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry is directed at the whole church or congregation, with the clergy promoting cooperation among the members.[11] Diaconal ministry is another key area of SHPM with an emphasis on compassion and concern for the physical needs of the people. Therefore, the SHPM proposes that the church's diaconal services concentrate on providing food, shelter, and clothing, depending on the contextual basic

[4] Ibid., 21.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Andries O Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty: a search for a pastoral care model that is contextual and liberating*, Doctoral dissertation, Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 2007, 17.
[7] Moyo: *The Lutheran Church,* 22.
[8] Ibid., 23.
[9] Ibid., 27.
[10] Ibid., 31.
[11] Ibid., 32.

needs.[12] Only empowered church leaders are aware of their role in attending to the needs of society. Finally, the empowerment of church leaders in Africa is important in working with the government and other stakeholders. Moyo argues that through SHPM, the church should apply the principle of critical solidarity as a form of church and government relationship.[13] This helps the church to commend the government when it delivers services and promotes human dignity and to condemn it when it perpetuates injustices. Additionally, the church should be free to associate with and support those who are subjected to state brutality.[14] This chapter discusses the empowerment of church leadership in SSA using the insights from SHPM approaches.

The impact of African heritage

Africa has a broad and diverse culture that depends on context, so that even SSA has a variety of cultural dynamics. However, Africans have some similarities and differences "from time to time, from place to place, and from people to people."[15] At a general level, African culture has influenced behavior and leadership style among the church and political leadership ideologies in SSA. According to Agbiji & Swart, the origins of both secular and Christian religious leadership and leadership practices can be found in certain African inherited leadership traits.[16] African kings and chiefs are believed to have drawn their authority from the ancestors whom they represented in front of the people. Igboin also states that:

> Kings were regarded as the representatives or viceroy of God on earth. Since God could not be questioned, the people believed that his representatives could not be questioned either. In fact, a king's powers are unlimited.[17]

African leaders were highly respected as mediators between the spirit world (God and ancestors) and humanity. Kings, chiefs, and religious leaders, their family members and those close to them are highly honored in African society.[18] African traditional leaders were human stewards and preserved culture

[12] Ibid., 29.
[13] Ibid., 30.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Maake Masango: Leadership in the African context, *Verbum et ecclesia* 23 (3), 2002, 708.
[16] Obaji M. Agbiji – Ignatius Swart: Historical sources of Christian religious leadership ideology: Implications and challenges for social transformation in post-military Nigeria. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae, 39(1)*, 2013, 224.
[17] Benson O Igboin: Traditional leadership and corruption in pre-colonial Africa: how the past affects the present. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae, 42*(3), 2013, 149.
[18] Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 225.

and heritage.[19] Leadership is attained neither by democratic election nor by merit and competence but by succession and inheritance. An "African king does not relinquish the throne: he dies there and never lives to be probed."[20] Although leadership through succession may bring peace and tribal and national stability, difficulties occur when the leader becomes an incompetent, corrupt, immoral, and self-serving idol. Although African leaders enjoyed absolute authority, their position was intended to support all and feed all. It was meant to promote livelihood for the entire community and especially the poor. However, misinterpretation of African authority results in abuse of power and resources under the leaders' stewardship. Due to traditional leadership influences, some SSA political and church leaders are so obsessed with power that it causes them to be immoral and corrupt idols rather than being role models.

Failure of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

It can be argued that contemporary church leaders are influenced by the nature of authoritarian and idolized political leaders. The failure of democracy in SSA has perpetuated the 'winner takes all' ideology due to election rigging strategies. Apartheid and colonization gave birth to African dictators who perpetuated self- service at the expense of the suffering populace of their nations. After manipulating elections, they become dictators who kill everyone who opposes them. Africa has experienced dictators like Idi Amin of Uganda, Mobutu of Zaire (DR Congo), Mubarak of Egypt, Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, and Jean-Bedel-Bokasa of The Central African Republic.[21] The recently passed Mugabe of Zimbabwe also died a dictator. "Mugabeism" is an example of idol leadership. Duri asserts that "Mugabe's self-immortalization, self- glorification, and self- perpetuation in power"[22] was creating idolatry. According to Charteris-Black:

> Heroic leadership plays a vital role in transitional and developing societies where even the more idolatrous form of heroic leadership may meet the special needs of both leaders and followers. The idols are usually motivated by powerful needs for affection, esteem, and self-actualization. They want and need an audience, and an

[19] Masango: Leadership, 709.

[20] Igboin: *Traditional* L*eadership*, 150.

[21] Bungishabaku Katho: Idolatry and the Peril of the Nation: Reading Jeremiah 2 in an African Context. *Anglican Theological Review, 99(4)*, 2017, 721.

[22] Fidelis Peter T. Duri: Mugabeism after Mugabe: Idolatry, Blasphemy and the Persistence of the Leadership Personality Cult in the ZANU-PF Party Since Independence, in M. Mawere – N. Marongwe – F. Peter Thomas Duri (eds.): *The end of an era? Robert Mugabe and a conflicting legacy.* Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2018, 173.

> audience needs them. Followers flock to see such heroes, crowd in to touch their hands or the hems of their garments.[23]

Leaders who want to be idolized hold on to the reins of power at all costs. Their leadership is characterised by "social injustice, corruption, poverty, suffering, division, fear, and uncertainty."[24] Furthermore, citizens suffered because of repressive laws and unprecedented levels of corruption coupled with "inefficient public spending and chronic poor or under-administration due to low revenue collection prevents improvements in quality service delivery."[25] For example, the veneration of Mugabe as a prophet similar to Moses and Jesus was intended for political grandstanding and elevation to demonstrate that he was an indispensable leader who would bring salvation to the citizens of Zimbabwe from all forms of oppression.[26] Like other dictators, Mugabe wanted "to perpetuate his stay in power at whatever cost."[27] Dictators' powers are self-serving instead of meeting the interests of the people or nation. But their end is miserable as they suffer house arrest, imprisonment, exile, and marginalization.[28] The idolization of dictators as messiahs of their nations in SSA has caused political instability in the region. Thus, the region has experienced military insurgency and coups in countries like Burkina Faso, Sudan, Guinea, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Gabon.[29] Recent protests and visible ire among young people in Kenya, Mozambique, and Nigeria have been sparked by the high cost of living, corruption, poor governance, and rigged elections. Such discontent has the potential to expand throughout the region if countries do not institute reforms. Idolizing leaders becomes blasphemous, affecting democracy and causing many to blindly submit to the whims of power which perpetuate misgovernance and the suffering of civilians.

Missionary legacy

Before colonization and the arrival of Christianity, Africans were led by chiefs, queens, and kings. The leadership structure was powerful and conducted religious ceremonies for the benefit of the community. Traditional leadership was highly regarded as it was believed to be connected to God and the

[23] Jonathan Charteris-Black: The magic of leadership. In: *The Communication of Leadership. The design of leadership style*, London, Routledge, 2007, 15.
[24] Katho: Idolatry, 721.
[25] Deborah, Isser – Gael Raballand – Michael Watts – Diane Zovighian: *Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st Century: Four Trends and an Uncertain Outlook*, Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2024, 4.
[26] Duri: Mugabeism after Mugabe, 177.
[27] Ibid., 175.
[28] Katho: *Idolatry*, 721.
[29] Isser et al.: *Governance*, 5.

ancestors to promote the community's spiritual, economic, and political welfare. The arrival of Christian missionaries had an "impact on the concept, ideology, and practice of leadership in Africa, leadership was shaped by missionary education, colonialist style leadership and professionalism."[30] Church and community leaders both shifted from traditional styles of leadership and adopted Western and missionary standards. "With the advent of the Christian missionaries and the colonial masters, much of the leadership role shifted from the traditional leaders, such as kings, queens, priests and chiefs, to the missionaries and teachers."[31] One of the most powerful missionary leaders was the mission superintendent or principal who managed permanent assets and funds, developed policies, oversaw the efficacy of the administration, and fostered Christian spiritual growth.[32] Despite the loss and weakening of authority due to missionary Christianity, African leaders adopted the Christian values of respecting people created in the image of God over and above their understanding of the sacred value of human life.[33] This led them to give their subjects more respect and to promote unity among the members of the community. Therefore, the missionary legacy is both negative and positive in terms of leadership development in Africa. Some contemporary church leaders, especially the bishops, pastors and prophets, want to operate like the missionary principals who held all the power in the mission station.

The rise of neo-Pentecostalism

Since 2000, Africa has experienced the outstanding growth and evolution of the Pentecostal movement. This has resulted in the 'new wave' of Christianity in the form of independent, charismatic mega-church prophetic movements.[34] These movements are led by self-proclaimed charismatic prophets, apostles, and founders. These include Alice Lenshina, Bishop David Oyedepo, Chris Oyakhilome, Emmanuel Makandiwa, Jeremiah Fufeyin, Paseka Mboro Mnguni, Shepherd Bushiri, T.D. Jakes, T.B Joshua, Uebert Angel, and Walter Magaya. In the case of Zimbabwe, figures such as Makandiwa, Magaya and Angel rose in the age of economic decline, claiming to have spiritual miraculous solutions to the socio-economic challenges faced by the citizens. They became the fastest growing movements, due to their manipulation of the desperate citizenry.

[30] Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 228.
[31] Ibid., 228.
[32] Shupikai P. Chimhungwe: *A Descriptive Chronicle of Transition from Mission to Indigenous Leadership in Two Church of Christ Institutions (Zimbabwe 1976–1986)*, Master's Dissertation, Hamilton: McMaster Divinity College, 2012, 47.
[33] Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 225.
[34] Kimion Tagwirei: Missionizing Church Governance: Transfiguring Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, *Religions 14.10* (2023), 1.

Their adherents idolized them as 'prophet' and 'Papa'. But these mega- church prophets and movements are usually not recognized by mainstream Christianity, such as the chief denominations, evangelicals, and traditional Pentecostals. It is interesting to note that neo-Pentecostal leaders and founders have made frequent claims that they are freeing themselves from stifling authority and dwindling spiritualities.[35] These prophetic movements are so independent and sectarian that they do not join national and global ecumenical bodies.

The mega-church prophetic movements are characterized by clergy-centered services. The leaders or prophets are the ones who take center stage, preaching, healing, and prophesying. They are highly regarded and idolized in such a way that they manipulate and patronize their members to always believe and follow their words blindly and without question. According to Agbiji and Swart, Nigerian prophets have religious and political authority due to their riches, prestige, and titles.[36] Similarly, in Zambia and Zimbabwe, mega-church prophets are amongst the richest and most politically connected people in their countries. Prophet Uebert Angel, the founder of Spirit Embassy Church, was appointed one of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's advisors and the ambassador at large appointed to America and Europe, exploring business opportunities for the country.[37] Prophet Angel and Makandiwa have been implicated in the 'gold mafia' scandal, where gold was smuggled out of poverty-stricken Zimbabwe.[38] Because they are connected to the upper echelons of political power, they are the untouchables who perpetuate corruption and self-enrichment in the name of serving God through the title 'man of God'. Instead of defending the poor, on the one hand they deprive them of their meagre incomes through the gimmick of seeding to enrich themselves, while on the other hand they support the corrupt regime that causes people's suffering. The mega-church prophets work hand in glove with the political elite in such a way that people cannot condemn the evil injustices done by the government. The clergy's desire for wealth and self-enrichment is slowly spilling over to other denominations, including the mainstream churches and apostolic movements which have existed for over a century in Africa. Due to the rise of mega-church prophets, the priesthood of all believers is undermined, clericalism is promoted, and the church becomes pastor-centric.[39] The clergy becomes more powerful, indispensable and liable to abuse their authority through taking advantage of their idolization.

[35] Tagwirei: Missionizing Church Governance, 1.
[36] Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 232.
[37] Zvamaida Murwira: President appoints Angel ambassador, *The Herald*, March 17, 2021, https://www.heraldonline.co.zw/president-appoints-angel-ambassador/ (accessed 15 August 2024).
[38] Bekithemba Dube: Man of God/Gold and Zanu-PFism in Zimbabwe: The case of Makandiwa and Angel, in B. Dube (ed.): *Regime, Religion and the Consolidation of Zanu-PFism in Zimbabwe: When Religion Becomes a Threat to Democracy*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, 142.
[39] Chimhungwe: A Descriptive Chronicle, 111.

Poverty and unemployment

In Africa, poverty and unemployment are intricately related because one causes the other in a cyclical manner. Poverty may be viewed as a result of unemployment, while unemployment may be caused by poverty that limits people's access to education and employment opportunities. In fact, the benchmark of poverty is unemployment. In addition, low wages and unemployment are some of the main drivers of poverty in Africa.[40] But the two crises are exacerbated by bad governance, corruption and mismanagement of national resources, leaving the citizens sinking in poverty. Moreover, poverty is aggravated by declining national economies, leading to unemployment, which makes it difficult to make ends meet. "According to the Global MPI 2023 report, about 534 million (47.8% of the total) of the 1.1 billion people experiencing poverty across 110 countries live in SSA."[41] With the world's highest average rate of 35.73%, the SSA is labelled "the poverty headquarters of the world."[42] Episodes of violent conflicts affect economic growth, thereby leading to poverty, hence the need for the prevention of political instability and for the promotion of peace and reconciliation in and among African countries.

Globally, and Africa in particular, employment is the basic means of eradicating poverty, hence unemployment leads to deprivation that leads to poverty.[43] Woode posits that "Unemployment, underemployment, and poor labour returns may all be considered immediate causes of poverty in Africa."[44] Generally, SSA is struggling with high rates of unemployment. Recent statistics from Botswana (which has a 36% unemployment rate), Eswatini (56%), Namibia (46%), and South Africa (54%) in Southern Africa reflect the general trend of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa.[45] The African Union argues that "the growing problem of youth unemployment is one of the main socio-economic development concerns of most African governments."[46] In addition to the crisis of food security, conflict, wars, and political violence also affect economies, resulting in a rising unemployment rate in African countries.[47]

[40] Andries O Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 209.

[41] Kilishi A Abdulhakeem: Revisiting the nexus between governance and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Poverty & Public Policy 16(3)* (2024), 274.

[42] Abdulhakeem: Revisiting the nexus, 279.

[43] Gerald Woode: *Distributional Impact of Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on Poverty Reduction & Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2024, 4, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4830742 (accessed 25 August 2024).

[44] Woode: Distributional Impact of Africa, 4.

[45] Ibid., 17.

[46] African Union. Continental Education for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to foster youth employment. Continental strategy for technical and vocational education and training, Addis Ababa, African Union, 2018, 8.

[47] World Bank: *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report, Pathways out of the Polycrisis*, Washington, DC, The World Bank Group, 2024,3.

Corruption is cited as the main cause of SSA's high unemployment rate. In fact, corruption in Africa results in a high inflation rate, deteriorating terms of trade, increasingly unpredictable prices, and high levels of unemployment.[48] These challenges fuel socio-economic and political insecurity. The lack of economic growth in Africa is mostly due to uncurbed corruption. Poverty and unemployment know no boundaries as they affect people across the religious spectrum, including Christians. The Church and its leadership are not spared from the impact of these crises. In fact, the Church's economy and mission are directly and indirectly affected because churchgoers are also members of society who face these challenges in their daily lives. They cannot be ignored, but should instead be regarded as key areas of focus for church ministry.

The adverse effects of climate change

Climate change is one of the global challenges and poor SSA countries are the most hard hit. "The region remains vulnerable to climate change and ecological crises, exacerbated by extensive open-cast mining activities conducted mostly by Chinese mining companies."[49] This is driven by a desire for wealth, causing climate change. The Sub-Saharan region continuously suffers due to droughts and tropical cyclones which result in floods that destroy people's lives, homes, and livelihoods. In SSA, 71.2 % of people are exposed to severe cyclones, floods, droughts, and heatwaves that badly affect people.[50] The worst floods in decades in Central and Western Africa, multi-year droughts and floods in Eastern Africa, and the rising impact of cyclones in Southern Africa continue to weigh on economic activities. In the first half of 2024, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe declared national disasters due to severe droughts. These hot and dry conditions leading to droughts have left Africa more vulnerable than other global regions. Due to droughts, SSA has suffered a significant decrease in the production of maize (5.8%) and sugarcane (3.9%), with a low increase in the production of drought resistant crops such as sorghum (0.7%) and cassava (1.7%).[51] According to Hove, "The continent's dependence on agriculture for economic growth exacerbates the climate challenge."[52] Tropical cyclones are experienced almost annually, hitting parts of Southern

[48] World Bank: *Doing business 2020: Comparing business regulations in 190 economies*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020.

[49] Rabson Hove: Eco-theology: Reimagining the Image of God in the Context of Creation and Care in Africa, *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya 9(1)* (2024), 38.

[50] World Bank: *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report, Pathways out of the Polycrisis*, Washington, DC, The World Bank 2024, 22.

[51] Deepak K. Ray et al.: "Climate change has likely already affected global food production." *PloS one* 14, no. 5 (2019), 5.

[52] Hove. Eco-*theology*, 39.

Africa such as Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe leading to loss of life, crops, livestock, and homes and causing people to be displaced.[53] In March 2019, an estimated 4.5 million people were displaced and between 700–1000 lost their lives.[54] Adverse weather conditions affect food production, leading to food insecurity in Africa. Overall, "climate change amplifies the impacts of conflict and global shocks on agricultural yields, food production, and trade, thus raising food security problems."[55] Additional issues include the loss of homes, property and livestock and damage to public infrastructure such as schools, roads, and bridges. These challenges require church leaders to be empowered in order to be able to play a role in responding to people's needs during times of natural disaster.

SHPM approaches to empowerment

Given the many challenges discussed above, church leaders need to be empowered to respond to natural and human-made crises. This requires the Church to equip the clergy and lay leaders through theological reflections that speak to social, economic, and political issues at the local congregational, national, and ecumenical level. The Church should seek "to empower individuals to fight against injustice through academic preparation, a strong confidence and belief, and a hope for the future."[56] The main purpose is to prepare leaders who are servants of God and his people. Empowered church leaders are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills for the service of the church and community. In turn the clergy's role "must be to equip and empower all who participate in the mission of the kingdom of God, to follow the example and witness of Jesus Christ."[57] Servant leaders become not self-seeking idols who seek to be honored and served, but rather role models. They submit to Christ to be "mere servants" who regard their service as their responsibility before their master (Lk, 17:10). Jesus was never obsessed with power but came to serve and die for the people (Mk, 10:44). Therefore, church leaders need to learn to be compassionate to serve the church and community. Empowered church leaders should consider insights from situational holistic pastoral ministry approaches.

[53] Ibid., 37.

[54] Darius Phiri – Matamyo Simwanda – Vincent Nyirenda: Mapping the impacts of cyclone Idai in Mozambique using Sentinel-2 and OBIA approach, *South African Geographical Journal* 103(2) (2021), 251.

[55] World Bank: Poverty, Prosperity, 3.

[56] Hopgood LeQuita C. Porter: *Empowerment: Equipping in Empowering Leadership Practices for Transformation in the East Preston United Baptist Church of Nova Scotia*. Doctoral dissertation, Wolfville, Acadia University, 2017, 135.

[57] Porter: *Empowerment*, 112.

Christian education

SHPM Christian education advocates for empowerment of the Church towards grounded pastoral care and preaching that brings about a transformation of societal realities. "This education can be geared towards combating ignorance and providing people and especially leaders with the needed knowledge and skills." [58] Well-informed church leaders preach sermons that condemn all forms of violence and human rights abuses and that make people aware of their socio-economic and political situation.[59] If the Church remains silent about unjust economic and political situations, it implies "the absence of God in those spheres."[60] Taruona, Kumalo & Moyo succinctly allude that

> Christian education in the form of theological training to enhance the capacity of a minister is an added advantage for pastoral ministers to increase impact and minimize errors in ministry. In fact, the pastoral ministry of the church is a vocation with specific functions that require specific skills for optimum functionality.[61]

SHPM proposes Christian education as one of the important tools to be used to transform people's socio-economic and political situations.[62] Therefore, empowerment begins with the education and training of the clergy who will in turn pass their theological knowledge on to the lay leaders and communities where they serve. Pali bemoans the lack of content and human resources that contributes to the building of relevant theological knowledge for Africa and beyond.[63] Consequently, African theological institutions should seek to remain relevant in the training of the clergy. Buffel argues that the clergy need to be empowered with contextual theology.[64] He further asserts that since Western theology was contextually relevant to the West, theological education and pastoral care in Africa should be contextualized as well.[65] Contextualization means that theological education and training should be tailor-made to address contextual issues such as poverty, unemployment, and political problems. In addition, it needs to engage with the problem of new forms of Christianity in SSA.

[58] Kalemba Mwambazambi – Albert K. Banza: Developing transformational leadership for sub-Saharan Africa: Essential missiological considerations for church workers. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35(1) (2014), 5.
[59] Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 27.
[60] Ibid., 23.
[61] Honoured Taruona – Simangaliso R. Kumalo – Herbert Moyo: Introduction, in H. Taruona – S.R. Kumalo – H. Moyo (eds.): *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2023, xii.
[62] Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 26.
[63] Joseph K. Pali: *Markers and tools to facilitate decolonisation of theological education in Africa*. Religions 15(7) (2024), 7.
[64] Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 57.
[65] Ibid., 57.

The other important aspect in empowering church leaders to address contextual challenges is exposing church leaders to progressive methodologies. One of these approaches involves using Liberation theology and its methodology of preferential treatment of the poor.[66] Church leaders need to be equipped so that they practice their pastoral care through solidarity and empowerment of the poor.[67] Therefore, African theological education should be relevant and address contemporary realities. "Equally our discipline of pastoral care, as developed and practiced in the context of poverty, must be contextual."[68] The Church and theological institutions must be equipped to reject any form of dehumanizing practices reinforced by colonial symbols of governance causing political and economic challenges in Africa (Pali 2024).[69] Church leaders need training in understanding issues of democracy, justice, human rights, rule of law, economic dynamics, and poverty.[70] According to Moyo, "The situational holistic educational ministry will have content that is based on the needs of conscientized participants and if well-coordinated this kind of education can lead to social transformation and freedom."[71] Besides theological education, church leaders need continuous training through denominational and ecumenical organized workshops, theological symposiums and webinars to share their experiences and sharpen their knowledge and understanding of the contextual realities and resources available to handle such challenges.

Diakonia

The church that engages in holistic pastoral ministry presupposes seriousness in contextual realities and diaconal work. It assumes the *missio Dei* and the mission of Christ. The mission of God in Christ is rooted in (Jn, 10:10) where he says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." Abundant life means life in wholeness. Therefore, church leaders should be enlightened to serve humanity holistically and not create a duality in people's lives as holy in the Church and profane outside the Church. SHPM diakonia should seek to be all-inclusive, helping all people and engaging all challenges in context. Since Christ came to give people abundant life, the church's diaconal ministry should be actively involved in the daily struggle faced by people in Africa. This is only possible if church leaders are empowered in terms of diaconal ministry beyond

[66] Ibid., 205.
[67] Ibid., 204.
[68] Ibid., 57.
[69] Pali: *Markers and Tools*, 4.
[70] Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 27.
[71] Ibid., 27.

supplying food and blankets during times of unplanned displacement due to political violence or natural disasters. Church leaders should be empowered to deal with complex economic and political situations. This is prophetic diakonia. Buffel (2023) emphasizes that

> Any theology or ministry that ignores the problem of poverty, injustices, or oppression, is not helpful and in fact it is engaged in discrediting itself. Equally pastoral care would be discredited if it was to ignore the reality of poverty, as well as the socio-economic-political and cultural causes of poverty, injustices, and oppression.[72]

While it is the Church's duty to help the poor and displaced with supplies for survival in the context of suffering, it should remain prophetic. In times of crises such as natural disasters or political displacements, it is the role of the Church to be compassionate and mobilize resources to support the needy. Prophetic diakonia calls for the Church and its leaders to respond to injustices, climate change, poverty, and unemployment in Africa. "The church should also be the church that is politically committed to the poor and is in solidarity with them."[73] Church leaders must take courage and confront issues of bad governance, corruption, and economic injustices. They will be able to "empower the poor in terms of analytical skills that offer them capacity to understand the socio-economic and political structures that continue to keep them poor despite their best efforts at escaping poverty."[74] Church leaders should speak out prophetically to protect the poor, the oppressed and the voiceless citizens.

Collaborative pastoral ministry

Given the magnitude of the church's prophetic pastoral ministry, collaboration and collegiality become central regarding the empowerment of its leaders. SHPM emphasizes the need for collaboration as well as solidarity in ministry as a way of killing the spirit of the idol and promoting that of the role model. A divided and fractured Church cannot respond to Africa's social, economic, and political realities. It may find itself conflicted with some of its members on the side of the poor and others on the side of the rich and powerful. Consequently, justice becomes difficult to restore in African society. There is great

[72] Andries O Buffel: Pastoral care in the socio-economic and political context of poverty: Towards a contextual, holistic and liberating model of pastoral care in the South African context, in H. Taruona – S.R. Kumalo – H. Moyo (eds.): *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2023, 130.

[73] Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 211.

[74] Ibid., 212.

need for collaboration in situational holistic pastoral ministry. The Church should always work as a united front in order to be able to effectively address the needs of society. Leaders need to be empowered in terms of understanding the dynamics of collaboration and its implications in situational holistic pastoral ministry, especially in SSA. According to Moyo, "Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry is ministry for the whole Church rather than the clergy alone."[75] Since it is for all members of the Church, it means the clergy and the laity should work together in advancing the mission of God. There are two forms of collaborative ministry to be discussed in this section. The church needs to be involved in internal collaboration and external collaboration.

Internal collaboration involves the clergy and the laity from the same denomination working closely together both for the spiritual growth of the church members and for the sake of addressing the people's socio-economic needs. In the context of the SHPM, Moyo argues that the role of the clergy is to foster the spirit of collaboration in ministry.[76] Promoting collaboration calls for the empowerment of the clergy so that they also empower the laity in terms of the dynamics involved in collaboration in church ministry. The clergy cannot be everywhere and do everything in every place all alone. The ministry then becomes the clergy or pastor's sole burden and he/she becomes more special than others. If the clergy works alone, then the body of Christ is dismembered, broken, and divided. The clergy should never work as a lone ranger. Buffel argues that

> There is no longer any room for the pastor-centered church or ministry. The people must take ownership and have total participation in the ministry of pastoral care. All that professional pastors must do is to equip the believers and to empower them in this ministry, which should be in line with the "priesthood of all believers".[77]

Empowering the laity for ministry entrenches the theology of the Church as the body of Christ, with every member fully participating in ministry. Lone rangers are easily idolized. Hence, empowering the laity for ministry allows the clergy to be role models as they seek to equip one another for SHPM.

Secondly, external collaboration entails churches or different denominations working together as well as networking with other stakeholders when addressing economic and political challenges in society. Responding to national issues of politics, human rights, justice, and peace requires the church in its multiple formations to work together as an ecumenical movement, hence the need to learn to participate in local congregational, national, and global ecumenism.

[75] Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 32.
[76] Ibid., 32.
[77] Buffel: Pastoral care in the socio-economic and political context of poverty, 137.

"This kind of collaboration preaches visible church unity which is the center and vision of ecumenism."[78] Despite denominational differences, churches need to work together. Denominational cooperation promotes the sharing of skills and resources and the cross-pollination of faith.[79] Cooperation among denominations promotes learning from one another to grow together as members of the body of Christ. The role of the clergy is equipping the laity with the skills needed to collaborate with different denominations involving both the clergy and the laity. Kouzes & Posner claim that "Empowering Leaders inspire and pass on their power to others, with a goal of equipping those they lead, and growing new leaders in the process."[80] Empowering lay leaders and other members of the church enables others to be role models of the next generations in ministry. Collaboration reduces competition that impedes unity by leading to the rise of idols rather than models.

In addition to collaboration among churches, the Church should cooperate with other stakeholders like government departments, non-governmental organizations, and other civic organizations that work towards addressing contemporary economic and political challenges. This enables African church leaders to work as a community. This helps to avoid the "Western paradigm" of pastoral care with its emphasis on individualism, psychotherapy, spiritualization, and professionalism (clericalism), as opposed to the relational African worldview of communalism based on ubuntu."[81] Collaboration helps people to realize each other's gifts, potential and abilities. It allows for the sharing of human, material, and financial resources.[82] There is also a sharing of ideas, knowledge, and experiences that helps in addressing the socio-political and economic situation in Africa. Division, disunity, and marginalization only lead to dismembering the body of Christ and the destruction of the spirit of unity and collegiality. Ecumenicity allows the body of Christ to unite and speak with one voice especially on the political and economic issues that require the prophetic voice of the Church. In SHPM, Moyo proposes the formation of committees which will work with the community and other stakeholders in every area of need like the health sector, education, and farming.[83] Regarding cooperation with the government, Moyo argues for 'critical solidarity' in community development and the promotion of societal wellbeing. He holds that "The church should also be free to associate with people who are brutalized by the

[78] Rabson Hove: *A critique of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe's (ELCZ) engagement in local ecumenism among the Karanga of Mberengwa in Zimbabwe*, Doctoral dissertation, Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020, 185.

[79] Ibid., 186.

[80] James M. Kouzes – Barry Z. Posner (eds.): Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006, 32.

[81] Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 210.

[82] Hove: *A Critique*, 180.

[83] Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 32.

State."[84] In this model, the Church relates to the state in ways that benefit all the people of God without being controlled by the state. The church should not be on the side of the government while the citizens are suffering. That would mean muzzling its prophetic voice in pastoral ministry. Transformation occurs through unity of purpose among the people of God and especially among church leaders. In order to remain prophetic, church leaders should have compassion and speak "truth to power" on issues of justice, human rights, equality, and peace. This also helps empower the laity for prophetic ministry through giving them an understanding of the importance of cooperation and collegiality. They become role models for future pastoral ministry.

Conclusion

This paper argues that the myriad challenges facing SSA need the Church to take an active role in its pastoral ministry. But to achieve its mandate, it needs church leaders who are fully empowered for their role of carrying out their duties and equipping others for ministry. In fact, the paper argues that a well-equipped clergy's critical role is empowering the laity for ministry. This is servanthood and transformative leadership that breeds role models rather than idols. If the clergy fails to empower others and promote collaboration in ministry, they are likely to become idols seeking to be honored and hailed above others. This is opposed to the understanding of the Church as the body of Christ and the priesthood of the baptized where the clergy and the laity participate in ministry equally, promoting the spiritual growth of the church and community development through Christian education, diakonia, collaboration, pastoral care and counselling. This paper proposes the use of insights from SHPM that seek to help the Church to be holistic and contextually relevant in its ministry to transform the Church and society. Church leaders should not remain within the four walls of the church but should rather seek to fulfil the mission of God through Christ: to give abundant life to all.

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[84] Ibid., 30.

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WHAT DID PROTESTANTS DO FOR DEMOCRACY IN CHURCH AND STATE?

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Abstract

Democracy and freedom in the modern sense took root for the first time in history on Protestant land (Netherlands, England, Scotland, USA), since the Reformers also had significant teachings on public policies, including government. Both in society and the Church, democratic elements can be traced back to the teachings of Luther, Calvin, Knox and their contemporaries. The Reformers believed that everything on Earth, including the people, rulers, and the clergy, is under the unlimited sovereignty of Christ. Political activity in public affairs has always belonged to Protestants to a greater extent than to other denominations. This short essay provides a reflection on these fundamental teachings, looking at Protestant thought on democracy in both Church and state.

Keywords: *democracy, government, public theology, Reformation*

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Introduction

There is no doubt that democracy and freedom in the modern sense took root for the first time in history on Protestant land (Netherlands, England, Scotland, USA). Although in some monastic orders, leaders had already taken elected positions, democracy became the main form of government in Protestant church organization. Democracy is still present in the Protestant Church: instead of infallibility and dogma, this is the binding material of church organization. The Reformers, however, did not only deal with their Church: they always had something to say about public life. Major Protestant manifestos usually have a separate chapter on public issues such as civil government.

The pulse of the Reformation spread first from Wittenberg and then from the Swiss city states to far-away lands, to England, Scotland and the Low Countries. And while the social context was different – the establishment of a city republic in Geneva, conflicts of royal power and succession in England and Scotland, independent statehood in the Netherlands, feudal interests in Germany – there was a common, solid foundation on which the responses of the new faith could be built.

The reformers believed that everything on Earth, including the people, their ruler, and the clergy, is under the unlimited sovereignty of Christ. Likewise, Church and state are in this same position: both were ordained by God for the benefit of fallen humanity, and both are God's servants. Furthermore, political activity in public affairs has always belonged to Protestants to a greater extent than to other denominations. In Protestant thought, not all democratic government is Christian, but all Christian government is democratic. The legacy of Protestant political theology is now embedded in the modern constitution and state, and has become the public minimum for all Christians.[1]

Protestant democracy in civil government

In socialist historiography, the birth of modern democracy is assigned to the French Revolution – and this is deeply entrenched in today's public thinking. Constitutional and state theory – at least in Eastern Europe – is still slow to recognise and acknowledge that another, much earlier event had a much greater impact on the founding principles of modern, Western democracy: the Reformation. The constituent elements of the constitutional canon (the rule of law, popular sovereignty, separation of powers, equality of rights, fundamental

[1] Antal Birkás: *Reformáció, államhatalom, politika*, Luther Kiadó, Budapest, 2011; Zsolt Szabó (ed.): *Szabadság, hatalom, lelkiismeret – fejezetek a protestáns politika gondolkodás történetéből*, Kálvin Kiadó, Budapest, 2024.

rights) are in fact rooted in the Reformation. The constitutions of the Protestant states (parts of Germany, England, and the USA) were built on these principles – and these are the countries that have put them into practice successfully.

A decisive impetus for the development of modern, civil constitutionalism and politicisation was undoubtedly provided by the Reformation, which became a constitutional factor in Protestant states. Political history identifies the first civil constitution as the constitution of the Union of Utrecht of 1584, and Rousseau, who came from Geneva and who respected Calvin not as a theologian but as a Genevan legislator, takes his idea of popular sovereignty from Calvin's referendum on the constitution of the Church of Geneva in 1541. The provisions of the Huguenot constitution, according to Abraham Kuyper, live on in the Constitution of the United States of America. The optimal balance (parliamentary sovereignty, the formula of 'the king rules but does not govern') reached after the drift of the English Revolution – which also weighed questions of faith – provided a model for a whole series of European constitutional monarchies. By the 19th century, Protestant states (Germany, Britain, the USA) had taken the lead in shaping world history and politics.

The Reformation was not only a theological movement. Beyond theology, the Reformers also had something to say about public life. Based on their own experience, Protestants were sensitive to questions of power and, with differing emphases, but firmly in favour of the subordination of the monarch to God and the limited power of the ruler, limited by parliament. The revival of republicanism, another distinctively Protestant idea, triumphed in the world as the antithesis of absolute monarchy. At the dawn of the modern age, in the early 16th century, the dominant form of government in Europe was absolute monarchy. And the Church, after the power struggles of previous centuries, supported and allied itself with it.

The Reformers affirmed that everything on Earth, including the people, their ruler, and the priesthood, is under the unlimited sovereignty of Christ. The sovereignty is not of the ruler, nor of the people, but of the Lord. Church and state are in the same position: both are ordained by God for the benefit of mankind fallen into sin; both are servants of God. The power given to them cannot be abused and the ruler must obey the laws of the land (the law is a silent supremacy, the supremacy is a living law – John Calvin); he must respect the covenant of God with his people (John Knox).[2] The centuries-old idea of the state bound by law, the rule of law, is reaffirmed here. Citizens owe absolute obedience to the ruler, who, like the hand of God, is the one who implements the will of the Lord. The penal power of the state also executes the just

[2] Stanford W. Reid: John Knox's Theology of Political Government, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988/4), 529–540.

punishments of God. From a firm starting-point of obedience, however, the Reformers, according to the different historical situations of their nations and their own temperaments, arrived at different degrees of exception, of disobedience to the tyrant, or even of rebellion. The first – but not the last – regicide in modern Europe was also Protestant in origin: the Reformation took the right to dethrone out of the hands of the Pope and the Church and put it into the hands of political elites seeking autonomy.

Protestant movements also reinterpreted the idea of freedom. The Christian man depends on Christ alone – that is, he is dependent neither on the state nor on the Church. Protestant thought liberated man to be free to have direct contact with God, without intermediaries. The free practice of religion, and the freedom of thought and conscience that go hand in hand with it, can be considered as the first modern freedoms, among the first generation of fundamental rights. Thus, the Reformation can also be seen as the first modern civil rights struggle, two and a half centuries before the slogans of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. By freeing faith and thought from ecclesiastical – and secular – control, it placed man solely and directly under the sovereignty of Christ and the laws of the Bible. This struggle for the free exercise of religion opened the way to the development of fundamental human rights, and led to the development of political freedoms, through freedom of expression (printing books, Bible translations). It sparked the German and English civil revolutions, and it was no coincidence that the 20th-century Martin Luther King took the name of the German reformer: it was not only a Christian gesture but also a political one, and a political program at the same time.

Abraham Kuyper, the Reformed pastor-turned-Dutch Prime Minister from 1901 to 1905, and founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, stated: 'the guarantee of our rights and liberties is in Calvinism.' This is the root of Christian liberty, the key to which is a return to the Bible and a rejection of the secular and ecclesiastical powers that hinder God's plan. This does not mean revolution and resistance to government: the gospel does not overrule but rather underlies the laws of the world and calls for obedience to authority. The rule of law, however, as opposed to the unlimited rule of rulers, is also a leading Protestant idea. The basis of 'rule of law thinking' is here displayed.

The Reformation raised man's head not only towards God, but also towards his fellow man. Grace extends to all, that is, all can equally attain salvation, with no ecclesiastical or secular privileges. State and government are elements of common grace, as concluded by Calvin.[3] The Calvinist stands at eye level with his fellow man, not above him. But neither does he put himself below: according to Kuyper, only Calvinism has reached the stage where it accepts,

[3] John Witte: Moderate (religious) liberty in the theology of John Calvin. The original Genevan experiment, in *The Reformation of Rights*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, 39–80.

and even approves, the criticisms made by believers of their own religious leaders, which is not characteristic of the Catholic Church in this form, let alone of Islam.

True equality of rights is based on the idea of equality before God, which includes the idea that ministers, though more educated, are not above believers in matters of faith, and that their relationship with God is no more direct than that of believers. The Protestant man stands up for his own rights as well as the rights of others, within the bounds of the law.

The Reformers used the Bible as a basis for the principles that underpin democracy today. Calvin, himself a lawyer, put his 'church constitution', which still governs the Reformed Church today, to a referendum. He did not go as far as elective offices, but he was an advocate of republicanism and the exercise of power by others at a time when most of Europe still had monarchies.

The division of power is explicitly stated in Calvin's magnum opus, The System of the Christian Religion, in which he devotes a whole chapter to questions of secular government: 'where power is divided in the hands of many, there is less danger of it degenerating into arbitrariness.' The Calvinist idea, however, is that the majority is not always right: Christians have often been and currently are in the minority, and there are many stories in the Bible of the Lord using one man or a small group against the majority to accomplish his plan. As a great student of Calvin, John Knox, said: 'one man with God is always the majority'.

In the Protestant view, it is not right for Christians to withdraw from the world, seeking only each other's company and not taking the fate of their country to heart. It is free, even right, for a Christian to be a politician, and politics can take on a Christian agenda, for the benefit of the people and with their authority. The well-known saying of the 20th century Hungarian legal and political scholar István Bibó – who also came into closer contact with Protestantism through his father-in-law, the Reformed Bishop László Ravasz – that 'a democrat is the one who is not afraid' also holds true: he who is a Protestant is not afraid. 'If the Lord be with him, who can be against him?' is the hymn of Martin Luther. In the cataclysm of the Reformation, many sacrificed their lives for true Christian freedom.

In the Protestant understanding, a Christian nation is both a congregation and a political community. No one can exclude himself from the law of God or from the affairs of his own community. Protestants have always been more active in public affairs than other denominations. The matter of faith is not a private but a public and political matter, *res publica*. In the Protestant conception, there is no sharp distinction between the private and the public sphere. There is no separate political life, family life, or professional life – in the fullness of the believer's life, faith embraces all spheres. Faith is private, public and political at the same time. And there can be no contradiction between

them. If there is, this represents a serious crisis of credibility and trust. The real question and conflict of faith was again pointed out by the Reformers: life or death, salvation or damnation. And wherever these questions arise, politics rears its head and tries to turn the direction of thinking in its own favour. It must also be seen that, in the midst of the violence and power struggles of history, religious questions have never been the cause of wars in themselves, but rather the means of politics in its power games. Religious wars were typically fought by competing elites seeking to consolidate their power against their rivals. Protestant religious wars are no exception.

Calvin considered participation in public office and politics to be one of the highest vocations, to which one should say yes only by God's calling. Protestants did not withdraw from public life, but participated in it. This is why Protestants have always been over-represented in politics. But they have always been Christian rather than party politicians – which is why there has never been a sustained successful Protestant political party or formation, despite attempts to create one. Protestants, in whatever party they were active, represented Christ above parties, fighting as faithful followers of Christ rather than of party discipline.

Protestant democracy in the Church

Protestant churches, to differing extents, are based on congregational autonomy and democracy. Any centralised organisational structure would enable the development of power clusters, which, by their very nature, gravitate towards making pacts with other, especially secular, centres of power. Protestant churches are built bottom-up and not top-down.[4]

The idea of a Christ-centred church can be deviated from in two directions: towards a pastor-centred church model on the one hand, and towards a lay-centred church model on the other. Both are dangerous temptations, because they both place people, though at a different scale, at the centre of the church's action, instead of the right worship of God. The range of Reformed churches in the world, with some simplification, covers these two directions geographically: the Reformed churches of the Netherlands and Switzerland see the pastor as an employee of the congregation, who does not (or cannot) always participate in the deliberations of the presbytery (church board) that actually leads the community. In contrast, the centre of the ecclesiastical network of the Reformed Churches in Hungary and Transylvania is, firmly and

[4] Fazakas, Sándor (ed.): *Kálvin időszerűsége: Tanulmányok Kálvin János teológiájának maradandó értékéről és magyarországi hatásáról*. Budapest: Magyarországi Református Egyház Kálvin János Kiadója, 2009.

unquestionably, the pastor, who is not only a member but also the chairman of the main decision-making body of the congregation. Thus, he becomes the maintainer of his own status – which is, in my view, a contradiction, or even a conflict of interests. The degree of deliberation, therefore, very much depends on the personality of the pastor: in the presence of an autocratic pastor, there is usually little room for wider discussion and decision-making within the community. This situation of church organisation is therefore little different from the clergy-centred governance structures of the Roman Catholic Church.

The book of Proverbs (15:22) says: 'Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.' God's plan and will, according to the Protestant creed, is usually carried out through the vision of others, through consultation. More people see more perspectives and have more to add to the issue on which they seek God's guidance. And the principle of universal priesthood makes pastors and non-minister church members partners in principle.

Another question is how these principles translate into practice. The practical operation of the Hungarian Reformed Church, mainly due to the influence of the predominantly Catholic environment, is characterised by the dominance of pastors and church offices, while the decision-making bodies are purely formal, and based rather on loyalty-centered interests rather than merit-based selection. This is linked to the fact that civic thinking has not taken deep root in Hungarian society. In the storms of history, it was the central state, rather than an association of independent, responsible citizens, that gave people security and protection. This had tremendous effects on the Church: the supposedly legitimate, elected bodies become inward-looking; clique-like, they often prolong their own mandate, preventing their own renewal through personal filtering mechanisms. Meanwhile, the formal church structures follow their own purpose functions in their cloud sphere, without feedback or accountability, and while on the surface the unity and identity of the Church is increasingly emphasised at the level of slogans, the church structures are increasingly disconnected from the community of church members, and the actual reality of the Church.

To live universal priesthood and ecclesial democracy, active, non-interested, autonomous, and willing church members are needed, similarly to the people of civil democracy. The leadership of the Hungarian Reformed Church – the 'clergy' – dominated by clergymen, who hold monopoly on information, often provides little real encouragement or means to empower and increase the numbers of such church members. In Protestant theology, however, the Church is the body of Christ, made up of mature believing members who are able to come to the Saviour on their own, in which we all come 'to the unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.' (Eph. 4.13.) Many pastors, however, are more interested in the existence of a flock kept in infancy, in

which they need not fear the emergence and strengthening of rivals. Likewise, the accountability of the state requires self-conscious, adult citizens, but the state is disinterested in their empowerment.

Like parliaments, for presbyteries (church boards) to become real deliberative and decision-making bodies, it is essential that their members are put in a real decision-making position, based on sharing information and building partnerships, which are often missing in the daily life of Protestant churches. This can be achieved by preparing board meetings more thoroughly, based on prior information sharing, by enabling real, responsible decision-making, by increasing public and congregational involvement in decisions, and by consciously sharing responsibility. The decision-making order should be based on a pastor-presbyter partnership and shared responsibility rather than on custom and unconditional trust. Church boards, if they function properly, can serve as schools of democracy in society.

It is a well-known phenomenon that the Western Christian churches are ageing, with few active, energetic, family-oriented and servant church members. One reason for this may be that they, especially the younger generation, are used to responsible participation in organisational decisions in secular bodies and workplaces, and demand to be informed as active participants in their church life. Many of them, although their spiritual hunger is undeniable, cannot be sucked into a centralised, authoritarian order that labels disputes as devilish. The main difference between the structure of the Catholic and Protestant Churches lies in the way in which pastoral status is created. In the Protestant Church, it is the exercise of a ministry established and maintained by the parish. In simple terms, the congregation has a pastor; it is not the pastor who has a congregation.

Throughout the course of Hungarian history, which has been characterised by Catholic dominance, the powerful office of bishop has also appeared in the Protestant churches because of their relations with the secular power. Its function in the 19th century was to participate in secular power (as members of the upper house) or to compromise with it (the 20th-century socialist political system, the Kádár-regime). Without this office, in my view, the Church would not be poorer, but richer, since an overweight power sphere would disappear. Internal power, on the other hand, calls into being closed decision-making forums of the chamber or central-committee type, whose contact with the public is contingent and arbitrary, and whose main purpose is to conclude power deals aimed at consolidating the existing structure.

The Protestant church ideal is a transparent and accountable, self-governing, Christ-centred church of adult, mature church members, whose communities are in close contact with publicly functioning church governance structures, free of power centres, stripped to the bare essentials, with boards as the real

decision-makers. And offices are filled by community selection, not by distribution along loyalty-centered lines of interest.

Protestants have recognized that in the relationship between politics and the church, as in everything else, the standard can only be the harder path. By dishonest offers of politics, wrapped in the 'protection of faith', the only answer can be to renounce perceived benefits. No living and life-forming Protestant church has been established where it operates at the mercy of the state and relies on it. The Church can only unfold the spiritual gifts of God freely, growing towards Christ, out of the shadow of power, as a free Church in a free state. The German-Scandinavian Protestant state religion and church is an institutional structure with a cultural function rather than a spiritual current. The Bekennede Kirche in Germany did not emerge within the official Protestant Church during the period of National Socialism, but against it.

Remarkably, participation and deliberation have not only appeared in the Protestant domain. The main elements of the Synodal Process, launched by Pope Francis in 2018, includes 'the co-responsibility and participation of the whole People of God in its life and mission, on all levels and distinguishing between various ministries and roles.' In the synodal Church, 'the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions.'[5]

As the final document of the Synodal Process states, 'The way to promote a Synodal Church is to foster as great a participation of all the People of God as possible in decision-making processes. This ecclesiological framework shapes the commitment to promote participation based on differentiated co-responsibility. Each member of the community must be respected, with value placed upon their gifts and abilities in light of the goal of shared decision-making.'[6] The Roman Catholic Church is seemingly moving towards a participatory, transparent, and accountable institutional framework.

Epilogue

In the Protestant conception, there is not a single foot of land that is not under the rule of Christ (Kuyper). Accordingly, in the world and in the Church, there are citizens of His kingdom, living under His laws. Christ's teachings reveal an approach in which pastors and non-ministers, Christians and non-Christians, men and women, people of different professions and different material situations serve one another at eye level, in equal proximity to God, for the benefit

[5] INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (2 March 2018)

[6] XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission Final Document (2–27 October, 2024), 87–79.

of one another. This principle is put into practice through democratic decision-making, which is a tool for both lay and church government. Listening to one other, honest and open debate, accepting one other's opinions are all expressions of Christian love. It would be great if the coming of His kingdom could be signalled by the putting into practice of as much of this as possible.

Do various nations' Protestant political ideas have anything in common? If so, this cannot be anything other than an unswerving and uncompromising faith in Christ alone and in the authority of the Bible. The various Protestant currents of thought have all placed the Word of God at the center, above questions of power and politics, in the Church as well as in society. For these are all under the unlimited sovereignty of Christ and not in the hands of earthly powers.

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UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP PREFERENCES THROUGH THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

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Abstract

Christian leadership, rooted in Scripture and exemplified by Jesus Christ, calls for a transformative approach that integrates theological convictions with psychological understanding. This paper explores foundational biblical principles, particularly the servant leadership model, while also incorporating psychological insights into emotional intelligence, motivation, and personality. These dimensions enrich leadership by helping leaders navigate relational dynamics, understand team behavior, and foster resilience. Drawing on both scriptural texts and contemporary scholarship, the study reframes leadership not simply as a role but as a spiritual and interpersonal vocation guided by the Holy Spirit. The development of character, vision, and ethical integrity is considered alongside psychological theories, such as those of Daniel Goleman and Robert Greenleaf, to demonstrate how spiritual formation and emotional maturity intersect. This synthesis of theology and psychology offers a holistic and practical framework for training Christlike leaders who are both spiritually grounded and emotionally competent in today's complex ecclesiastical and societal contexts.

Keywords: *Christian leadership, servant leadership, emotional intelligence, theology, psychology*

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Introduction

A fusion of theological principles and psychological perspectives shapes Christian leadership preferences. Theologically, leadership is modelled after Jesus Christ, who epitomised servant leadership (Matthew 20:26–28). Psychologically, effective leadership incorporates elements, particularly emotional intelligence, motivation, and transformational influence (Jonker & Dube, 2025). Integration of these perspectives offers a comprehensive understanding of Christian leadership, fostering spiritual and organisational growth.[1]

Background

Christian leadership is deeply rooted in biblical principles and is further enriched by psychological insights. Biblically, leadership is demonstrated after the model of Jesus Christ, who exemplified servant leadership (Matthew 20:26–28; Philippians 2:5–8). The concept of divine calling is also central to Christian leadership, as seen in the call of Moses (Exodus 3:10–12) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), which emphasizes that leadership is a vocation rather than a position of power. Additionally, the early Church demonstrated collective leadership and delegation, as illustrated in Acts 6:1–7.

Recent scholarship has further explored the integration of theology and psychology in leadership. Jonker and Dube[2] argue that effective Christian leadership must incorporate emotional intelligence, motivation, and transformational influence. Tanugraha et al.[3] highlight the importance of merging theological convictions with psychological competencies to enhance both spiritual and organizational growth. Research on the Five-Factor Model of Personality[4] suggests that traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness align with servant leadership principles, reinforcing the psychological underpinnings of biblical leadership ideals.

[1] Daniel Tanugraha et al.: "Integrating Theology and Psychology in Leadership Development." *Journal of Christian Leadership Studies* 12, no. 1 (2024): 45–62.

[2] Piet Jonker – Samuel Dube: *Transformational Leadership in Christian Organizations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2025.

[3] Tanugraha et al.: Integrating Theology and Psychology in Leadership Development

[4] Robert R. McCrae – Paul T. Costa: *Personality in Adulthood: A Five-Factor Theory Perspective*. New York: Guilford Press, 1999.

Review of the Literature

Theological Foundations of Christian Leadership

This study explores the interplay between theological traditions and psychological theories in shaping leadership approaches. Christian leadership is often viewed as a divine calling, as seen in Exodus 3:10–12, where God appoints Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt (Holy Bible, ESV). Similarly, Jeremiah 1:5 affirms the idea of divine purpose, illustrating that leadership is not self-appointed but God-ordained (Holy Bible, ESV). By investigating principles such as servant leadership and emotional intelligence, this study aims to enhance understanding of effective leadership in Christian contexts.[5]

In Christian contexts, leadership is often rooted in theological principles that highlight humility, service, and a sense of divine purpose. Scripture frequently presents leadership not as dominance but as a commitment to serve others. Jesus exemplifies this in Matthew 20:26–28, where He teaches that true greatness comes through servanthood: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave" (NIV). This idea underpins the concept of "servant leadership," which has deeply influenced Christian leadership philosophies.[6] Furthermore, Christian leadership is seen not as a personal goal but as a divine calling. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this in Ephesians 4:1, encouraging believers to live in a manner worthy of the calling they have received. Scholars argue that this view defines leadership as a spiritual vocation rather than a quest for status or authority.[7] As a result, leadership in Christian settings is framed as a response to God's guidance and purpose rather than self-promotion or ambition.

Biblically Rooted Models of Christian Leadership: An Integrated Argument

Christian leadership is distinct from secular paradigms in that it is rooted in Scripture and shaped by a theological understanding of service, sacrifice, responsibility, and transformation. Four major models—servant leadership,

[5] Walter C. Wright: *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Influence and Service*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000, 112.

[6] Robert K. Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002; Larry C. Spears: "Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders." *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010): 25–30.

[7] Robert Banks – Bernice M. Ledbetter: *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

shepherd leadership, stewardship leadership, and transformational leadership—offer a comprehensive vision for how Christian leaders are called to lead. Each model builds upon the other three, forming an integrated framework that prioritizes relational care, ethical responsibility, and spiritual renewal.

Servant Leadership: The Foundation of Christian Leadership

Servant leadership provides the starting point for Christian leadership by challenging conventional notions of authority. Jesus explicitly redefines greatness in Matthew 20:26–28, stating that "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." This teaching is powerfully illustrated in John 13:12–17, where Jesus stoops to wash His disciples' feet—an act that models humility and service. Scholars such as Greenleaf and Sendjaya[8] argue that this approach shifts the focus of leadership from command and control to empathy, support, and selfless action. By prioritizing the needs of others, Christian leaders reflect Christ's example and create communities grounded in love and mutual respect.[9] This foundation sets the tone for other models of leadership, establishing that all Christian leadership begins with a heart of service.

Shepherd Leadership: Leading Through Relationship and Sacrifice

Building on the servant leadership model, shepherd leadership adds a deeply relational and pastoral dimension. While servanthood focuses on humility and care, shepherding emphasizes long-term commitment, guidance, and personal sacrifice. In John 10:11–14, Jesus declares, "I am the Good Shepherd… who lays down his life for the sheep." This underscores a leadership model based on intimate knowledge and sacrificial love. Similarly, Psalm 23 depicts God as a shepherd who leads, protects, and restores. According to Keller and Wright,[10] shepherd leaders are called to be present and attentive, walking with their followers through both joy and hardship. This form of leadership challenges the idea of emotional distance in leadership and calls for leaders to be spiritually nurturing and protective. Shepherd leadership, then, deepens the servant model by reinforcing the value of relational responsibility.

[8] Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership*; Sen. Sendjaya: *Personal and Organizational Excellence through Servant Leadership: Learning to Serve, Serving to Lead, Leading to Transform*. New York: Springer, 2015.

[9] Kent M. Keith: *The Case for Servant Leadership*. Westfield, in: Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2015.

[10] Timothy Keller: *The Shepherd Leader*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013; Wright: *Relational Leadership*.

Stewardship Leadership: Leading with Accountability and Purpose

While servant and shepherd leadership highlight a leader's character and relational posture, stewardship adds a dimension of ethical responsibility and accountability to leadership. Christian leaders are not only to care for people but also to faithfully manage the resources, gifts, and opportunities entrusted to them by God. 1 Peter 4:10 urges believers to use their gifts "as faithful stewards of God's grace," reminding leaders that everything they possess—including influence—is ultimately God's. The Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14–30 reinforces this, showing that God expects wise and fruitful management of all that He provides. As Block[11] and Van Dierendonck and Patterson[12] observe, stewardship requires leaders to balance service with accountability, ensuring their actions honor God and benefit others. In this way, stewardship builds on the previous models, adding a layer of integrity, intentionality, and vision-driven leadership.

Transformational Leadership: Leading Toward Renewal and Growth

Finally, transformational leadership brings all the previous models to their highest aim: the inner and outer transformation of individuals and communities. If servant, shepherd, and stewardship leadership are about how leaders act, transformational leadership focuses on what those actions are meant to produce—deep, lasting spiritual change. Romans 12:2 commands believers not to conform to worldly standards but to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind," and 2 Corinthians 5:17 proclaims that in Christ, we are "new creations." Leaders are therefore called not only to manage or guide but also to inspire others toward Christlike transformation. Bass and Riggio[13] emphasize the role of vision, motivation, and spiritual influence in transformational leadership, while Sanders[14] notes that true Christian leaders embody the change they wish to see. This model integrates all others, aiming not just for effective leadership but for spiritual flourishing as well.

[11] Peter Block: *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*. 2nd edn. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2013.

[12] Dirk Van Dierendonck – Kathleen Patterson (eds.): *Practicing Servant Leadership: Developments in Implementation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

[13] Bernard M. Bass – Ronald E. Riggio: *Transformational Leadership*. 2nd edn. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.

[14] J. Oswald Sanders: *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007.

A Unified Model of Christian Leadership

These four leadership themes—servant, shepherd, steward, and transformational—are not competing ideas but rather complementary aspects of a unified biblical vision. Together, they call Christian leaders to lead with humility, relational depth, ethical integrity, and spiritual purpose. Rooted in Scripture and affirmed by contemporary scholarship, this integrated model offers a holistic and Christ-centered approach to leadership that challenges worldly paradigms and promotes the flourishing of individuals and communities for the glory of God.

Psychological Foundations of Christian Leadership

Psychological research has significantly contributed to leadership studies, particularly through emotional intelligence and personality theory. Goleman[15] emphasizes that effective leaders demonstrate self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—qualities essential for Christian leadership. Additionally, the Five-Factor Model of Personality highlights traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness, which align with biblical leadership values.[16] The New Testament illustrates these principles in Acts 6:1–7, where the apostles selected leaders based on their wisdom and spiritual character to ensure effective ministry (Holy Bible, ESV).

Emotional Intelligence: Leading with Awareness and Compassion

Emotional intelligence (EI) involves the capacity to perceive, interpret, and regulate emotions in oneself and in others.[17] Leaders who are emotionally intelligent enhance relationships, resolve tensions, and inspire trust. This trait aligns with biblical virtues such as gentleness and self-control, which are part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Jesus demonstrates EI when He expresses grief at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35), showcasing empathy and emotional sensitivity. Developing EI enables Christian leaders to reflect Christ-like compassion and maintain emotionally supportive environments.[18]

[15] Daniel Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books, 1995, 102.

[16] McCrae – Costa: *Personality in Adulthood*, 50.

[17] Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence;* Daniel Goleman – Richard Boyatzis – Annie McKee: *Primal Leadership: Realising the Power of Emotional Intelligence.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

[18] Jay Joseph – Bruce E. Winston: "A Correlation of Servant Leadership, Leader Trust, and Organizational Trust." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 26 (1), 2005, 6–22;

Resilience: Faith-filled Endurance in Leadership

Resilience is the psychological strength required to adapt and bounce back during adversity. It is a key quality for sustaining leadership over time.[19] Paul exemplifies resilience in 2 Corinthians 4:8–9, where he speaks of enduring trials without despair. His endurance reflects a spiritually anchored tenacity that Christian leaders are called to emulate. As McMinn and Hall[20] observe, leaders who are grounded in prayer, faith, and a strong sense of purpose are better equipped to overcome difficulties and continue leading effectively.

Empathy: Building Deep Connections through Compassion

Empathy refers to the ability to connect with others by understanding and sharing their emotions. Research shows that empathetic leadership leads to stronger group cohesion and loyalty.[21] The Bible emphasizes this in Romans 12:15, encouraging believers to align emotionally with others' joys and sorrows. Jesus' compassionate response to the crowd in Mark 6:34 illustrates how empathy drives meaningful leadership. Wright[22] emphasizes that leaders who lead with empathy foster trust, cultivate strong relationships, and model Christ's love.

Intrinsic Motivation: Leading with Purpose and Integrity

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the internal drive to act based on values and purpose rather than external rewards.[23] Scripture reflects this concept in Colossians 3:23, which urges believers to work wholeheartedly as though serving God. Christian leadership, therefore, stems from a deep spiritual calling

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Cary Cherniss: "Emotional Intelligence: Toward Clarification of a Concept." *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 3, no. 2, 2010, 110–126.

[19] Steven M. Southwick – Dennis S. Charney: *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018; David Fletcher – Mustafa Sarkar: "Mental Fortitude Training: An Evidence-Based Approach to Developing Psychological Resilience for Sustained Success." *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action* 7 (3), 2016, 135–157.

[20] Mark R. McMinn – Todd W. Hall: *Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007.

[21] Simon Baron-Cohen: *The Science of Evil. On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty,* Basic Books/Hachette Book Group, 2011; Jessica E. Dinh et al.: "Leadership Theory and Research in the New Millennium: Current Theoretical Trends and Changing Perspectives." *The Leadership Quarterly* 31 (1): 101379, 2020.

[22] Wright: *Relational Leadership*.

[23] Richard M. Ryan – Edward L. Deci: "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being." *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68–78; Dirk van Dierendonck et al.: "Building Ethical Cultures in Organizations through Servant Leadership." *Journal of Business Ethics* 174 (2021): 133–149.

rather than the pursuit of status. Sanders[24] suggests that such internally motivated leaders demonstrate integrity, perseverance, and authenticity in their leadership practice.

Conclusion: A Faith-Integrated Approach to Leadership

By integrating psychological principles with biblical truths, Christian leaders can foster environments that are emotionally sound, spiritually grounded, and relationally effective. Emotional intelligence, resilience, empathy, and intrinsic motivation not only contribute to leadership success but also mirror the character and mission of Christ. When shaped by both Scripture and psychological insight, Christian leadership becomes a transformative and life-giving practice.

Theological and Psychological Perspectives on Christian Leadership

Blending theological principles with psychological insights is vital for well-rounded and biblically faithful Christian leadership. This combination equips leaders to not only stay grounded in Scripture but also to understand the emotional and relational aspects of leading people in complex settings.

Theologically, the foundation of Christian leadership lies in the example of Jesus, who taught that greatness comes through serving others. In Matthew 20:26–28, Jesus says, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant… even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."[25] This servant-hearted approach shapes Christian leadership so as to reflect humility and selflessness. Scholars like Henry and Richard Blackaby stress that true Christian leadership centers on aligning oneself with God's direction and modeling a Christ-like character.[26]

On the psychological side, researchers have contributed meaningful perspectives that complement these biblical values. Daniel Goleman's work on emotional intelligence highlights core leadership qualities such as empathy, self-awareness, and strong interpersonal relationships.[27] These mirror the characteristics listed in Galatians 5:22–23, where the Apostle Paul outlines the fruit of the Spirit—qualities that should define a Christian leader's

[24] Sanders: *Spiritual Leadership.*
[25] Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001), Matt. 20:26–28.
[26] Henry T. Blackaby – Richard Blackaby: Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2001), 20–23.
[27] Daniel Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence,* 87.

demeanor.[28] Developing these traits supports leaders in creating authentic, compassionate relationships within their ministries.

Psychology also provides tools for understanding personality, team dynamics, and motivation, which are essential in diverse ecclesiastical contexts. Leadership expert John C. Maxwell notes that effective leaders must invest in building trust and influence by understanding the people they serve.[29] This insight resonates with Proverbs 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another,[30] highlighting how meaningful relationships shape both leaders and their communities.

In summary, integrating theological convictions with psychological knowledge helps Christian leaders navigate the spiritual and human aspects of their calling. Scripture provides the moral and spiritual framework, while psychology offers a practical understanding of people and leadership. Together, they form a dynamic and faithful model of leadership rooted in service, wisdom, and Christ-like character.

Case Studies of Christian Leadership

Case Study 1: Leadership in a Local Church (Pastor John Smith)

Pastor John Smith models his leadership on the principles of servant leadership, which prioritizes humility and a heart for service. This aligns with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 20:26–28, where greatness is associated with serving others. His approach corresponds with Self-Determination Theory,[31] which emphasizes that internally motivated individuals are more effective and resilient. By fostering biblical virtues like humility and empathy (Philippians 2:3–4), Pastor Smith encourages his congregation to take the initiative and engage meaningfully.

He also exemplifies high emotional intelligence,[32] which is especially evident in how he resolves conflicts by listening actively and expressing empathy. His actions reflect the humility of Jesus, as seen in John 13:12–17, where Christ washes the disciples' feet.

[28] Holy Bible: English Standard Version, Gal. 5:22–23.
[29] John C. Maxwell: The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007, 45–50.
[30] Holy Bible: English Standard Version, Prov. 27:17.
[31] Edward L. Deci – Richard M. Ryan: *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. Plenum Press, 2000.
[32] Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence*.

In terms of group cohesion, Pastor Smith applies Social Identity Theory,[33] strengthening a collective identity rooted in Christian unity, as portrayed in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 and Ephesians 4:3. This contributes to a nurturing and cooperative church environment that promotes spiritual and communal growth.

Case Study 2: Leadership in a Megachurch (Pastor Jane Davis)

Pastor Jane Davis's leadership is characterized by a visionary approach that mobilizes people toward a clear and inspiring future. Grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory,[34] she motivates her congregation with a compelling mission, echoing 1 Corinthians 9:24 and Proverbs 29:18, which emphasize purposeful living and spiritual vision.

She utilizes Cognitive Load Theory[35] to manage the demands of decision-making by delegating responsibilities to a team of trusted leaders. This follows the example of Exodus 18:21–22, where Moses delegates authority to capable leaders to improve governance.

Davis also cultivates strong organizational loyalty through clearly communicated expectations, reflecting the psychological contract model.[36] This fosters accountability and collective responsibility, aligning with 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, where various roles contribute to one unified purpose.

In order to maintain a community in a large setting, she implements a *campus pastor system*, counteracting issues like reduced individual participation in large groups—a challenge known as social loafing.[37] This mirrors the biblical delegation seen in Acts 6:1–7, ensuring that each community within the megachurch remains engaged and connected.

Both Pastor John Smith and Pastor Jane Davis demonstrate the integration of biblical principles and psychological theories in their leadership. While Pastor Smith's approach focuses on emotional intelligence, servant leadership, and community building in a small church, Pastor Davis adapts visionary leadership, delegation, and organizational commitment to the challenges of leading a megachurch. Both leaders apply biblical scriptures to guide their

[33] Henri Tajfel – John Turner: "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", in William G. Austin – Stephen Worchel (eds.): *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 33–47. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979.

[34] Bernard M. Bass: *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998.

[35] John Sweller: "Cognitive Load During Problem Solving: Effects on Learning." *Cognitive Science* 12, no. 2 (1988): 257–285.

[36] John P. Meyer – Natalie J. Allen: *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research, and Application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1991.

[37] Bibb Latane et al.: "Many Hands Make Light the Work: The Causes and Consequences of Social Loafing." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37, no. 6 (1979): 822–832.

leadership, demonstrating that psychological insights and biblical teachings can work together to create effective, spiritually grounded leadership.

Conclusion

In summary, this article has explored the multifaceted nature of Christian leadership, drawing upon both biblical teachings and contemporary leadership theories. The integration of servant leadership, transformational leadership, and emotional intelligence has revealed a model that emphasizes humility, service, and interpersonal sensitivity.[38] The biblical foundation, particularly the example of Christ's leadership, reinforces a framework centered on moral integrity, selflessness, and spiritual resilience (Philippians 2:5–8, ESV). Moreover, emotional intelligence, as emphasized by Goleman and Salovey and Mayer, provides a psychological dimension that enhances relational competence in leadership.[39]

This article has further highlighted how Christian leadership must evolve to be able to address the challenges of a diverse and dynamic society. Cultural intelligence and theological reflection remain essential to this development.[40] Ultimately, Christian leaders are called not only to guide but also to serve with empathy, courage, and spiritual clarity—qualities essential for sustaining ethical and transformative leadership in contemporary ministry and organizational contexts.[41]

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[38] Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership*; Bass – Riggio: *Transformational Leadership*; Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence.*

[39] Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence*; Peter Salovey – John D. Mayer: "Emotional Intelligence." *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9, no. 3 (1990): 185–211.

[40] David A. Livermore: *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009; Tanugraha et al.: Integrating Theology and Psychology in Leadership Development.

[41] Sendjaya: *Personal and Organizational Excellence*; Wright: *Relational Leadership.*

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Jeremiah 1:5 (ESV)

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LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT

SILENCE: A NEGLECTED VIRTUE FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS[1]

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Abstract

Silence, often overlooked, holds significance for Christian leaders, offering a framework for reflection, ethical growth, and deeper spiritual connection. This paper examines the dimensions of silence as explored by Baldur Kirchner, a Catholic theologian whose work emphasizes silence as an essential practice for self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and attentive listening. Through Kirchner's perspectives, silence emerges as a foundational discipline that enables leaders to engage with others, themselves, and the divine in meaningful ways.

[1] This paper is a result of the master thesis at University of Pretoria, done by the first author, Susanne Thyroff, under the supervision of Prof Volker Kessler. Thyroff, Susanne serves as Chairwoman of ERF Medien (Germany) since January 2025. She submitted her Master's thesis at the University of Pretoria, titled "Silence – A Neglected Virtue for Christian Leaders." She has extensive experience in marketing and public communication, serves on the board of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Bad Kreuznach (ACK), and is actively as member involved in the preaching ministry of the free church, Die Brücke, in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. Volker Kessler initiated the international Christian Leadership conferences which started in Pretoria, 2013. He is dean of GBFE, Germany, and professor extraordinarius at the University of Pretoria, Department of Practical Theology and Mission Studies. He is teaching wordwide on Christian Leadership, and he has published many articles, books on Christian Leadership and Virtue Ethics. One of his most famous books, co-authored with his wife Martina is on power addiction (German title "Die Machtfalle", published in Hungary as "Hatalmi csapdák a gyülekezetben").

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This paper investigates silence's role in leadership by focusing on its capacity to cultivate inner clarity, relational empathy, and alignment with higher values. Christian leaders, in particular Pentecostal leaders, can benefit from Kirchner's insights on integrating silence into their decision-making processes and their interactions with others. This paper highlights the transformative potential of silence, not only as a personal discipline but also as a key to fostering authentic and value-driven leadership.

Keywords: *silence, Christian leadership, virtue ethics, contemplation, servant leadership*

Introduction

In a fast-paced world where noise dominates both personal and professional spaces, silence offers an alternative approach for leaders seeking clarity and purpose. Often underestimated, silence provides critical opportunities for reflection, self-awareness, and alignment with core values. For Christian leaders, this practice holds particular relevance as a way to seek divine guidance and foster spiritual depth.

Kirchner describes silence as having three primary dimensions: first, silence in conversations with others, which involves active listening, restraint, and empathetic understanding. This form of silence requires leaders to hold back from interrupting or rushing to speak, creating space for others to express themselves fully. Kirchner views this type of silence as a demonstration of humility and respect, fostering trust and mutual understanding.

Second, Kirchner highlights silence for self-reflection, an inward practice that allows individuals to process inner conflicts, gain clarity on their values and goals, and cultivate personal resilience. This introspective aspect of silence fosters emotional healing and deepens a leader's sense of purpose and identity.

Finally, Kirchner emphasizes silence before God as an essential practice of contemplation and prayer, where the heart opens to divine guidance. This silence is not merely the absence of sound but an intentional act of surrender, allowing for transformation and renewal. Kirchner describes this form of silence as a posture of listening and expectation, comparable to Samuel's words: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sm 3:9).[2]

By addressing the silence practiced in relationships with others, in self-reflection and before God, this paper underscores the dual nature of silence as both a communicative virtue and a spiritual discipline and a pathway to personal growth.

An essential question arises: why focus on Kirchner rather than the more widely known Anselm Grün? In the German-speaking world, Grün's works on

[2] Baldur Kirchner, Conversations with the author, Ettenbeuren, April 2016.

spirituality, leadership, and silence have gained significant popularity, with extensive academic analyses available. Grün's contributions have been examined in works such as *Theology and Language of Anselm Grün,*[3] making him a familiar figure in theological and popular contexts.

However, Kirchner's approach, though lesser-known, offers unique insights that warrant scholarly attention. His background in psychoanalysis, his integration of monastic traditions, and his application of silence to leadership contexts distinguish his work. Kirchner emphasized that silence is not merely the absence of words but an intentional space for healing, reflection, and transformation—both in conversations and in one's spiritual life, as highlighted in his seminar teachings and theological reflections.

This paper explores the perspectives of Baldur Kirchner, a Catholic theologian, on the role of silence and presents a comprehensive understanding of how silence can shape ethical, personal, and spiritual dimensions of leadership. It contains some autoethnographic elements from the first and main author, Susanne Thyroff. Whenever the first person singular is used, this refers to Susanne. I (Susanne Thyroff) have personally attended some of Kirchner's seminars, including *Seelische Stabilität durch Selbstfürsorge* ("*Emotional Stability through Self-Care*") in 2016, and have witnessed firsthand how his teachings profoundly impacted me seeking spiritual clarity and resilience. His mentorship was pivotal during a formative phase of my life.

The structure of the paper begins with personal reflections on the experience of silence, followed by a historical overview of silence as a virtue in theological and philosophical thought. It then introduces Baldur Kirchner's biography and key publications to contextualize his thought. Building on this foundation, the core of the paper discusses the three dimensions of silence as defined by Kirchner. Finally, the paper concludes with reflections on the practical implications of silence for Christian leadership, with special reference to Pentecostal contexts.

Susanne's personal experiences with silence

I (Susanne) grew up in a Pentecostal church founded by my father, where worship services were often characterized by passionate prayers, simultaneous worship and characterized by praying in tongues and multiple languages as well as lively expressions of faith. Pentecostal conferences and prayer meetings emphasized spoken prayer as a sign of spiritual blessing, and moments of silence were rare. However, during a personal crisis, I began to appreciate the role of silence in

[3] Thomas Philipp – Jörg Schwaratzki – François-Xavier Amherdt (Hrsg.): *Theologie und Sprache bei Anselm Grün*, Freiburg: Herder, 2014.

discerning God's will and processing emotions. My professional background in marketing and communication, which also emphasized verbal expression, initially reinforced this pattern. Yet, guided by Kirchner's theological framework, I discovered silence as a transformative discipline that aids in decision-making, fosters spiritual renewal, and creates space for intentional listening.

The practice of silence helped me to make decisions and find inner healing. During my first exposure to Kirchner's teachings, I attended his seminar titled "Emotional Stability through Self-Care".[4] This experience marked a turning point as I explored silence as a practice that could bring emotional and spiritual clarity. Kirchner's emphasis on listening to the inner self resonated deeply with me. I was encouraged to focus on the stillness within and allow unresolved emotions to surface. In one significant moment of silent contemplation, I began to address personal questions about my career and theological studies. As I practiced silence consistently, I found myself experiencing a profound sense of peace and certainty about my decisions.

Moreover, the practice of silence became a means of healing past emotional wounds. I recall numerous early mornings spent in silence, reflecting on Kirchner's suggestion to embrace solitude as a space for transformation. Often, these sessions led to emotional breakthroughs—moments of weeping that felt cathartic and restorative. Kirchner's description of silence as a space of healing proved accurate, as I gradually experienced a renewed sense of self-worth and a release from burdens that had weighed heavily on me.[5] One of Kirchner's pivotal teachings emphasizes that silence can lead to an encounter with God, an immersion into one's self where the divine presence becomes tangible. This idea mirrored my own experiences during contemplation, where the act of listening inwardly opened doors to a deeper spiritual connection. Kirchner asserts that "the Holy Spirit dwells within me",[6] underscoring the profound spiritual dynamics at play in moments of silence. By integrating this discipline into my daily routine, I not only grew spiritually but also developed the patience and discernment necessary for leadership. As Kirchner argues, listening is a foundational pillar of personal development.[7]

Through Kirchner's teachings and my own journey, I came to understand that silence is not merely an absence of words but a dynamic process of self-discovery, healing, and divine encounter. This practice has profoundly influenced my approach to leadership, equipping me to navigate complexities with greater clarity, empathy, and resilience.

[4] Baldur Kirchner: *Seelische Stabilität durch Selbstfürsorge* (Seminar, Ettenbeuren, April 2016).

[5] Baldur Kirchner: *Demut und Stille. Sich selbst neu begreifen*, Kammeltal, Edition Kplus, 2021, 91.

[6] Susanne Thyroff: Personal conversation during the seminar *Seelische Stabilität durch Selbstfürsorge*, Ettenbeuren, with Baldur Kirchner, April 2016.

[7] Baldur Kirchner: *Benedikt für Manager. Die geistigen Grundlagen des Führens*, Wiesbaden, Betriebswirtschaftlicher Verlag Dr. Th. Gabler / GWV Fachverlage, 1994, 45.

To transition from these personal reflections, it is important to delve deeper into the broader conceptual framework of silence as a virtue. Understanding how silence aligns with virtue ethics provides a foundation for appreciating its relevance in leadership.

A historical overview of silence as a virtue

In common parlance, silence is often understood as the absence of words or nonverbal communication. However, theological perspectives, particularly those of the Italian-German philosopher and theologian Romano Guardini, define silence as the conscious renunciation of utterance.[8] It is not merely non-communication, but an intentionally designed space for reflection, connection, and openness towards the other person or the presence of God. This view transcends a utilitarian understanding of silence as a mere tool and recognizes it as a virtue that enriches spiritual and emotional awareness. Guardini emphasizes that silence is not only an external, but also an internal attitude, called recollection, which orients the soul towards God. He describes silence as a form of recollection before God and also as a virtue in interpersonal relationships.

In 2021, the German professor of New Testament, Klaus Berger, published a monograph on Silence. [9] He describes silence as a central path to divine revelation, leading to an inner peace in which the presence of God can be experienced in a special way. According to Berger, silence is a necessary component of liturgy and mysticism, rooted in biblical witness and the historical tradition of Christian devotion.[10] He sees it as a way and mode of God's revelation and emphasizes that people can become more like God in silence by turning to him silently and thereby sensing his will. According to Berger, silence is also significant when people experience God's silence and understand it in their lives.[11]

The Church Fathers and mystics have also highlighted the importance of silence: Ignatius of Loyola, in his Spiritual Exercises, emphasized the spiritual significance of silence as a means of inner contemplation and communication with God.[12] Teresa of Ávila compared the soul to a castle with various dwellings, where the approach to God takes place in silence, and emphasized that it was important only to be certain that God was there, and not necessarily to speak to him.[13] John of the Cross, in his works, described the "Dark Night of the Soul"

[8] Romano Guardini: *Tugenden. Meditationen über Gestalten des sittlichen Lebens*, Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, Mainz, 1987, 164.
[9] Klaus Berger: *Schweigen. Eine Theologie der Stille*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Verlag Herder, 2021.
[10] Berger: *Schweigen*, 12.
[11] Ibid., 54.
[12] Ignatius von Loyola: *Geistliche Übungen*, Regensburg, Echter Verlag GmbH, 2021.
[13] Teresa von Ávila: *Die Seelenburg*, München, Anaconda Verlag, 2021, 23.

as a profound spiritual experience that can be interpreted in connection with silence.[14] Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk of the 20th century, also addresses the value of silence in his works, connecting his withdrawal into solitude with social and political engagement, and rejecting a complete retreat into silence.[15]

In summary, silence as a virtue is much more than the mere absence of words. It is an active, intentional act that leads to self-reflection, to encountering the divine, and to deeper, respectful communication with others. It is a practice that encompasses personal, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions.

Virtue ethics, unlike normative ethics, does not ask "what is good?" but "who is good?" It focuses on the character of the individual, emphasizing habits cultivated through consistent practice.[16] Classical virtues such as justice, courage, prudence, love, and hope resonate with biblical principles, reflecting God's nature and inviting believers to emulate these traits. As Halbig[17] observes, virtues are robust character traits, practiced across diverse situations, shaping a person's moral and spiritual integrity. Silence, however, requires a nuanced understanding; it is not a universal prescription but a practiced discipline that demands discernment.

To understand the significance of virtues in the context of Christian leadership, it is helpful to explore concepts of virtue theory. In his ground-making work *After virtue*, first published in 1981, Alasdair MacIntyre[18] critiques modern ethics and advocates for a return to the Aristotelian tradition. According to MacIntyre, virtues are not mere habits but internalized dispositions that develop through practice. He argues that virtues are character traits that enable individuals to achieve their *telos* (goal or purpose). A community characterized by shared values provides the framework in which individuals learn to act virtuously. This perspective is relevant to Christian leaders whose values and actions are strongly influenced by the community in which they operate. In the Christian context, virtues play a crucial role in the development of character and in living a life according to God's will.

Leadership, particularly in Christian contexts, extends beyond operational management to embody spiritual guidance. Christian leaders are tasked with stewarding both people and divine purposes, whether in spiritual organizations

[14] Johannes vom Kreuz: *Der geistliche Gesang. Vollständige Neuübertragung der gesammelten Werke Band 3*, hrsg. von Ulrich Dobhan, Ernst Hense und Elisa Peeters, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder Verlag, 2011.

[15] Corinna Dahlgrün: *Christliche Spiritualität. Formen und Traditionen der Suche nach Gott*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, 9.

[16] Moisés Mayordomo: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer neutestamentlich orientierten Tugendethik: Ein programmatischer Entwurf, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 64, Heft 3 (2008): 216–217.

[17] Christoph Halbig: *Der Begriff der Tugend und die Grenzen der Tugendethik*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2013, 19.

[18] Alasdair MacIntyre: *After virtue. A study in moral theory* 3rd edn. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

or secular enterprises led by Christian leaders. Kirchner's perspective highlights the transformative impact of silence not just on spiritual ministries, but also on leaders operating in secular domains who strive to embody Christian virtues in their professional spheres. Silence, as part of this leadership, enables a leader to listen deeply—to God, to others, and to their own inner convictions. According to Böhlemann and Herbst,[19] spiritual leadership emerges from alignment with the Holy Spirit's guidance. This discipline fosters a grounded and God-centered approach to decision-making, encouraging leaders to serve as instruments of divine will.

Servant leadership, popularized by Robert Greenleaf,[20] emphasizes serving others as a pathway to effective leadership. Silence aligns with this model by fostering attentiveness and receptivity—essential qualities for discerning the needs of others and responding with humility and wisdom. Biblical narratives, such as Jesus' moments of solitude, underscore the importance of silence in leadership, portraying it as a means to seek divine strength and clarity.

Silence provides a space for contemplation, described by Kirchner as an inward turning that allows leaders to encounter the divine presence.[21] This "gaze upon God" fosters spiritual intimacy, enabling leaders to draw strength and wisdom from their relationship with God. Contemplative silence transforms not only the individual but also the communities they serve, encouraging a leadership style rooted in grace and authenticity.

Baldur Kirchner: Life and work

His life

Baldur Kirchner, born on November 17, 1939, in Komotau (present-day Chomutov, Czech Republic), had a childhood profoundly shaped by his upbringing in a Jesuit-run orphanage. This environment influenced his later reflections on silence as both a potential source of harm and a tool for profound healing. In *Benedikt für Manager* he observed, that silence, when misused, can become "punishment" or "psychological torture.[22]

Kirchner's life was shaped by his 1962 escape from East Germany. Kirchner pursued advanced studies in philosophy, Catholic theology, classical philology,

[19] Peter Böhlemann – Michael Herbst: *Geistlich leiten*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011, 22.

[20] Robert K. Greenleaf: *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, New York, Paulist Press, 2002.

[21] Baldur Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg. Begegnungen mit der persönlichen Innenwelt*, Kammeltal, Edition Kplus, 2008.

[22] Kirchner: *Benedikt für Manager*, 119.

and Slavic literature at the universities of East Berlin and Tübingen. His doctoral thesis examined the worldview of Ivan Bunin through his prose.[23]

In the 1970s, he was trained in psychoanalysis under Balthasar Staehelin, a formative experience that shaped his understanding of silence as a process of self-revelation and healing.

His theological journey was enriched by regular visits to the Benedictine Abbey of Neresheim, starting in 1975, where he engaged deeply with the Rule of St. Benedict. These experiences inspired his seminal work *Benedikt für Manager*, in which he applied monastic principles to contemporary leadership contexts.[24]

In his later years, Kirchner focused on the practical applications of silence in leadership and personal well-being. His book *Demut und Stille*[25] highlighted the transformative power of humility and silence in fostering wisdom, ethical clarity, and resilience.

Until his death on April 17, 2023, in Kammeltal, Kirchner remained intellectually and spiritually active, leaving a legacy that frames silence as a profound tool for spiritual growth, personal healing, and ethical leadership.

Kirchner's key publications

Baldur Kirchner's publications are central to understanding his perspective on silence, leadership, and personal development. His works bridge theological, philosophical, and practical insights, often drawing from monastic traditions and applying them to contemporary contexts. Unfortunately, not many of his German books were translated into other languages. This section outlines some of his key publications, highlighting their main themes and relevance to the topic of silence:

Benedikt für Manager. Die geistigen Grundlagen des Führens[26] (in English: Benedict for leaders. The spiritual foundations of leadership): This foundational work explores the spiritual principles of leadership by drawing parallels between monastic life, particularly the Rule of St. Benedict, and the corporate world. Kirchner presents silence as a key virtue for leaders, emphasizing its role in cultivating inner wisdom and ethical clarity. He highlights the connection between silence and humility.

Kirchner sees this book as a guide for managers to integrate Christian principles into their leadership practices. He argues that the Benedictine

[23] Baldur Kirchner: „Die Lebensanschauung Ivan Aleksejevic Bunins nach seinem Prosawerk," PhD diss., Universität Tübingen, 1968.
[24] Kirchner: *Benedikt für Manager*, 9–11.
[25] Kirchner: *Demut und Stille.*
[26] Kirchner: *Benedikt für Manager.*

tradition offers a solid foundation for leadership. He also defines a virtue as the ethical constitution of a person.[27]

He connects the ability to listen with ethical competence. He posits that leaders can only effectively lead people they know, and they can only get to know them through listening.

Dialektik und Ethik. Prinzipien des Führens und Vertrauens[28] (in English: Dialectics and ethics. Principles of leadership and trust)*:* This book delves into the relationship between communication, ethics, and leadership. Kirchner discusses the importance of dialogue and dialectical thinking in fostering trust and ethical decision-making. He also describes communication culture as a result of personal development. He believes the way one interacts with others is a reflection of one's personality. He argues that the personal values of an individual strongly influence their actions. Kirchner stresses that the ability to engage in a scholastic debate reflects the moral competence of a leader and argues that convincing others, as opposed to persuading them, occurs when a person communicates from their center.

Der kontemplative Weg. Begegnungen mit der persönlichen Innenwelt[29] (in English: The contemplative path. Encounters with the personal inner world): In this work, Kirchner focuses on contemplation as a means of personal growth and spiritual development. He offers a guide to exploring one's inner world and finding deeper meaning and connection with the divine. He views the book as a guide for people who have a sense of spiritual homelessness, and who are searching.

Kirchner argues that truly spiritual guidance opens the door to a seeker's essential depth and does not glorify techniques or the person leading them. Also, he describes how a person who practices contemplation can discover the capacity to be alone. He discusses how inner silence emerges only when unresolved conflicts are addressed and emphasizes that healing for the sick soul can be found within. Kirchner argues that listening to one's inner world is a vital prerequisite for being able to listen to others.

Demut und Stille. Sich selbst neu begreifen[30] (in English: Humility and silence. Understanding yourself anew): Kirchner's later work highlights the transformative power of humility and silence, arguing that these virtues are crucial for achieving wisdom, ethical clarity, and resilience. He believes that the humility of a spiritual teacher is demonstrated by seeing their leadership as service, viewing themselves as a channel, and not pursuing their own personal interests.

[27] Kirchner: *Benedikt für Manager,* 89.

[28] Baldur Kirchner: *Dialektik und Ethik. Prinzipien des Führens und Vertrauens*, Kammeltal, Edition Kplus, 2006.

[29] Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg.*

[30] Kirchner: *Demut und Stille.*

Dimensions of silence according to Kirchner

Kirchner's understanding of silence spans three interrelated dimensions: self-reflection, communication with others, and communion with God. These dimensions, grounded in his Catholic theological background, offer a comprehensive framework for leadership development. A Pentecostal reflection is provided to explore the alignment and potential tensions with Pentecostal practices.

Silence for Self-Reflection

Kirchner identifies silence as a virtue reflecting a mature personality.[31] Silence begins where words end, existing even before speech.[32] This recalls the Gospel of John's depiction of God's eternal silence preceding the Word. For Kirchner, silence is a conscious, voluntary refraining from speaking, enabling leaders to resist self-promotion.[33]

Silence fosters self-discovery and personal clarity while also deepening relational connections by sharpening awareness of nonverbal cues.[34] However, used as punishment or as neglect, silence can harm relationships and create emotional distress. It is also a tool for decision-making, as it facilitates reflection on what to express or withhold. Engaging with silence in the context of death allows individuals to transcend life's noise and confront existential fears.[35]

Building on Staehelin, Kirchner relates silence to two realities: the finite physical and the infinite spiritual. Personal growth involves recognizing the integration of these realities. Primal fear ("Urangst") hinders relational capacity, while primal trust ("Urvertrauen") fosters empathy, hope, and resilience. Leaders with primal trust inspire confidence and provide encouragement.[36]

Kirchner emphasizes silence's role in self-reflection and personal transformation. He highlights the importance of processing external feedback to achieve self-knowledge, where silence provides a space for emotional clarity and healing.[37] Individuals lacking inner centeredness often exhibit restlessness, which can be remedied by silent introspection.[38]

Kirchner concludes that meaningful communication arises from personal depth cultivated through silence. He references monastic figures whose solitary reflection prepared them for impactful service, illustrating that silence not

[31] Kirchner, *Benedikt für Manager*, 115.
[32] Ibid., 117.
[33] Ibid., 115–116.
[34] Ibid., 118–119.
[35] Ibid., 120–121.
[36] Ibid., 17, 23–24.
[37] Kirchner: *Dialektik und Ethik*, 96–99.
[38] Ibid., 115.

only facilitates communication but also embodies the essence of personal growth.[39]

In Pentecostal theology, self-reflection primarily occurs through the active engagement with the Bible and prayer. While practices like contemplation are less emphasized, the process of personal transformation is central to Pentecostal spirituality. The concept of being a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) is foundational, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit understood to begin at conversion.[40] This contrasts with Kirchner's view that the divine already resides within every individual from birth.[41]

In Pentecostal theology, self-reflection typically occurs through Bible reading and loud prayer, rather than extended periods of silence or contemplation. The distinction between "logos" (the written Word) and "rhema" (the Spirit-revealed Word) is a frequently discussed concept in Pentecostalism. The process of reflection often involves meditating on Scripture until a passage becomes "rhema," a specific, Spirit-inspired message for the believer.[42]

Unlike Kirchner's view that the divine is inherent in all people and accessible through inner stillness, Pentecostals teach that self-reflection is guided by the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers upon salvation.[43] Inner peace and self-awareness are seen as the result of the Spirit's transformative work, not solely through silence.

Silence in Communication with Others

Kirchner emphasizes that communication reflects an individual's personal development, manifesting in their lifestyle and behavior toward others. The quality of interpersonal dialogue reveals the ethical principles of the participants. An ethically oriented communicator will act in accordance with their conscience, communicate honestly, and foster relationships that are personal rather than merely functional.[44]

Dialogue competence, according to Kirchner, is an essential social skill. It involves the ability to actively listen, which demonstrates respect and appreciation for the other person. Failure to listen, on the other hand, stems from egocentrism, where the listener is preoccupied with their own thoughts rather than fully engaging with the speaker's message. This often leads to incomplete understanding and diminishes the value of the relationship.[45]

[39] Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg,* 7.
[40] Stanley M. Horton: *Der Heilige Geist*, ICI-University, Asslar-Berghausen, 2008, 19.
[41] Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg,* 35.
[42] Mark Virkler: *How to Hear God's Voice*, Shippensburg, Destiny Image Publishers, 2006.
[43] Horton: *Der Heilige Geist*, 19.
[44] Kirchner: *Dialektik und Ethik*, 12–13.
[45] Ibid., 149.

Impatience, expressed through interrupting, is another sign of poor listening, undermining the speaker's contribution. Such behavior may be rooted in fear or insecurity, such as the fear of losing an argument. Superficial listening, driven by these anxieties, results in dominance rather than connection. True engagement requires setting aside one's own agenda and making space for the other person's concerns. Kirchner links the ability to listen attentively with the capacity to love, as both require overcoming self-centeredness and releasing personal needs.[46]

In Pentecostalism, communication with others is rooted in spiritual discernment and Scripture-based guidance. While silence is not directly emphasized as a method for interpersonal connection, the Holy Spirit's work in believers fosters qualities like patience, humility, and love, which are essential for healthy relationships (Gal 5:22–23).

The Pentecostal emphasis on the Spirit's role in guiding interactions resonates with Kirchner's view that self-awareness and listening are key to meaningful dialogue.[47] However, Pentecostal practice does not prioritize silence in communication but focuses on active engagement through Spirit-led interactions.

Silence in Communication with God

Kirchner describes contemplation as a pathway to exploring one's inner life, enabling individuals to process past experiences and realign their values.[48] In this inner space of silence, free from external and internal distractions, a person can encounter the divine. This place is characterized by stillness, where even thoughts are quieted, creating room for God's voice to be heard.[49]

Contemplative practice, according to Kirchner, requires a dedicated and consistent approach. He recommends setting aside a specific, quiet space for contemplation. During this time, patience, discipline, and a readiness to face unresolved inner conflicts are essential. Inner silence emerges when individuals confront and resolve troubling issues rather than suppressing them, opening themselves to God's transformative presence.[50]

Kirchner emphasizes that contemplation should not be approached with an expectation of emotional highs or specific outcomes. Instead, it involves surrender and letting go of worldly attachments, enabling a deeper encounter with God. This process, which he likens to a conscious dying to self, cultivates

[46] Ibid., 149–150.
[47] Ibid., 149.
[48] Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg,* 10.
[49] Ibid., 36.
[50] Ibid., 40.

spiritual openness and a profound sense of trust.[51] Over time, contemplative prayer moves beyond structured techniques, leading to a wordless, intuitive awareness of God's presence.[52]

Drawing on Matthew 6:7–8, Kirchner highlights the importance of retreating into a "quiet room" for prayer. In such stillness, believers can rest in attentive worship before God, relinquishing personal agendas and allowing his guidance to shape their thoughts and actions. This posture of surrender fosters a deep sense of peace and unconditional acceptance, affirming God's love and presence.[53]

Contemplation also serves as a source of spiritual guidance and decision-making. In silence, individuals often find clarity about life's purpose and receive divine direction for important decisions. Kirchner notes that this process strengthens the connection between conscience and personal identity, ensuring that actions are aligned with deeply held values.[54]

Regular contemplation leads to profound inner healing and transformation. Kirchner describes it as "a transformation of the personality by the divine will," allowing unresolved pain and conflicts to surface and be addressed.[55] This renewal fosters qualities such as patience, humility, and freedom from ego-driven desires, drawing believers closer to God.[56]

At its peak, contemplation facilitates the unification of the soul with God. Kirchner highlights this experience as a momentary yet profound encounter with divine unity, transcending human limitations and offering a glimpse of eternal harmony.[57]

The Pentecostal approach to hearing God emphasizes Scripture ("logos") and Spirit-led revelation ("rhema"). Believers are taught that God's voice is most clearly heard through the Bible, often illuminated by the Holy Spirit in moments of prayer or reflection.[58] While moments of quietness can provide an environment for hearing God, Pentecostal teaching stresses that silence alone is insufficient without prior engagement with God's Word.

This contrasts with Kirchner's emphasis on silence as a primary means of encountering God. In Pentecostal theology, silence complements active practices like Bible study and prayer, where the Holy Spirit brings Scripture to mind (Jn 14:26). The idea of listening for God in silence is acknowledged but not a central practice.

[51] Ibid., 48.
[52] Ibid., 53–54.
[53] Ibid., 71–73.
[54] Ibid., 65–67.
[55] Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg,* 58.
[56] Kirchner: *Demut und Stille*, 108.
[57] Kirchner: *Der kontemplative Weg,* 78.
[58] Virkler: *How to Hear God's Voice.*

Key Differences between Pentecostal and Kirchner's perspective

Aspect	Pentecostal Perspective	Kirchner's Perspective
Self-Reflection	Guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit.	Achieved through silence and inner contemplation.
Communication with Others	Spirit-led interactions emphasizing humility and love (Gal 5:22–23).	Requires listening and self-awareness developed in silence.
Communication with God	Centered on Scripture ("logos") and Spirit-revealed insights ("rhema").	Silence is a primary method for hearing God's voice.

Concluding Reflections

This exploration of silence as a neglected virtue for Christian leadership reveals its transformative potential in three key dimensions: self-reflection, communication with others, and communion with God. Baldur Kirchner's insights, deeply rooted in Catholic theology and enriched by psychoanalytical and mystical traditions, provide a compelling framework for understanding the multifaceted role of silence in leadership contexts.

Kirchner expands the traditional Pentecostal understanding of silence, which is often confined to "quiet time" before God, by framing it as a comprehensive virtue that shapes relationships with oneself, others, and the divine. His perspective encourages leaders to embrace silence not merely as a private spiritual discipline but as an ethical practice that fosters humility, empathy, and intentional listening.

Silence as Self-Reflection

Kirchner identifies silence as a tool for self-discovery and transformation. By creating intentional spaces for introspection, leaders can confront unresolved inner conflicts and realign their values with their calling. This aligns with Pentecostal teachings on the transformative work of the Holy Spirit but differs in its emphasis on contemplative practices. Pentecostal leaders might benefit from integrating such practices into their spiritual disciplines, as they offer a pathway to deeper clarity and resilience.

Silence in Communication with Others

Effective leadership, according to Kirchner, relies on the ability to listen deeply—a skill that begins with silence. This perspective complements the

Pentecostal focus on Spirit-led interactions by underscoring the relational and ethical dimensions of listening. Leaders who practice silence in their interactions can build trust, foster mutual understanding, and cultivate a culture of respect within their teams and communities.

Silence in Communion with God

Kirchner's view of silence as a gateway to encountering God resonates with Pentecostal theology, particularly in its emphasis on discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. However, his approach diverges by positioning silence as a primary means of divine communion, whereas Pentecostal practices prioritize engagement with Scripture ("logos") and Spirit-revealed insights ("rhema"). Both traditions, however, recognize the value of silence in creating space for divine guidance.

Relevance for Christian Leadership

This study highlights the potential for Christian leaders to adopt silence as a complementary practice to their existing spiritual disciplines. While Kirchner's approach may challenge traditional Pentecostal norms, it offers valuable tools for fostering personal growth, enhancing interpersonal communication, and deepening spiritual connection.

Kirchner's assertion that silence alone can lead to divine encounter, even for non-Christians, warrants critical engagement from a Pentecostal perspective. While such experiences may occur, Pentecostal theology emphasizes the centrality of Scripture and proclamation in leading individuals to a transformative relationship with Christ. Silence, therefore, might serve as a preparatory practice that opens individuals to the Gospel message.

Practical Implications

Integrating silence into Christian leadership training could have profound implications. Contemplative retreats, workshops on active listening, and structured times of quiet reflection could help leaders develop greater spiritual and emotional depth. By embracing silence as a discipline, Christian leaders can cultivate a leadership style that is both grounded in humility and attuned to the needs of their communities.

Final Thoughts

Silence is more than the absence of words; it is a dynamic space for reflection, relational connection, and spiritual renewal. By viewing Kirchner's insights through a Pentecostal lens, Christian leaders can rediscover silence as a powerful tool for ethical clarity, authentic communication, and divine encounter. This integration has the potential to transform not only individual leaders but also the communities they serve, making silence a foundational virtue for leadership in the modern age.

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ETHICAL DESIGN THINKING AND LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This paper outlines the principles of "design thinking," and more specifically of human-centered, ethical design thinking by asking what kind of leadership is required to achieve the goals of designing products and services that serve the highest ethical standards for human thriving. Three ethical leadership qualities for design thinking are outlined, namely visionary thinking, integrity coupled with resilience, and empowering others. Such qualities are linked to role-model leadership as part of collaborative problem-solving. A description of these qualities is followed by a reflection on the ethics of care, and its link to ethical design thinking. The paper concludes with a few recommendations for leadership training that honors the principles of ethical design thinking.

Keywords: *empowering others, ethical design thinking, ethics of care, role-model leadership*

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Introduction

"Design thinking" is emerging as a disciplinary field able to equip contemporary and future leaders and students with innovative problem-solving skills and participatory leadership competencies.[1] Design thinking is a method for creative, collaborative problem-solving, serving as a sound basis for organizational learning and action research due to its focus on generating holistic, empathic understandings of complex problems[2]. Developing appropriate leadership for ethical design thinking is becoming increasingly crucial in the contemporary environment so deeply marked by volatility, rapid change, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.[3]

Whitbeck's[4] notion of "ethics as design" asks that one consider products and tools as having innate ethical and moral implications relating to access, social justice, health, and wellbeing. Put differently, ethical design is the material form of doing ethics.[5] Ethical design researchers point out that contemporary, high-tech design demands explorative, fast, and situated responses, while much of the ethics that should guide such ventures is still anticipatory and stagnant, thereby causing inertia between ethical standard operating guidelines and the need for quick, effective action.[6]

By embedding principles of ethical role-model leadership in design thinking models, leadership scholars, teachers, and researchers can add value to the training of graduates that would enable them to tackle complex (or "wicked") real-world problems in a caring way. The central aim of this paper is to delve into the key leadership qualities of moral reflection on context, empathy, and empowering others, that may foster the kind of reflective, role-model leadership for a "caring design" that intersects relational and responsive dimensions in design thinking. The author's interest lies in leadership training for ethical design thinking that avoids contextual design thinking and top-down leadership. To uncover these competencies requires a deep reflection on what role-model leadership demands are in ethical, caring design thinking that strives to achieve the highest socio-environmental good and wellbeing. The next section elucidates some of these leadership qualities.

[1] Rahmin Bender-Salazar: "Design Thinking as an Effective Method for Problem-Setting and Need-Finding for Entrepreneurial Teams Addressing Wicked Problems," *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* 12 (2023), 13.

[2] Tim Brown: *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation,* New York, Harper Collins, 2009.

[3] Bettina Gehrke et al.: "Introduction to Global Leadership Practices," in B. Gehrke et al. (eds.): *Global Leadership: Navigating the Complex World*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2024, 4.

[4] Caroline Whitbeck: "Ethics as Design: Doing Justice to Moral Problems", *The Hastings Centre Report* (1996), 9.

[5] Christopher Frauenberger – Marjo Rauhala – Geraldine Fitzpatrick: "In-Action Ethics", *Interacting with Computers* (2016), 220.

[6] Frauenberger et al.: *In-Action*, 221.

Leadership for human-centered, ethical design

Empathetic, ethical leadership aligns closely with the notion of a leader as a role model with the kind of leadership agility that is adaptive, and which leans towards servant-leadership by offering examples and opportunities of learning by doing. Role-model leadership of this cadre is further away from the notion of the leader as idol, guru, or corporate hero[7] that is chiefly based on admiration due to unrealistic expectations of the idol's virtues, skills, extraordinary abilities, or means to single-handedly save the organization, community, or society.[8,9] Three role-model leadership qualities in this regard are explored below, namely (1) resilience and adaptability, (2) value clarification and ethos-building, and (3) openness to feedback to empower others.

Leadership in ethical design as modelling resilience and adaptability

The first element in empathetic role-model leadership in caring design thinking is that of optimistic guidance during a crisis, or amidst rapid change. Stress, anxiety, and pressure to act during a crisis, or when facing a serious problem, may encourage reactive, short-term goal setting, and even unethical decision-making to contain any risks and maximize gains.[10] The way in which the leader frames any crisis is therefore critically important. Positive framing demands that the role-model leader presents any challenge as an opportunity to gain experience and to plan for much-needed change, thereby empowering others to become architects of purpose.[11] This kind of leadership modelling, in which the focus is to learn from past mistakes, and to act with hope and optimism for agile decision-making during change management, is a key element in ethical design thinking. The link to design thinking lies in prototyping, where the leader allows his/her team to experiment with solutions and reflect on strengths and weaknesses in a double-loop learning cycle that accumulates diverse insights into, and innovative solutions to the problem.[12]

[7] Gehrke et al.: *Global*, 5.

[8] Ron Meyer – Ronald Meijers: *Leadership Agility: Developing Your Repertoire of Leadership Styles,* Abington, Routledge, 1–14.

[9] Andrea D. Ellinger: "Supportive Supervisors and Managerial Coaching: Exploring their Intersections", *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 86 (2013), 310–316.

[10] Bret Crane: "Eudaimonia in Crisis: How Ethical Purpose Finding Transforms Crisis", *Humanistic Management Journal* 7 (2022), 391–416.

[11] Andrew M. Carton: "I'm Not Mopping the Floors; I'm Putting a Man on the Moon: How NASA Leaders Enhanced the Meaningfulness of Work by Changing the Meaning of Work", *Administrative Science Quarterly* 63 (2018), 323–369.

[12] Bender-Salazar: *Design Thinking*, 17.

Ladkin[13] posits that ethical, empathetic role-model leadership implies that unique contexts and circumstances require situated judgements and fit-for-purpose leadership that go beyond mere reactivity or following set operating principles. Relying solely on reactive leadership can create a situation where there are too many leaders and not enough leadership, resulting in stagnation, or "all talk and no action." It is helpful to suggest an example where such fish-bowl stagnation can be addressed by adding stronger learning-oriented leadership. For example, an institutional Ethics Review Board in a university requires many salaried hours and great efforts to vet research proposals. This can create pressure to act quickly, and to manage great volumes of work within short turnaround times. Moreover, review board members are often comfortably cushioned in the anonymity offered by the group so that their powers to control vetting outcomes are disproportionate to their responsibility to support researchers. Consequently, rejected research proposals can easily be blamed on the inexperience of students, the neglectfulness of supervisors, or failures in the operation of lower-level screenings of the proposals prior to reaching the review board. Equally, leadership of these review boards can blame non-sensible review outcomes on a lack of experience, work pressures, or lack of specific expertise in the group. The blame gets shifted in a legitimized closed circuit of retributive causality, and more paperwork and standard operating procedures are produced, but the effort remains the inward-looking clanking of marbles in a sealed glass jar, out of pace with the new demands for ethical conduct in the field and insulated from the devastation its actions inflict on rejected research proposals. Adding the kind of leadership that models resilient adaptability here can help redirect the focus of a review team to instead embrace reflection and experimentation by allowing open interactions with the researchers who submitted proposals for review.

Leadership in ethical design thinking as modelling constant value clarification and ethos-building

The second element in role-model, empathetic leadership is to ensure value clarification as to what human wellbeing and thriving entail. Ruitenberg and Desmet's[14] positive psychology suggests that it requires meaningful engagement,

[13] Donna Ladkin: "Chapter 2: A Practice-Based Approach to Developing Ethically Responsible Leaders", in S. Kempster – A. Turner – G. Edwards (eds.): *Field Guide to Leadership Development,* Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017, 15–28.

[14] Hans P. Ruitenberg – Pieter M. A. Desmet: *Design Thinking in Positive Psychology: The Development of a Product-Service Combination that Stimulates Happiness-Enhancing Activities. Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Design and Emotion,* Central Saint Martin's College of Art & Design, London.

sharing, cultivating optimism, nurturing relationships, and practicing kindness. Drawing on all these ideas, leadership of this role-model variety would then stress the leader's own mindset of growth[15] or "paradox mentality."[16] Moreover, value clarification would then follow three basic steps. Firstly, by purposefully seeking opportunities to gain experience, develop, and grow the skills of all team members to create and foster a learning environment. Secondly, by removing any obstacles that block the empowerment of all people concerned. Thirdly, by foregrounding the social significance of the design outcome's contribution to society so that the actions are social purpose driven.[17, 18, 19]

One of the biggest tasks for the ethical role-model leader in continuous ethos-building is to manage expectations in an ethical way by understanding what team participation means for all individuals involved in the process. Often, the promise of participation is built on the flimsy foundations of illusions of choice. For example, a contract worker whose precarious situation is unlikely to result in securing one of a handful of ever-dwindling permanent posts in an organization, may blindly sacrifice more effort and time in the hope of a better outcome. If the leader does not manage such expectations through open dialogue, the power asymmetry results in exploitative labor practices. Another example is where a mentee may not see the forest of task-dumping for the tree of job-shadowing. Mismanaging subordinates' expectations is a rich hunting ground for weak leaders who revel in the power of their positions, but who are unwilling to match that thrill with a deep commitment to do what is ethical. Active, ongoing ethos-building is therefore an embodied, intrinsic act that must grow and change with each new challenge and subject itself humbly to the principle of "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*."

Ethos-building must be assessed, because a leader may be so deeply embedded in a particular network, at the expense of being marginal to other networks, that the ethos becomes utterly self-serving and morally corrupt. Trade-offs in social capital-building to keep cronies happy can engender a situation of mutual destruction when an unethical leader broker deals that turn a blind eye to the transgressions of supporters in return for their continued patronage. Leadership built on such shaky grounds must increasingly use repressive means to distribute the scarce socio-economic advantages available to their sycophantic followers and disburse these sparingly only when the obedient followers allow themselves to be stripped of their own basic rights to critique and hold

[15] Crane: *Eudaimonia*, 391–416.
[16] Ina Aust – Bettina Gehrke: "Leading Sustainability Transformation", in B. Gehrke et al. (eds.): *Global Leadership: Navigating the Complex World*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2024, 104.
[17] Ellinger: *Supportive Supervisors*, 310–316.
[18] Daniel B. Turban – Wan Yan: "Relationship of Eudaimonia and Hedonia With Work Outcomes", *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 31(2016), 1006–1020.
[19] Aust – Gehrke: *Leading*, 105.

the leadership to account. By rewarding silently obedient followers, an unethical leader instills just enough fear to control those who dare call out the emperor for not wearing a cloak to toe the line, without turning that fear into open mobilization against such corruption.

Ethical design leadership, by contrast, empowers others by transcending formal titles to consciously check and safeguard the wellbeing of all concerned. Leadership of this kind demands "transversal competencies"[20] (or wide-ranging skills, abilities, and sensibilities) that develop from inherent traits brought into full potential via focused training, so that the emerging leader understands collaboration, interdependence, teamwork, creativity, and communicativeness.

Leadership as modelling an openness to constant feedback to empower others

The third element in role-model empathetic leadership is a new mindset that breaks with the blind acceptance of top-down policies and hierarchical directives of the kind that actively discourages and erodes agency. If the leadership in design is based on hierarchical power linked to the ability of the leader to bestow rewards and punishments, it may create "pretend" leaders. MacGregor Burn[21] suggests that "pretend" leaders use threats and coercion to keep people in line. Such leaders depend on the automatic, transactional authority bestowed on them by titles or positions in an organigram. They tend to foreground the standard operating procedures or processes to justify the status quo and prefer to focus on means to the end. They value obedience and satisfy the lower level of wants and needs of their followers or subordinates. Pretend leaders flourish in contexts dominated by an accounting-and-penalty culture of so-called "consequence management" (reaction to and minimizing of the potential negative impacts of actions) that prohibits risk-taking and shuts down the possibility of learning from mistakes or negative encounters. This behavior can be observed in organizational environments where leaders openly tell their middle-managers that they are not allowed to criticize them or question their decision-making in front of others.

For any learning culture to be able to operate, leaders would need to be open to critical feedback, also because any theory of moral reasoning (or, to put it differently, the answers to the question as to what the ethical or highest moral

[20] Evandro M. Mazo – Renelson R. Sampaio – Cristiano V. Ferreira: "Design Thinking as an Approach to Guide a More Humanized Learning Process in Engineering Teaching," *International Journal of Advanced Engineering Research and Science* 8 (2021), 333.

[21] James MacGregor Burns: *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness,* New York, Grove Press, xi-xii.

good is) must remain fallible and open to revision. Shankar and Sayeed[22] refer to this as transformational leadership that empowers others to innovate without fear. They hold that its basis is empathetic understanding, modelling, coaching, mentoring, rethinking old ways, and openness to feedback. Again, the link between role-model leadership attributes and ethical design thinking is evident.

Openness to feedback demands that leaders and organizations understand why unethical behavior can enter design thinking in the first place. At least three entry points can be identified.[23] Firstly, unethical practices can enter where there is a lack of awareness of what is acceptable. This usually occurs when there is poor understanding of who is responsible for what. For example, in the 1970s, Ford created a Pinto that exploded in a rear-end collision due to fuel leaks. Its production was rushed due to competition in the small car manufacturing sector, and although engineers knew of the danger in preproduction crash tests, the leaders still cleared it for manufacturing because it was branded a purely business decision.[24] Secondly, unethical behavior flourishes where knowledge flow is shut down to the extent that people do not share ideas and knowledge about the pain points. For example, the collapse of Barings Bank in the United Kingdom was due to a series of managers ignoring warning signs.[25] Thirdly, unethical behavior takes root when there is a lack of examples of role models acting out such behavior. If a leader is not honoring working hour arrangements, for example, how can the rest of the team be expected to exhibit a work ethic?

To better understand the concept of openness to feedback, it is useful to contrast the idol-leader and the role-model leader in greater depth. The idol-leader may be closer to a charismatic understanding of leadership that demands the type of person who is good at influencing, persuading, gaining trust, and instilling a sense of mission, yet less open to the idea of constant revision of actions via open feedback. Consequently, such leaders may still be cruel or unethical and in turn encourage cruelty or unethical behavior in their subordinates. Both deontological (meaning that the intent is moral) and teleological (meaning that the actions result in something that is morally good) principles are needed in modern leadership. Idol-leaders, using charisma and power as currency, may routinely delegate unethical behavior to their followers, for

[22] Meera Shanker – Omer B. Sayeed: "Role of Transformational Leaders as Change Agents: Leveraging Effects on Organizational Climate," *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 47 (2012), 470–484.

[23] Katie Shilton: "Values Levers: Building Ethics into Design," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 38 (2013), 374–397.

[24] Stuart Strother: "When Making Money is More Important than Saving Lives: Revisiting the Ford Pinto Case," *Journal of International & Interdisciplinary Business Research* 5 (2018), 166–178.

[25] Chun W. Choo: "Organizational Disasters: Why They Happen And How They May Be Prevented," *Management Decision* 46 (2008), 32–45.

example by out-sourcing the more unpleasant or questionable tasks, or by urging their subordinates to "*do whatever it takes*" to reach a particular output target. For example, in a bid to stay competitive, an educational institution may apply relentless pressures on staff to ensure higher student pass rates, thereby neglecting other, more important goals related to learning.

Being open to feedback to empower others means acknowledging the notion that responsible judgement depends on dialogue. It also implies that leading and following are two sides of the same coin, and that leaders may only know themselves through their followers and vice versa. Whereas tools such as 360-degree assessments of leaders pay lip-service to this ideal, in practice, encouraging active and constructive dissent to safely question a decision or ask for clarification from a leader in a modern workplace is far less easy to implement.[26]

Truly transformational, ethical role-model leaders value freedom, justice, and human dignity, and turn followers into leaders.[27] They demonstrate these ideals normatively through their actions, communication styles, decision-making, and reinforcement.[28] The role-model leader would need to demonstrate ethical decision-making in both the private and the public sphere. Ciulla[29] refers to this as the Bathsheba syndrome, where the private and public ethical behavior of the leader are at odds with one another. She suggests that these happen along three related fault lines. Firstly, the leader may lose sight of the main social value or task. Secondly, the leader may indulge in morally unacceptable behavior and cover it up. Thirdly, the leader may hold an inflated belief in his or her ability to control the outcomes, should their behavior or deception be made public. One way of addressing these fault lines is to base leadership training on the principles of the ethics of care and this issue is elaborated in the next section.

The ethics of care as the basis for leadership training in ethical design thinking

To set out the principles of the ethics of care as a basis for ethical leadership training, two dimensions are first discussed, namely ethics in leadership and its importance in ethical design thinking and how the ethics of care presents

[26] Richard Cotter: "Reflexive Spaces of Appearance: Rethinking Critical Reflection in the Workplace," *Human Resource Development International* 17 (2014), 459–474.

[27] Ciulla, Joanna B.: "Ethics Effectiveness: The Nature of Good Leadership", in D.V. Day – J. Antonakis (eds.): *The Nature of Leadership*, Los Angeles, SAGE, 2011, 526.

[28] Michael E. Brown – Linda K. Treviño – David A. Harrison: "Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 97 (2005), 12.

[29] Ciulla: *Ethics Effectiveness*, 532–533.

itself in leadership. Ciulla[30] says that in leadership, ethics are magnified, and this is the reason why ethical design thinking requires leadership training based on Verkerk's[31] tenets of the ethics of care, such as relationality (connected, holistic thinking), compassion (making others feel valued, appreciated, and cared for), responsiveness (allowing change), and connection (encouraging integrity and trust by consistently modelling such qualities).

MacGregor Burns[32] suggests that three types of ethics of care present themselves in leadership, namely the fulfillment of ethical virtues, end values, and modal values. Firstly, ethical virtues suggest that the role-model leader should be seen to act ethically, and to embody the virtues held to be ethical. If, for example, a leader demands observance of rules, yet constantly allows himself to disobey, then the dissonance between what is proclaimed and what is expected results in the failure of role-model leadership. The issue of the ethical virtues of the leader, however, raises the difficulty as to whether the modern workplace hires for perceived character and trains for skills or vice versa – hires for skills and attempts to instill ethical leadership via training later. This is a deeper dilemma than one can imagine, especially if the forces and the pace of change suggest that leadership is known for its ability to achieve results regardless, and not by its efforts to remain ethical.

Secondly, end values[32] demand that the role-model leader understand the rules of ethical conduct needed to obtain the goals of the organization or the design team. But again, these rules of conduct would need constant checking in an evolving ethos-building process. Moreover, end goals should be evaluated against the demands for wellbeing for humans and their environments. The human flaw of motivational blindness can easily allow a leader to disregard how self-serving certain decisions or acts are. An example of motivational blindness is where a mid-level employee constantly bemoans the fact that she is not reaching the promotion criteria despite having management experience from elsewhere, yet she also routinely fails in smaller leadership tasks entrusted to her. Motivational blindness allows this person to campaign for an overhaul of promotion criteria, whipping up a storm of support, yet her own smaller leadership failures remain uncorrected.

Thirdly, modal values imply that the role-model leader should champion a communal sense of justice and equity. This means that the kind of role-model leadership needed for ethical design thinking is one that sees leadership as a complex process of relationship-building guided by mutual trust and commitment. The role-model leader must be ethically mature and able to nurture

[30] Ciulla: *Ethics Effectiveness*, 508.

[31] Margrita Verkerk: "Care Ethics as a Feminist Perspective on Bioethics," in C. Gastmans – K. Dierickx – H. Nys – P. Schotsmans (eds.): *New Pathways For European Bioethics*, Antwerpen: Intersentia, 65–68.

[32] McGregor Burns: *Transforming Leadership*, 6–9.

sound leadership traits in his or her followers so that *"the leadership trickles down, creating momentum in leading."*[33]

To develop caring, role-model-oriented design leadership skills, students should be allowed to practice participatory methods (such as empathy maps, brainstorming for radical collaboration, communication for change, influence-authority mapping, and Badura's guided mastery) in a creative, caring way. These issues are elaborated below.

Developing caring design leadership skills through empathy mapping

The centrality of empathy in role-model leadership was discussed earlier on in the paper. Dave Gray, a founder of XPlane, developed empathy mapping tools[34] to map out a target group's feelings, motivations, and needs. In many of the social sciences and humanities, participatory researchers and development practitioners are familiar with group mapping exercises such as asset mapping, community transect walks, Venn diagrams, and the stone soup method to elicit discussions intended to clarify values. Empathy mapping is yet another item that can be added to the toolkit of leadership training and adapted to develop role-model leadership to strengthen abilities in reflective leadership.

Brainstorming for radical collaboration as part of caring design leadership training

Brainstorming for radical collaboration is the cooperative use of familiar techniques in multi-stakeholder collaborations to move beyond stalemate situations, deal with conflict, or address a lack of progress. The focus is on engagement and not necessarily on building consensus. The entire engagement is about the need to learn from others, to elicit as many diverse perspectives as possible, and then co-design ideas and innovative solutions.[35] Role-model leadership, as explained earlier on, invites both consensus and dissent, creatively searching for common solutions without stagnating.

[33] Jada P. Yengkopiong: "The Paradox of Leadership: Toxic Education Leadership in the Learning Institutions," *East African Journal of Education Studies* 7 (2024), 94.

[34] Dave Gray: "Update to the Empathy Map," https://gamestorming.com/?s=empathy+map (accessed 3 March 2024).

[35] Marley Lewington: "What is Radical Collaboration and why does it Matter?" https://ottawa.impacthub.net/category/community-stories/ (accessed 4 March 2024).

Communication for change as part of caring design leadership training

Any training intervention for role-model leadership should embrace communication *for* change (not *about* change) as a key component. In such an intervention, the principles of a theory of change can be imparted, then modelled according to case studies to look at ways to enable a community or a group to build cohesion, deal effectively with queries, foster trust, address motivation, enhance commitment, ensure actual participation, tackle uncertainties, and establish working feedback loops between talk and action.[36]

Influence-authority mapping as part of caring design leadership training

Again, researchers and practitioners in the social sciences and humanities are familiar with stakeholder analysis, and the influence-authority map is simply a more contemporary permutation of these principles. The basic steps entail identifying stakeholders, assigning weights to each stakeholder's influence (depicted as the size of the circle representing that stakeholder), describing the relationships between stakeholders (depicted as lines and arrows between them), and suggesting how much influence stakeholders have over others (depicted as the thickness of the lines drawn between them).[37] The value of teaching future role-model leaders such mapping exercises lies in assisting them to develop holistic, inclusive thinking.

Bandura's guided mastery as part of caring design leadership training

Based on social learning theory, mastery modeling is based on the basic tenets that people learn behavior by watching someone else model it. In addition, when people identify with the role model, they become self-efficient in adopting that modelled behavior. Finally, when people observe that correct behavior is rewarded, they adopt changed behavior faster.[38] The applicability of these techniques for role-model leadership could not be more apparent.

[36] Zareen Husain: "Effective Communication Brings Successful Organizational Change," *The Business and Management Review* 3 (2013), 43–50.

[37] Charles Lambdin: "Influence Mapping," https://charleslambdin.com/2021/12/14/influence-mapping-part-1/, 2022 (accessed 3 March 2024).

[38] Association for Talent Development: "A Mastery Modelling Parable", *Alexandria* 74 (2002), 46–49.

Conclusion

Role-model, empathetic leadership is needed for ethical design thinking that successfully manages social relationships and processes to achieve sustainable human thriving. This paper builds on the idea that ethical design requires the skills of role-model leadership that are fostered in participatory approaches. The basic tenets discussed are summarized in Figure 1 below. This book affords us the opportunity to renew our understanding of what ethical leadership means. The potential constructive collaboration between role-model leadership research and ethical design thinking training is huge. When leaders rely solely on their formally assigned authority or charisma, they might only consider like-minded others. In bringing ethical design thinking perspectives to bear on leadership, this paper attempts to draw attention to the importance of emphasizing human connections in training intervention to help foster role-model leadership.

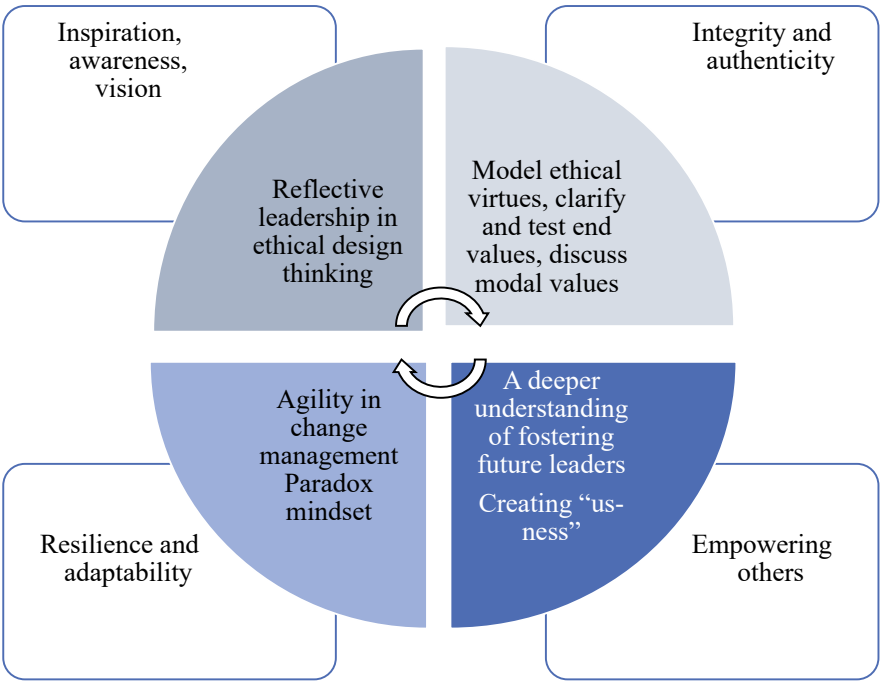

Figure 1. Qualities that define ethical leadership in human-centered-design thinking
Source: Author (2025)

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LEGISLATION AND JUDICIAL (ADMINISTRATIVE) LAW IN PRIVATE LEGAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL LAW FROM A MANAGEMENT THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Legislation and the application of law (judicial, administrative) are embodied within the framework of the state system. With regard to the different areas of law, civil law (private law) and social law, the regulatory role of the state can be highlighted. In the case of a person occupying a leading role in the system of state organizations, loyalty, compliance with legal requirements, and compliance with orders may be given priority when assessing suitability to be a leader. Expectations of leadership differ according to whether the managerial position is held in public administration or in the judicial system. This distinction is mostly due to the fact that public administration is traditionally understood to be part of the executive branch, while the judiciary embodies the judiciary and judicial branch as an independent branch of power in the system of separation of powers. The basis for the existence of the judiciary as an independent branch of government is the permanent declaration of its independence from other branches of government.

Keywords: *legislation, administrative and judicial enforcement, civil/private law, social law, leader*

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Introduction

Approach, theoretical basis

The study[1] falls *within the field of state and jurisprudence,* which includes legislation, the application of law (mostly related to constitutional law, sociology of law, state and legal theory), private law and social law.[2] The area of law concerning civil law and social law has been chosen because they are completely different branches of law. The latter area is related to training and research in university education.[3] The investigation concerns domestic legislation and judicial and administrative law and the application of judicial and administrative law concerning civil law and social law from the time of the regime change in Hungary onwards, from 1989-1990 to the present day, as well as the management of these areas of law. The interpretation of leadership in legislation and in the application of law is determined by which branch of government the leader belongs to.

The subject matter of the research

This specific research aims to connect a topic related to the field of political science and law with the discipline of management theory in connection with the examination of leadership roles. *The literature generally holds management theory to be linked to the discipline of social science,*[4] *directly connected to the discipline of political science and contained within the field of administrative law.*[5] We are convinced that state and legal science and the management sciences can also be classified as social sciences, thus allowing for a direct connection between the two disciplines to be established.

The process of legislation and application in the field of private and social law require execution by the leadership of the organisational unit (institution). The present research examines the management of a state (and not ecclesiastical) organization exercising official authority and endowed with public authority.

[1] This paper is an edited version of the presentation delivered at Christian Leadership Conference in Budapest on 6 September 2024.

[2] In this paper, the terms "civil law" and "private law" are used interchangeably.

[3] The Institute of Social Work and Diaconia operates at the Faculty of Economics, Health Sciences and Social Affairs of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University, which includes social pedagogy, social work and diaconia training.

[4] Czuprák, Ottó: *Leadership Theory,* Budapest, Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem, 2012, 5; Torma, András: *Chapters from the State and Legal Science Foundations of Organizational and Management Knowledge*, Miskolc, 2013, 8–69.

[5] Rixer, Ádám: *Criteria for evaluating Hungarian administrative jurisprudence*, 47–55.

The position of the person leading the institution can be examined on the basis of the theme "Leaders between the positions of role model and idol". This is naturally a different perspective than the one which would be employed if it were a church institution. *The methodology of the research is based on the interpretation of primary sources (Fundamental Law of Hungary, legislation) and on comparative processing and analysis (document analysis) of data from secondary sources, domestic and foreign literature (legal literature).*

Legislation and judicial (administrative) law

Legislation and application of the law (whether judicial or administrative) express the relationship of the law and everyday life. The world in which we live is in constant motion, change and transformation due to the digital revolution and the generalization of electronic communication between legal entities (individuals).[6] *The law (legislation and application of the law) must be able to keep pace with changes in human relationships.* Therefore, the law usually tries to provide some kind of answer to social processes, sometimes adequately, but other times unsuccessfully.[7] In the relationship between law and society, it is usually movements in society that provoke the reaction of the legislator (and not vice versa).[8]

It is therefore not legislation that brings about changes in society. On the contrary, these dynamic changes must usually be reflected retrospectively by the law. *Law and society are never structures that form static systems; they can be seen as arenas for constant change.* The process of legislation (the legislature) and judicial and administrative application is maintained and operated by the state.[9] *The power to legislate is always the privilege of the majority that holds political power.* Any parliamentary majority of a political community exercising political power, the range of laws requiring more than a simple majority and the proportion of votes required for the adoption of a law determine whether other political actors need to be involved in the legislative process.[10] The

[6] In Hungary, Act CIII of 2023, which entered into force in principle on 1 July 2024, provides for the digital state and the rules for the provision of digital services.

[7] Maczonkai, Mihály. *Sociology of Law*, Pécs, Janus Pannonius University Faculty of Political Science and Law, 1997, 7–9.

[8] The relationship and interaction between law and society can be evaluated as a permanent field of research in the sociology of law.

[9] About the state, see Ham, Christopher – Till, Michael: *The Policy Process in the Modern Capitalist State.* New York – London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993; Parsons, Wayne: *Public Policy.* Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1995.

[10] According to its Fundamental Law of 25 April 2011, the Hungarian Parliament generally enacts laws by a simple majority vote (Article 6(5) of the State).

content and meaning of legislation (law or regulation)[11] acquire a specific meaning and interpretation through the application of the law by judicial and administrative bodies.

It is generally believed in the legal literature that due to the activity of the court in interpreting a specific law, one can speak of the law created by a judge (court) that can be regarded as an independent legislative power.[12] The Anglo-Saxon legal system is based on the law of precedent, the legal principles formulated in previous court decisions, and there is a tendency to approach this practice in the continental legal system (including Hungary).[13] The supreme body of public administration in Hungary is the Government, and it is entitled to establish state administration (administrative) bodies as defined by the law.[14] *Administrative law enforcement activities take place within the system of public administration.* Therefore, the application of administrative law in the system of the separation of powers is linked to the executive branch.

Legislation and judicial (administrative) law in private and social law

After reviewing the process of legislation and law enforcement in general, let us now turn to how they appear in the two areas of law examined, private law and social law in Hungary. In Hungary, at the time of the change of regime, in 1989-1990, Act IV of 1959 on the Civil Code, the old Civil Code (hereafter: old Civil Code) was in force with regard to civil law, and there was no uniform code for social benefits, which was only established later with the creation of Act III of 1993 on Social Benefits and Social Administration (hereafter: ASB-SA).[15] The Act on Social Assistance, which forms the basis of social assistance,[16] has been amended several times over the past thirty years and is still in force. As a rule, its provisions have been in force from 1 May 1960) entered into law on 15 March 2014 with the creation of the new Civil Code, Act V of 2013 on the Civil Code (hereinafter: Civil Code), and is still in force. *The significance of the Civil Code in the legal system is that it covers almost all types of human relations.* According to Lajos Vékás, the Civil Code, the private law code, is

[11] Fundamental Law Chapter Fundamental Principles Article T (2).

[12] Badó, Attila – Loss, Sándor – H. Szilágyi, István – Zombor, Ferenc: *Sociology of Law*, 117., Kulcsár, Kálmán: *Sociology of Law*, 43., 197–198.

[13] In Hungary, the legal uniformity decisions and precedent-setting decisions of the Curia are binding on lower courts (Article 25(3) of the Fundamental Law).

[14] Article 15(2) of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.

[15] The Act was adopted by Parliament on 30 December 1992, and most of the provisions of the Act entered into force on 27 January 1993.

[16] Homicskó, Árpád Olivér: *Systematics of Hungarian Social Law Benefits*, 221.

the second most important law of the state (the country) after the Constitution (Fundamental Law).[17]

A significant difference can be identified between the two selected areas of law, not only as regards the subject matter of regulation, but also as regards the range of entities involved in the legal relationship. *Private law follows the model of a social market economy, while social law is a specific,*[18] *defined area of public social policy.* In the context of private legal relations, the laws of supply and demand developed on the market play a significant role, while in the field of social law regulation, the legal policy aspirations of the state are decisive. Civil legal relations are not influenced by state legal policy aspirations or the budgetary situation of the state. They develop independently of the state between legal entities (individuals), which is why the use of the term "private law" – independent of the state, i.e., public, law – may be justified for these legal relations. Legal relations related to social law, on the other hand, can be placed in the state (administrative) sphere, where the legal policy intentions and aspirations of the representatives of the state at any given time are of decisive importance. This characteristic of social law is particular to public branches of law.

Civil legal relations are based on the coexistence of legal entities (individuals) and the equivalence of services, where the parties have the opportunity to freely shape their legal relationship within the legal framework. In the field of civil legal relations, even if the state appears in them, it does not appear as an exercise of public authority. *In the field of civil law, the provisions fixing legal relations between the parties are dispositive (permissive) rules, while in the field of social law mandatory (strict) rules that do not allow for derogations appear. The dispositivity of civil law rules provides the subjects of the legal relationship with the possibility of disposing of it within the framework of legal provisions, while in social law, in which the body acting on behalf and on behalf of the state is one of the subjects of the legal relationship, this type of leeway no longer exists for the other subject of the legal relationship (natural person).* Disputes arising in civil legal relations that come before the courts are decided by the courts (judicial application of law). Administrative decisions taken by a public body in the field of social law constitute an activity falling within the scope of administrative enforcement. *In areas governed by social law, public administration bodies exercising official authority (as state bodies) appear as one of the subjects of the legal relationship; they make enforceable decisions and exercise public authority.*[19] An important difference between the two areas

[17] It is the basis of the Fundamental Law's legal system (Article R(1) of the Fundamental Law).
[18] Vékás, Lajos (ed.): *The Civil Code with Explanations*, 18.
[19] Hoffman, István: *Introduction to Social Law*, 19.

of law is that, unlike private law, social law (the right to social security, the right to health care, the right to housing, etc.) can be regarded as a fundamental right enshrined in the constitution.[20]

It is an interesting question to assess what triggers legislation (legislative amendments) in the two areas of law examined, two areas which differ significantly from each other. There are necessarily two reasons for making legislation (amending legislation) in the field of private law: a) the development of judicial jurisprudence forces the state to codify into law the interpretation and explanation of the legislation and the jurisprudence developed by the court; b. on the other hand, changes in commodity relations, market relations, and in social and economic traffic exercise an "imperative" effect on the legislator to change legislation, implement legislative amendments, or create new legislation. Among the determining factors for the change and development of the two areas of law, the findings of professional forums and the legal literature, and especially the professional opinions and opinions developed by the institutions of the social care system in the field of social law, cannot be ignored. *The professional audience in civil law may consist mainly of representatives of jurisprudence, while professional opinions concerning the social care system are formulated and established not only by legal experts, but also by professionals dealing with social issues.*

In the field of civil law, since this is the determining law of personal relations and economic relations, the number of disputes before the courts is consistently higher than before the courts in the social field. *As a result, judicial practice plays a strong and dominant role in developing law in the field of private law.* Several rules crystallized in judicial practice can be mentioned that have become legal provisions (e.g., property claims of spouses, the addition or limitation of inheritance claims).[21] These rules, laid down in the Civil Code in force, were previously established by the court as a conclusion and as law in connection with the adjudication of a given private law dispute during the application of the law by the court. *The generally applicable principles established in the course of judicial application are incorporated into legislation in the form of new legal provisions.* As a consequence, the judicial application in private legal relations has a direct impact on the legislative process. Unlike the trend observed in private legal relations, legal regulation in the social field does not depend on judicial jurisprudence, but on the legal policy intentions of the state and the legal policy objectives of the legislator. *As a common set of the two areas of law, it can be emphasized that processes, tendencies, and changes in society as a result of legislation and the application of law play a more significant role*

[20] Drinóczi, Timea: *Social rights*, in Jakab, András – Könczöl, Miklós – Menyhárd, Attila – Sulyok, Gábor (eds.): *Internet Legal Encyclopedia* (*Constitutional Law columnists*: Bodnár, Eszter – Jakab, András), http://ijoten.hu/szocikk/szocialis-jogok (2019) (1) (2) (accessed 5 January 2025).

[21] Civil Code §§ 4:59, §§ 5:70-5:72, § 7:2.

than individual leadership ability or position. With regard to legislation and the application of the (judicial, or administrative) law, one or more responsible persons may be identified, but the direction followed and the criteria it meets are determined by (political) interests that go beyond individual leadership.

The application of law by the judiciary is linked to the administration of justice as an independent branch of government. *The application of administrative law, as part of the executive (public administration), can also be linked to an independent branch of government, the executive.*[22] The functioning of the court is characterized by independence, submission only to the law, and the absence or prohibition of instructions.[23] With regard to the application of administrative law, the judicial review of administrative decisions provides supervision and control of the judiciary as an independent branch of government. The process of the application of administrative law in Hungary is determined by the legal regulations in force at any given time. However, the relationship of public administration, as an area under the control of the Government, cannot be disputed with the political sphere.[24] The structure of the currently existing Hungarian public administration system can be placed in the structure of "Government" – "Minister" – "Sheriff/Lord Lieutenant" – "District Registrar".[25] However, the system of separation of powers does not involve administrative control of the judiciary due to the independence of the court and the trial judge. The application of administrative law generally does not affect private legal relations.[26] Therefore, there is no conflict of competence between the separate areas of the two different types of application. An appeal may be lodged against an administrative decision made before the notary by filing an action with the administrative body within the statutory time limit.[27]

The role of management in legislation and judicial (administrative) law

In Hungary, laws are adopted by Parliament and decrees may be made by the Government or its member, the Governor of the Hungarian National Bank

[22] Article 26 (1) of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.
[23] Article 25 (2) of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.
[24] Article 15 (2) of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.
[25] Act CXXV of 2018 on Government Administration (hereinafter: GAA) §§1-3. §, § 5., §§ 39-41., §§ 48-49.
[26] Except for the rules of Government Decree 16/2015 (II.16.) on property protection proceedings initiated before the notary.
[27] In Hungarian law, the application (appeal against the decision) must be submitted to the notary who made the administrative decision dealing with the estate protection case within 15 days of being notified of the decision (Act CL of 2016 on the General Administrative Code (hereinafter: AGAC) § 118(3)).

(Central Bank), the head of the autonomous regulatory body and the representative body of local governments on the basis of the authorization of the Act. *In both cases, this involves (team) work carried out by a professional community, taking into account the preparation and drafting of legislation, behind which there is some legal policy intention, legal policy will. In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, the legislative process is determined by the legislator's intention and interest in legal policy, independent of the person, which usually does not manifest itself in the person of a leader. Legal policy intentions and interests are less personified than those of the people who draft legislation and participate in its process.* In the application of judicial law, the trial judge makes the substantive decision (judgment) "on behalf of the court" but prepares and signs the decision himself. In the course of administrative law, the decision in the case is made by the "special administrator", but the decision is signed by the head of department at the level of the district office. The administrative head of the court's organisational unit (president or vice-president) has no say in the substantive decision of the court. The application of administrative law is also an activity defined by law, and its supreme body and manager is the central government, which plays a political role.

In the legislative process, the leading person who determines the direction of the process (legal policy objective, legal policy interest) is usually not given. *In the system of public administration, since it is part of the executive power, the political aspect cannot be completely ignored when filling a managerial position.* In the application of administrative law, where a position has to be taken on a professional issue (e.g., guardianship administration in the district offices of county (capital) government offices, in the procedures of the department of labor, or in administration before the land registry department), a professional decision is usually made in accordance with legal requirements. *In the application of judicial law, the trial judge is independent, cannot be instructed, is subject only to legal requirements, and his decision is influenced only by previous precedents and the decisions of the Curia on legal uniformity.* Individual decisions are made in the application of judicial law and administrative law, where the main goals are compliance with legal requirements and the enforcement of professional aspects. In the application of judicial law, it is possible for the trial judge to change certain non-substantive judicial decisions on his own initiative, but a possibility of correcting the decision made at first instance is provided by the ordinary remedy (appeal). *In the application of administrative law, it is possible to amend, revoke, or apply a supervisory measure under certain legal conditions.*[28]

[28] AGAC Section 115(1) – (6), AGAC Section 121(1) – (4).

Leaders between the positions of role model and idol

In the process of legislation and law enforcement, the importance of leadership is less pronounced compared to other areas (e.g., the organizational system of the university or the organization of the church). The legislation is strongly linked to the exercise of political power, and the application of law (both judicial and administrative) seeks to enforce professional aspirations within the legal framework. When occupying a managerial position in the state organizational system, compliance with legal requirements is a very important circumstance. The role of leadership in legislation (the legislature) belongs to the person who has the right to initiate legislation under the authority of the Fundamental Law.[29] At the same time, it cannot be ignored that there is always some legal policy intention or aspiration behind the legislative initiative.

In the judicial system, a managerial role is an administrative managerial position.[30] With the exception of the President of the Curia, the head of the court may hold the managerial position for a fixed period of time (two terms of six years).[31] In the public administration organization, the heads of administrative departments (minister, chief sheriff, district registrar) also play a political role as part of the public administration (the executive). The mandate of the Minister is linked to the operation of the Government and to the Prime Minister's intention and political vision, and the mandate (appointment) of the chief sheriff and the district registrar is not tied to a specific duration of time.[32] The management levels in both the judicial organization and the administrative organization can be defined in the courts as follows, from the highest level downwards: *1. President of the Curia of Hungary, 2. President of the Court of Appeal, 3. President of the General Court, 4. President of the District Court.*[33] Two central administrative bodies should be highlighted in the judicial organisation in Hungary: *1. the National Court Office (hereinafter: NCO), which carries out the central administration of courts, and 2. the National Judicial Council (hereinafter referred to as the NJC), which supervises the operation of the NCO, as well as the President of the NCO and the President of the NJC.*[34]

In the administrative organization, from the top down, from the top of the hierarchy, the following positions can be defined: *1. Government (Prime Minister), 2. Minister, 3. Sheriff/Lord Lieutenant, 4. District Registrar, 5. Head of*

[29] In Hungary, laws may be initiated by 1. the President of the Republic, 2. the Government, 3. the parliamentary committee and 4. a Member of Parliament (The chapter entitled "State" of the Fundamental Law Article 6(1)).

[30] Act CLXI of 2011 on the Organisation and Administration of Courts (hereinafter: AOAC) § 9 (1) – (3).

[31] AOAC Section 127(1) and (3).

[32] GAA § 1 (2), § 50 (1).

[33] AOAC § 10 (1).

[34] Article 25 (1) (2) of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.

Department. The legislative process is inherently connected to politics. A leading position in the legislative process can therefore be seen as a political role. Certain differences can be identified between the application of administrative and judicial law. The application of administrative law as part of public administration (implementation) is also related to politics, but the exercise of its activity is subject to legal requirements. *In the judicial application of law, the main emphasis is on the normative role and on professional activity defined by legal regulations and its activity is independent of politics.*[35]

In the system of state organizations, the person occupying a leading role does not appear primarily as a role model or idol. In the administrative and judicial field of the state organizational system, the head of the specific organizational unit may be of great importance. *In these areas, the personal qualities of the leader and the expectations set by the appointee can also affect his "suitability" for the leadership position.* In the system of state organization, legislation (the legislature), the judiciary and public administration, *the leading person is primarily a person serving the state.* In a significant number of cases, state service involves a serious commitment on the part of the leading person. Those individual abilities are necessary, in both the administrative and the judicial organization (state power organization), in the private and business sphere alike, for success in a leadership position (open personality, good communication, integration, consistency, purposeful leadership attitude, recognition and quick resolution of problems, ability to make decisions, effective management of conflicts, etc.). At the same time, leadership roles in other areas (e.g., church organization, university organization) differ significantly from the leadership role in the examined branches of state power (court, public administration) in several respects. In the system of organization of state power, the leader is also the instrument for exercising state power. In representing the state, the leader is the only person who appears at the given organizational level towards the outside world. In the private or business sector, the manager does not necessarily fulfil such a role (e.g., the business organization may have several managing directors entitled to make independent decisions).

Leadership roles in the state (state power) and non-state spheres are also of a different nature in that in the former cases, leadership roles cannot be completely separated from political circumstances. This direct link can be clearly demonstrated in the system of public administration as an organisation that

[35] On the management of the court, see Llagami, Naureda: Leadership in the Judiciary: Management and Administration Roles in the Justice System. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, Vol. 12. No. 2, 2024, 71–89; Thumma, Samuel A.: On Leadership for "the Every Judge", *Court Review: The Journal of the American Judges Association,* Volume 56, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2020, 68–74; Shepard, Randell T.: The Changing Nature of Judicial Leadership. *Indiana Law Review*, vol. 2009, 42, 767–772. Hunter, Rosemary – Ruckley, Erika: Judicial Leadership on the UK Supreme Court. *Legal Studies* vol. 38, no. 2, 2018, 191–200.

implements executive power in practice. In the case of leadership positions held in the judicial organisation – with the exception of leaders elected by Parliament – the relationship with politics is not and cannot be important due to the quality and soundness of the professional application submitted for the leadership position. *A common set in the judiciary and public administration is full compliance with legal requirements (normativity), but political considerations also play an important role in public administration due to the political affiliation of positions (e.g., minister, chief minister).* This type of influence is usually not observed when holding management positions in non-state institutions and during the period of their exercise. There is also an additional difference between management positions in the public and non-public sectors. We believe that this follows from the relationship that the person holding the managerial position has to the legal requirements. In the state (state power) sphere, the assessment of the work, activity and operation of a person occupying a managerial position depends to a greater extent on compliance with legal requirements, given that the organization headed by him also performs official law enforcement activities, than in the case of a person occupying a managerial position in the non-state (state power) sphere. In the non-state (state power) sphere, the duties and powers of the person holding a managerial position are, of course, also determined by legal regulations, however, since the leader does not represent a state interest, but the interest (economic interest) of the given company or business organization. Consequently, the legal regulations applied to him or her are also subject to a different assessment. The personal qualities, professional aptitude and employment criteria of the leader overlap to a large extent in the state (state power) and non-state spheres. The reason the two spheres do not fully overlap is that if the political aspect appears when filling a leadership position and judging leadership activity, it also changes expectations towards the leader.

Political determination when taking up a leadership position and its possible renewal raises the value of political loyalty when assessing fitness to lead. When filling a non-state (state power) leadership position, economic or other considerations usually play a role (e.g., experience gained in education in the organizational system of the university or in the organization of the Church when filling a leadership position, attachment to the organization due to previous work, managerial experience). Therefore, professional aspects and professional aspirations are emphasized in the performance and full implementation of these tasks.

The term "loyalty" has different meanings for the head of a state agency and for the head of a non-state organization. *For the head of a non-state-run institution that does not perform a state function, "loyalty" may appear not primarily in a political sense, but in a professional sense, in relation to the relationship to one's own principles and beliefs.* The head of a non-state

business organization usually does not perform state (state power, state administration) tasks. Therefore, the question of loyalty with political content cannot arise in relation to him. For the head of the body performing tasks related to state power, political loyalty is the pledge/condition for the continuation of the managerial mandate/operation. For the head of an organisation or institution performing a non-state (state power) function, loyalty can manifest itself in at least three senses, as indicated above. *The length of time for which a leadership position is filled in the organization of state power shows a different picture.* Leadership roles related to legislation cannot be separated from the parliamentary elections held every four years in Hungary.[36] In the application of administrative law, the mandate of the Government (minister) depends on the outcome of the parliamentary elections and the intention of the Prime Minister at the above-mentioned organizational levels. At a lower level (Sheriff/Lord Lieutenant, District Registrar), there is no term limit, but the duration of the appointment cannot be disconnected from the result of the election and the intention of the appointee. In the judicial system, the position of manager is subject to a fixed period of time (six years), which is usually renewable once.

Conclusions

1. *The state leadership roles examined in the research topic have one thing in common: they are all linked to a branch of state power and thus indirectly to the division of powers* (legislation: legislature, implementation; judicial application: judiciary; administrative legislation: implementation). The leading role in the three branches of power determining the functioning of the state means that the state has serious expectations of the leader and the leader is under strong compulsion to comply. In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, the leadership role of the state is directly or indirectly linked to a branch of state power in the system of the separation of powers. As a result, leadership also takes on a political dimension.

2. A circumstance that strengthens the role of state leadership even in the position defined by legal regulations is the *personal charisma* of the leader stemming from his personality (the existence of which is independent of whether the leader performs his duties in a state, non-state or Church organization).[37] The personal charisma and charismatic radiance of a person in a leadership position comes from his personality. The subjective characteristics and characteristics of the human personality, as well as its relationships with

[36] Article 2 (3) of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.
[37] Weber, Max: *Economy and Society 1. – Foundations of Understanding Sociology*, 248–259.

the members of the work organization, determine the acceptance of the individual occupying a specific leadership role by the community. In the exercise of power, the personal charisma of the leader can captivate his employees, who may think of him as someone located at some point in the space/field between "idol" and "role model".

3. In the public sector, the manager appears primarily as a *public employee*, although in public administration and in the judiciary, he has a different emphasis, whose main focus is less on personal relationships with colleagues during the period of office. A managerial position in an area of state power must imply for him the responsible "operation" of an organization or department under the direction of the head. An important difference between a state leadership role and a leadership position is that the former role usually involves direct contact with the world of politics. A person in a leadership position – not in the organizational system of the state – cannot detach himself from the world of politics completely, but the relationship is usually not a direct one.

4. *The leader in the public sector is primarily responsible to the State due to his or her leadership role*, whereas any classification of the leader in the area/field between "idol" and "role model" may occur from persons who come into contact with the leader. The body which appoints or elects the leader does not regard the leader as an idol or role model, but *rationality and pragmatic considerations related to the management of the organisational unit can usually be taken into account over the manager's activities regarding the issue of efficiency.*

5. The professional value of leadership in a state organisation can be: a) in legislation: the immediate reaction of the law to social changes through the creation of new legislation or legislative changes (*speed, openness, consensus*); b) judicial (administrative) application of the law: full compliance with the statistical approach, swift and thorough completion of the cases received by the authority as soon as possible (*timeliness, soundness, efficiency*).[38] *In all of the areas of state organization mentioned in this study, significant social expectations and compliance are also formulated for the operation of persons holding a leadership role in any of the areas of state organization mentioned in this study and the organization headed by them (public administration, courts).* This may be the case with regard to judicial organization and public administration, for example that the principle of "customer-friendly" service

[38] Magyary, Zoltán: *The Hungarian Public Administration*, 75–81. For public administration, see also Horváth, Imre: *Administrative Organization and Management*. Budapest–Pécs, Dialogue Campus 2002; Fabián, Adrián: *Public administration theory*. Budapest–Pécs, Dialogue Campus, 2010.

is applied in the exercise of the law. Full implementation of this objective is, of course, the responsibility of the head of the department.

6. The objective to be achieved by the leaders of the state organization is the enforcement of the interest of the state (public interest, public good).[39] The leaders of the supreme organs of the state are the implementers of the legal policy goals that the state seeks to achieve. According to the requirement formulated for the state, it must create conditions that entail dignified social conditions for the individual (citizen). In the realization of this goal of the state, the responsibility of the state leader is paramount.

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[39] Article 38 (1), Article 28 of the State Chapter of the Fundamental Law.

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Act CL of 2016 on the General Administrative Code

Act CXXV of 2018 on Government Administration

Act CIII of 2023 on the Digital State and the Rules for the Provision of Digital Services

"MIRROR OF PRINCES" FOR MIDDLE MANAGERS: ROLE MODELS FOR SUBORDINATE MANAGERS

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Abstract

The "mirror of princes" is a collective name for books that provide role models for rulers, which are deeply rooted in ethical and, in many cases, Christian values. This study attempts to describe a role model for middle managers based on the teachings of the New Testament, primarily on the requirements set forth in the first letter of the Apostle Paul to Timothy. Middle managers who follow this role model reject double talk. Both their superiors and subordinates trust them, knowing that they will protect them from illegal and professionally incorrect decisions. Their integrity is based on their stable value system and strong character. They are soft-hearted, believe in the usefulness of soft management tools, and can use them properly thanks to their high emotional intelligence. Middle managers must be like the gardener in Jesus' parable who gives another chance even to the barren fig tree.

Keywords: *role model, middle managers, integrity, emotional intelligence, management science*

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Introduction

The title of this study is a paradox in emphasizing the need for an authentic role model for middle managers. Why? Because management science books are usually written for senior managers. The qualities of a successful leader are also mostly researched regarding top managers. This used to be even more the case. In the Middle Ages, the writings that gave leaders guidance were addressed to the rulers of countries. These books for kings and princes were collectively called a *mirror of princes*. From China to the Arab countries and to Europe, many such works were created.[1] However, there is not one among them that intends to provide guidance for leaders other than monarchs. It is a pity, since this literary genre elaborated very important ideas deeply rooted in ethical – and, in many cases, Christian – values.

It is even more remarkable that in the parables of Jesus Christ, kings or high-ranking leaders symbolize the Father himself, and the leaders at the center of the parables are middle managers. They are expected not to perform great deeds, but to treat the people entrusted to them fairly. Consequently, the Gospels provide important but less specific guidance for the behavior of leaders, including middle managers. Of all the books of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul's first letter to Timothy is the one that sets out specific requirements both for the primary leader of the parish (the overseer) and the managers of practical tasks (the deacons).

The English word deacon is the translation of the Greek word *diakonos*. The Acts of the Apostles and several letters of the Apostle Paul mention two functions within the ancient churches: those of elders and deacons. The Elders had authority to rule: they held the office of "overseer". Deacons are never described by the books of the New Testament as exercising governing authority. Their function was to serve the community of the church, primarily by looking after the needy. The purpose of the election of the first seven deacons was to relieve the apostles of practical leadership duties, so that they could spend more time preaching the gospel. Consequently, and later, the deacons took over the day-to-day management duties from the Elders (overseers), and in this sense they can be considered middle managers.[2]

[1] Noëlle-Laetitia Perret – Stéphane Péquignot (eds.): A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature Brill E-Book (PDF), 2022.

[2] I used the following works for the description:
Merkle, Benjamin: *The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons*, 2010, https://www.9marks.org/article/biblical-qualifications-and-responsibilities-deacons/; Siahaan, Paimin et al.: Christian Leaders Competences Based on 1 Timothy 3:1–13 *Pharos Journal of Theology*, Volume 103, Issue 2, 2022, https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.103.0227; Storms, Sam: *10 Things You Should Know about Deacons in the New Testament*, 2019, https://www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/10-things-you-should-know-about-deacons-in-the-new-testament

Today's management literature does not forget about middle managers. They form the largest target group of management training institutions, so the curriculum of their training courses is largely aimed at helping them develop middle management skills. Experts highlight some competencies that are considered necessary for middle managers to become successful, and then management training institutions base the curricula on the development of these skills.

For example, Andrea Abbas,[3] an instructor of leadership courses, defines the characteristics of a thriving middle manager as follows:

1. Trustworthiness
2. Practicing accountability & coaching
3. Fairness and fact checking
4. Offering an ear to listen
5. Consistency and keeping their word
6. Providing hope and inspiration
7. Authenticity & being real
8. Practicing what they preach
9. Being okay with being in the middle.

Indeed's editorial team underlines the following skills as being extremely important for a successful middle manager:[4]

a) Effective Communication
b) Problem-solving Skills
c) Attention to Detail
d) Organisational Skills
e) Empathy and Understanding
f) Systemic Thinking and Action
g) Resilience
h) Influencing Others
i) Conflict Management
j) Emotional Regulation

The two lists clearly reflect that the biggest challenge for middle managers is directly managing their subordinates. Strategic thinking and planning do

[3] Andrea Abbas: *The characteristics of a thriving middle manager*, 2022, https://www.ems1.com/ems-management/articles/the-characteristics-of-a-thriving-middle-manager-NvFLuHbUuX-2m0VC4/ (accessed 5 January 2025).

[4] *Indeed*, Editorial Team: 9 Essential Skills for a Career as a Middle Manager, 2024, https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/middle-manager-skills (accessed 5 January 2025).

not appear among the skills considered most important. The listed competencies can be divided into two groups. One group contains the ethical requirements for middle managers, which mainly include the traits listed by Andrea Abbas. The other group consists of competencies that make direct management effective. *Indeed*'s editorial team primarily focuses on the latter.

This practical approach has advantages and the development of skills at the heart of the training helps middle managers to perform their tasks more effectively. My perspective is different. The title of my study suggests that it attempts to approach the role of middle managers from a more elevated perspective. The authors of the mirrors of princes warn the addressee, i.e., the future ruler, that he has been called to a great vocation, and must therefore grow up to his lofty vocation in morality, wisdom, and behavior. It is also relevant for managers working at lower levels of the hierarchy.

If someone is appointed to be the leader of a community, then he/she becomes responsible not only for himself/herself, but also for the community he/she leads. The achievement of the community's goals and the well-being of the community's members depend to a significant extent on his/her decisions and example. This is highlighted also by the Apostle Paul. He writes: "Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task." (1Tm. 3:1)[5]

My starting point is that leaders, including middle managers, are role models for their subordinates, whether they like it or not. To be attractive and credible role models, they themselves need an authentic role model. My research question is whether the requirements set by the Apostle Paul for the selection of deacons can serve as a credible role model for today's middle managers.

Requirements for the Selection of Deacons

Let us recall the criteria recommended by the Apostle Paul for selecting deacons: "… deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of faith with a clear conscience. … A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well." (1Tm. 3:8–9, 3:12.)

In the following subsections, I will apply these requirements to all middle managers, leaving it to the reader to judge which apply exclusively to church leaders.

[5] Translations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

Middle managers are to be worthy of respect

The Apostle Paul makes no distinction between overseers and deacons in that both should be worthy of respect. In contrast, many people believe that a middle manager does not need general respect: he is the boss's man; it is enough if his boss trusts him. Even scientific surveys confirm that integrity is less commonly expected of middle managers than of top managers.[6] This is completely contrary to the concept of the Apostle Paul and is nothing more than the destruction of the image of a middle manager set up by the Apostle.

Middle managers are often under pressure to be their boss's extended arm, to carry out the boss's instructions without thinking twice. That is why it is important to choose a person as a middle manager who is strong enough to resist this pressure. Resistance to compulsions and maintaining integrity is not impossible even under difficult circumstances. This is illustrated by the first two sections of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poem. He was a German Lutheran pastor who opposed Hitler's fascist regime, was imprisoned, and then executed. In prison, he wrote his influential poem: "Who Am I?"

> Who am I? They often tell me
> I stepped from my cell's confinement
> Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
> Like a Squire from his country house.
>
> Who am I? They often tell me
> I used to speak to my warders
> Freely and friendly and clearly,
> As though it were mine to command.
> …

Where does he draw the strength for this? The last two lines of the poem provide an answer to this question: "Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine. / Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!"[7]

The relationship between a middle manager and his/her superior is one of the most important aspects of a middle manager's integrity. What kind of relationship should a middle manager build with his/her boss? For me, the answer lies in the relationship between state dignitaries (very high-ranking state leaders)

[6] William A. Gentry et al.: Integrity's place among the character strengths of middle-level managers and top-level executives, *The Leadership Quarterly* Volume 24, Issue 3, June 2013, 395–404.

[7] Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Who am I?, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, New Greatly Enlarged Edition, New York, Touchstone, 1971, 347–348.

and their bodyguards. During my work as administrative secretary of state, I came into personal contact with a few state dignitaries whose security was ensured by bodyguards. The dignitaries complained that their movements were severely restricted by security measures and they could only leave their residences in consultation with the bodyguard commander and accompanied by bodyguards. Despite their complaints, they accepted this situation and followed the rules because they knew, on the one hand, that the rules served their safety, and on the other hand, that the bodyguards would protect them even by risking their lives in the event of an assassination attempt.

A middle manager can best preserve his integrity if he becomes the protector of his boss. A financial manager should be his boss's "financial bodyguard", the human resources manager should protect his boss against mistakes related to labor affairs, etc. It is not an easy role. The boss sometimes gets angry if his subordinate manager says no to him. He will complain about the restrictions, but sooner or later he will realize that they serve his protection. This will be especially true if the boss experiences that in other matters his subordinate manager is not working against him, but for him, and that he fulfills his legitimate requests enthusiastically and to a high standard. A subordinate manager needs to say yes "loudly" nine times to his boss's legitimate requests, to be able to say no to an illegal request for the tenth time. This is not theoretical reasoning, since my own experience corroborates it.

I have been in a management position for thirty-seven years, of which I was the number one leader of an institution for only two years. So I was effectively a subordinate manager, albeit in relatively high positions. In 1990, following the formation of the first democratically elected government, I was appointed deputy state secretary in the Ministry of Social Welfare, and in 1993 I was promoted to administrative state secretary in the Ministry of Labor. In Hungary, the job of the administrative state secretary is the highest non-political position in a ministry; he is the head of the ministry's administration and one of the minister's deputies. I spent more than 13 years in this position, albeit in different ministries. In the meantime, the government changed five times. When the administrative state secretaries were usually replaced, only I remained in this position, as deputy to five different ministers. This shows that I was not "a specific minister's man", but rather I tried to prepare the professional decisions of my current minister as best as possible and to protect them from bad decisions.

I had been an administrative state secretary for about 12 years when I was asked at a roundtable discussion how I could measure the success of my work. "By the fact that not a single minister was replaced while I was the administrative state secretary in his or her ministry," I replied. The audience liked my answer, because a subordinate leader can do no more than that for his boss, and if his boss is successful, then he too is successful, and so is the organization

he leads. This is shown by the fact that I was never fired from the position of administrative state secretary either; this phase of my career ended because the position of the administrative state secretary itself was abolished in 2006. To lift one example from this period: one minister, for whom I served as administrative state secretary for seven years, never signed a single important document that did not have my countersignature.

I have been working in the State Audit Office (SAO) since 2012, as a senior, but subordinate manager. It was here that I received one of the greatest verbal compliments from the president of the SAO, when he once introduced me in this way: "he is my colleague who protects me from making bad decisions."

A middle manager must protect not only his boss, but also his subordinates. From whom? First of all, from himself, from his bad moods, his impatience. However, the greatest danger for subordinates is when their boss tries to persuade them to act illegitimately or in a way that prioritizes the boss's selfish interests. They can only resist this by risking their jobs. For me, the greatest recognition I received from my subordinates was when one of them said to me: "Mr. Secretary of State, I would like to thank you for one thing: in the three years we have been working together, you have never asked me to do anything that would have been incompatible with my conscience."

Middle managers must protect their colleagues from the unfounded anger of the "big boss" or lower-ranking bosses. But they must also protect their vulnerable subordinates from the mockery and teasing of others. Middle managers earn the respect of their subordinates by standing up for the weak, not by siding with those who abuse them.

Conclusion: The ideal middle manager can be trusted both by his/her subordinates and by his/her bosses and is widely respected. Sometimes it is very difficult, but Bonhoeffer's behavior clearly proves that a man of integrity can preserve his human dignity even among terrible conditions.

Middle managers should be sincere (not double-tongued)

The second most important characteristic that the Apostle Paul expects from a deacon is sincerity. Sincerity is the quality of being free from pretense, deceit, or hypocrisy. It is easy to understand that sincerity is a very important characteristic of a deacon. But the King James Version, a more ancient translation, uses another term: a deacon must not be "double-tongued". The latter term is rarely used in contemporary English and is difficult for a non-native English speaker to understand. Therefore, practical considerations dictated that the NIV translation replace the term "double-tongued" with a more commonly understood term: sincere. However, something of the original text is lost in this

translation. The more commonly used synonym for the term "double-tongued" is two-faced. Becoming two-faced (double-tongued) is one of the greatest temptations for middle managers. They must meet a double expectation: carry out the orders of their superiors and maintain the sympathy of their subordinates. This can apparently be achieved most easily if the middle manager tells both sides what they want to hear. For example, a middle manager receives instruction from his superior that is difficult for his subordinates to implement. If he were a sincere person, he would try to get his superior to change the instruction so that it would be easier for his subordinates to execute. Instead, he nods in agreement when the superior gives the instruction, then blames the superior for the bad decision in front of his subordinates who protest the instruction.

Conclusion: The double-tongued behavior of "bowing to the boss and winking at the subordinates" could be useful in the short run, but in the long run it is very risky, since if it is exposed, then the middle manager losses the confidence of both his boss and his subordinates as well.

Middle managers "should not indulge in much wine"

This requirement seems self-evident, since no one appoints an alcoholic as a middle manager.[8] But the situation is more complicated, since there is a risk that a middle manager will become an alcoholic if he has the tendency. Why? Because managerial work is associated with increased stress, and if the manager solves it with the help of "too much wine", he can easily become an alcoholic. Unfortunately, there are even more harmful stress relievers. From this perspective, one can assume that the Apostle was drawing attention to the danger of stress associated with leadership.

The person appointing the manager must be aware that management involves much more stress than the work of a subordinate – and the new manager even more so. This is especially true for middle managers, who are under pressure from both above and below. It is advisable for senior managers to help their middle managers cope with increased stress. Ultimately, however, it is up to the middle managers to discover and apply the tools that will help them in this struggle, as the effectiveness of the chosen tools depends on the individual. The important thing is that the stress relievers they use build rather than undermine the manager's abilities. The very extensive literature on this topic is worth studying. Channuwong and Kantatian describe 17 strategies that managers can use to reduce stress,[9] for example: physical exercise, listening to music,

[8] According to biblical scholars, the emphasis on this requirement may also have been related to the fact that the deacons were also responsible for providing the wine essential for the celebration of the Mass.

[9] Sukhumpong Channuwong – Wutthinant Kantatian: Stress Management Strategies for

developing a sense of humor, breathing exercises, reframing thinking, leaving the past in the past, and learning how to keep smiling during times of crisis.

Conclusion: Stress is an unavoidable feature of managerial work. "Indulging in too much wine" is just one of the stress relief tools to be rejected. Middle managers need to learn to cope with stress in healthy ways.

Middle managers must not pursue dishonest gain!

It is important to emphasize that the Apostle Paul only forbids dishonest gain, and consequently approves honest gain. A Christian can therefore with a clear conscience assume managerial positions not only in the public sector or non-profit organizations but rather in a variety of businesses, provided the business is run honestly. However, he should stay far away from any dishonest activity. This is important because if a middle manager has been working for some time in an organization that does not follow ethical standards, it will be difficult for him or her to avoid engaging in unethical behavior.

At the same time, this requirement echoes the words of the Gospel of Matthew, in which the master says to the servants who doubled the talents they had received from him: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Mt. 25:21.) Why? Because the middle manager is the one who is initially only entrusted with a little, which he must handle faithfully, not only taking care of it, but also doubling it. His faithfulness may indeed be rewarded with a promotion, but even if that does not happen, he can still feel the happiness of working with integrity.

Conclusion: It is advisable to formulate the prohibitive requirement set by the Apostle Paul in a positive way: middle managers should be trustworthy even in small things!

Only take on a middle management position with a clear conscience

"They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience." This is the original requirement set by the Apostle Paul. What might be the interpretation of this requirement in a non-religious context?

Let us start with the fact that middle managers are the executors of the decisions made at a higher level, and they must represent the appropriateness of these decisions. If they do not agree with the decision, then they will only

Managers: An Integration of Eastern and Western Approaches European *Journal of Social Sciences* Vol.29 No.1, 2012, 66–75.

be half-hearted in representing the decision to their own subordinates. This reduces the effectiveness of their work and is therefore detrimental to the organization that employs them. But middle managers also suffer if they must implement decisions that they do not identify with. Middle managers cannot be expected to agree with every decision they have to implement, but it is essential that they accept the strategic goals and declared values of the organization, and that the goals and values do not conflict with their own beliefs.

It is not always possible to foresee whether the managerial position one is applying for entails the performance of tasks that cannot be undertaken with a clear conscience. Therefore, it is advisable for a candidate applying for a position as middle manager to clarify his moral stance in advance. For example, if he is applying for the position of financial manager, he can write in the application that he would choose this company as his workplace because, to the best of his knowledge, fair management principles are applied here. If this is true, then his chances to get the job have just improved by him expressing his moral standpoint. If this is not true, then he would probably not be selected as financial manager, but this way he would avoid future conflicts.

Let me mention my own example. In 2003, when a socialist-liberal government was in power, I was offered the position of administrative state secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, which was the highest administrative position in Hungary at the time. The opportunity appealed to me, but I was afraid that some of the tasks to be performed would conflict with my Christian values. Therefore, I asked the minister who invited me to apply whether my Christian beliefs would cause a problem. "Not at all," he replied, "at least there will be one such person among us." And indeed, in the next three years, I never received a single task, the implementation of which would have contradicted my ethical principles.

Conclusion: Middle managers are not able to significantly change the strategy or project that they must implement. Therefore, a middle management assignment should only be undertaken for a task that the person in question can perform with a clear conscience.

Middle managers should make essential decisions in accordance with their core values

"A deacon must be faithful to his wife," wrote the Apostle Paul, according to the NIV translation. We can get to the deeper meaning of this requirement by going back to an older translation. The translation according to the King James Version is the following: "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife." The Apostle Paul sets forth the requirement that a man who had not divorced his first wife and chosen another wife should be chosen as a deacon. The Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy in 65-67 AD. At that time, this

requirement was of fundamental importance. Jewish law allowed men to divorce their wives by issuing a certificate of divorce and then to remarry. However, Jesus Christ expressly forbade this. This meant – more than thirty years after Jesus' teaching on this matter – that the only Christian men to divorce their first wives were those who still preferred the Jewish law over the teaching of Jesus. The essence of the requirement set forth by the Apostle Paul is therefore that only such should be chosen as leaders of the Christian community who follow the teaching of Jesus in the existential decisions of their lives.

Obviously, only Christian organizations can set this requirement for applicants who profess to be Christian. However, this requirement can also be generalized, meaning that it is advisable to choose a person as a leader who has already proven in his/her life that he/she makes important decisions in accordance with his/her core values, and that these values are in harmony with the organization's values. This is the touchstone of solid character. A leader – even a middle manager – is often faced with a decision-making situation in which he/she must choose between his/her own self-interest or the organization's short-term interest, on the one hand, and stated values on the other. In such situations it takes solid character, a willingness to make sacrifices, the ability to delay gratification and often courage to make decisions that are in line with the organization's values.

In the time of Jesus, divorce was more like dismissal: "scrapping the wife". The culture of scrapping is especially characteristic of our age. Pope Francis has spoken out against this on several occasions. The following story reinforces the need to reject the culture of scrapping. On their 50th wedding anniversary, a celebrated couple was asked how they had managed to stay together for so long. Their answer was simple: At the time when we got married, if something didn't work, people fixed it and didn't throw it away.

We receive an even more general picture of the above-mentioned requirement if we recall from the Gospel the conversation that took place between the Pharisees and Jesus before Jesus uttered his teaching on the indissolubility of marriage.

> Pharisees said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."
>
> "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. (Mk. 10: 4–5.)

Consequently, when Jesus forbids divorce, he also draws attention to the fact that a husband must not be hard-hearted; he must not ignore his wife's interests and feelings. In Jesus' time, Jewish marriage was not a relationship of two equals; the wife was subordinated to her husband. The wife was existentially

dependent on her husband and became completely vulnerable if he dismissed her. To prevent the wife from becoming destitute, one of the most important points of the marriage contract stipulated the amount of money the husband had to pay to the dismissed wife in the event of divorce. Therefore, usually only a well-to-do man could afford to divorce his wife and marry again, which also entailed a significant financial burden. Let us imagine the situation when a Jew who had become a Christian, a well-to-do, respectable man who had divorced his previous wife, applied to be an overseer[10] or deacon. According to the requirement formulated by the Apostle Paul, he had to be rejected because he proved to be hard-hearted and followed not the teachings of Jesus, but the old Jewish law instead.

The lack of equality also characterises the relationship between employer and employees. This is true even though modern labor law attempts to mitigate this inequality and protect the rights of employees. Employees are existentially dependent on their employer and they must perform their work according to their employer's instructions. Employees are directly subordinated to their workplace leaders, i.e., middle managers. Therefore, the requirement formulated by Jesus is particularly applicable to middle managers: do not be hard-hearted. If somebody is hard-hearted, he/she is not kind or not able to feel sympathy. One of the opposites of hard-hearted is soft-hearted; people who are kind and often compassionate towards others.

In a workplace setting, an important characteristic of managers' soft-heartedness is that they believe not only in the effectiveness of the hard management tools, but are convinced of the usefulness of soft manager tools, and have the soft manager skills to use them appropriately. Modern management science also highlights the importance of this, which is supported by the following three quotes:

> A soft skill that's extremely helpful for management roles and can significantly improve workplace relations is the ability to empathize with employees. Middle managers can exhibit empathy by listening intently to employee concerns, offering resources and providing support and understanding when unexpected or uncontrollable circumstances impact performance.[11]

> Always think about people's well-being. Trust is a key element for human relations, but it is something that must be cultivated and that is achieved with the behavior demonstrated on a daily basis.[12]

[10] Among the requirements for selecting an overseer, the Apostle Paul also states that he should be "husband of one wife", and in fact mentions this requirement as the second one.

[11] *Indeed*, Editorial Team: *9 Essential Skills for a Career as a Middle Manager.*

[12] People First: *5 essential qualities in a middle manager*, 2020, https://www.peoplefirst.blog/en/5-essential-qualities-in-a-middle-manager/ (accessed 5 January 2025).

> One of the most rewarding aspects of being in a middle manager role is the opportunity to positively impact the daily lives of everyone you work with. A supervisor that listens, keeps confidentiality when possible and holds you accountable while not passing judgement is modelling a strong character and will influence a healthy culture.[13]

However, there are situations when a middle manager must make or implement a decision that negatively affects his subordinates in the interest of the organization. What can a middle manager do in such a case? One is recommended to take out the New Testament and search for the teachings of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, one can find the following parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So, he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'" (Lk. 13:6–9.)

What is the lesson from this? Middle managers must fight against negative measures affecting their subordinates. On the one hand, by trying to persuade their senior manager to postpone his/her order or mitigate its negative effects, and on the other hand, by giving their subordinates all assistance necessary to avoid the negative measure, and to help them, above all, to grow up to the requirements which provide security. However, if all this does not help, middle managers must also implement decisions that negatively affect subordinates.

Conclusion: Taking the analogy of the parable, the best role model for a middle manager is the careful gardener protecting the barren fig tree. Although he is sometimes forced to weed, he cares deeply about the beautification and enrichment of the garden and knows that for this purpose the plants must be protected and nurtured.

Competencies learnt in the family circle are useful for managerial work

"A deacon … must manage his children and his household well." The Apostle Paul makes a similar requirement for overseers, but he also explains why this requirement is rational. "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)" (1Tm. 3: 4–5.) From the necessity of the explanation one can conclude that the

[13] Abbas: *The characteristics of a thriving middle manager.*

similarities between parental and leadership competencies were not self-evident even at that time. Nearly two thousand years later, management science discovered the importance of emotional intelligence in the success of managerial work. The term emotional intelligence (EI) was first defined by researchers Mayer and Salovey in a book chapter[14] published in 1990. They explained EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."

The development of emotional intelligence is one of the most popular training courses among middle managers. The Harvard Business School which provides several training courses in this topic tries to convince the potential students with the following argument:

> The technical skills that helped secure your first promotion might not guarantee your next. If you aspire to be in a leadership role, there's an emotional element you must consider. It's what helps you successfully coach teams, manage stress, deliver feedback, and collaborate with others. It's called emotional intelligence, and it's one of the most sought-after interpersonal skills in the workplace.[15]

My own experience is that family is the best place to develop and practice EI. The literature also confirms this: "The family is where we first learn about relationships. It is where we form emotional bonds and learn about social interactions. The continuous, evolving dynamics of family relationships require us to develop skills, knowledge, practice and emotional intelligence to support, love and care for our family members," writes Mabel Gonzales in the abstract of her book chapter.[16] The literature[17] also points out that a loving family atmosphere is the best soil for the development of children's emotional intelligence.

The Apostle Paul knew from experience that only that man is suitable for the leadership of a church community who creates a good atmosphere in his family and maintains discipline without using violent means. It is for this reason that he added to the requirement that "he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect."

Conclusion: The competencies acquired by keeping the family together and raising children can also be used well in managerial work. This also means

[14] Peter Salovey – John D. Mayer: Emotional intelligence. In *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 1990, 185–211.

[15] Lauren Landry: *Why Emotional Intelligence Is Important in Leadership*, 2019, https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/emotional-intelligence-in-leadership (accessed 5 January 2025).

[16] Mabel Gonzales: *Family Relationships and EI. In: Emotional Intelligence for Students, Parents, Teachers and School Leaders*. Springer, Singapore, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0324-3_5

[17] Archana Chandran – Bindu. P. Nair: Family Climate as a Predictor of Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents, *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2015, 167–173.

that women who have spent longer periods of time caring for their young children should not be at a disadvantage in managerial appointments compared to men and women who concentrated only on their careers at work.

Comment: It is important to make young people aware of this and to convince them that having children does not have to be postponed and put on the back burner for the sake of a career at work. Employers should also realize that parents raising one child, or two or more children cannot be considered career starters, since they have acquired important competencies while raising their children that they will be able to successfully utilize as managers at work.

Answer to the research question: A role model for middle managers can be built on the Apostle Paul's requirements

Starting from the requirements formulated by the Apostle Paul for the selection of deacons and further deepening them with the teachings of the Gospels, I have outlined a role model that today's middle managers can follow to effectively contribute to the success of their organization, while creating a good workplace atmosphere for the community they lead. Leaders following this model possess many qualities and abilities that modern management science considers essential for middle managers. (This confirms that the teaching of the New Testament is always relevant.) This role model is much more than a simple set of useful and nice competencies that help middle managers survive the dual pressure of their superiors and subordinates. In this role model, the middle manager is the man of integrity and not the man of the boss. He/she rejects doublespeak. Both his/her superiors and subordinates trust him/her because they know he/she will protect them from illegal and professionally incorrect decisions. The basis of his/her integrity is his/her stable values and strong character which ensures that he/she won't make decisions following his/her selfish self-interest. He/she is soft-hearted, believes in the usefulness of the soft management tools and is able to use them appropriately thanks to his/her high emotional intelligence.

I am not saying that following this model does not involve conflicts, nor that every organization is looking for such a middle manager. But it is not necessary to accept every job offer for a middle management position. Before accepting a management appointment, it is advisable to clarify what values the middle manager considers important, and whether these fit with the values followed by the organization. If not, then even the most financially attractive offer should be rejected, since a middle manager will never be able to change a corrupt organizational culture, and in fact, there is a greater risk of becoming tainted. It is worth waiting for a better option. Being a middle manager is

a worthwhile mission, but only in an organization whose mission the middle manager can serve with a clear conscience.

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ETHICAL MODELS AND EDUCATION

TRUSTWORTHY LEADERSHIP: THE FOUNDATION FOR THRIVING IN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper explores the critical role of trust in ethical leadership within faith-based higher education, a sector currently facing a crisis of trust, particularly between faculty and administration. It examines the internal and external pressures impacting higher education, including faculty burnout and the faculty–administration divide, exacerbated by differing perspectives on power and organizational culture. The paper introduces "trustworthy leadership," a model integrating organizational trust factors (competence, honesty, care, reliability, identification), servant leadership, transformational leadership, and Christian values (truthfulness, humility, love). Grounded in a quantitative study demonstrating a strong correlation between a culture of trust and a thriving faculty, this paper argues that cultivating trustworthy leadership is essential for the flourishing of faculty members and administrators in faith-based colleges and universities. The paper concludes with practical strategies related to shared governance, faculty development, hiring processes, institutional planning, and support for underrepresented faculty, to foster trustworthy leadership and rebuild trust within these institutions.

Keywords: *trust, leadership, faculty, Christian higher education*

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Introduction

Without question, trust is a critical component of ethical leadership. Several leadership books and articles address the importance of trust for cohesive teamwork and sustained organizational success over time.[1] However, few theoretical models include or emphasize trustworthiness as a vital component of effective leadership.

My leadership context, faith-based higher education, is facing a crisis of trust. In the current milieu, negativity, suspicion, and fear are more likely to characterize university employee interactions than collaboration, engagement, and joy. This reality is especially true of the relationship between faculty and administration. Trustworthy leadership—a developing concept that integrates organizational trust factors, servant and transformational leadership theories, and traditional Christian values—is needed to repair divisions within the university and promote the thriving of faculty and administrators, ultimately contributing to the flourishing of academic communities.

Higher Education Today

The list of external problems facing higher education is endless. The higher education sector is a microcosm of our BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible) world. Public perception, inconsistent government funding, inequitable (often unclear) outcomes, and numerous economic factors create stress for college administrators and characterize higher education as a volatile industry. Internally, the list of challenges is comparable in their scope and complexity. These challenges are highlighted by faculty burnout, financial instability, and a deepening divide between faculty and administration.

Faculty burnout

Recent changes and challenges to higher education have critically affected faculty members and their well-being. The global pandemic highlighted many challenges facing university faculty. Systemic inequalities, increased workloads,

[1] R.A. Heifetz – M. Linsky: *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002; P. Lencioni: *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012; J.M. Kouzes – B.Z. Posner: *Learning leadership: The five fundamentals of becoming an exemplary leader.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2016.

and weakened faculty governance structures have led to greater stress levels and feelings of isolation and fragmentation from the rest of the institution.[2]

Faculty members at Christian colleges and universities in the United States face many of these same challenges but also experience additional stressors unique to the faith-based sector, such as an expectation for mentoring and faith integration.[3] In recent years, the highly polarized political landscape has resulted in several high-profile faculty dismissals, leaving many remaining faculty members wondering if academic freedom still exists and experiencing fear and insecurity about the future.[4]

Divide between faculty and administration

The polarization in mainstream culture is mirrored in the academy, best expressed through the fragile relationship between faculty and administration. Faculty and administration frequently conflict around nuanced ideological, theological, and financial issues, although both align with the educational mission and a shared desire to increase institutional health.[5] Many of the published articles focus on the different values and perspectives that faculty and administration develop due to their differing goals within the institution.[6] Although I believe much of the conflict stems from a lack of trust, a brief overview of the differences in organizational culture is pertinent to the subject of this paper.

[2] K. R. McClure – A.H. Fryar: 'The great faculty disengagement', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 January 2022, https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-great-faculty-disengagement (accessed 22 January 2022).

[3] A. Noble: 'A professor's perspective: Why Christian colleges emphasize mentorship', *Christianity Today*, 25 January 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/partners/higher-education/professors-perspective-mentorship.html (accessed 19 March 2023).

[4] J. Dunn: 'An angry debate over Critical Race Theory splits Christian colleges', *Newsweek*, 14 February, 2022, https://www.newsweek.com/angry-debate-over-critical-race-theory-splits-christian-colleges-1678626 (accessed 5 March 2022); R. Dobkin: 'Conservative campuses are facing cancel culture problems', *Newsweek*, 4 August, 2024, https://www.newsweek.com/christian-college-university-professor-conservative-1928037 (accessed 1 September 2024).

[5] J.L. Bess – J.R. Dee: *Bridging the divide between faculty and administration: A guide to understanding conflict in the academy*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014.

[6] W.H. Bergquist – K. Pawlak: *Engaging the six cultures of the academy: Revised and expanded edition of the four cultures of the academy*. 2nd edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008; L.G. Bolman – J.V. Gallos: *Reframing academic leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Academic Cultures

Colleges have been described as organized anarchies,[7] or bifurcated organizations[8] because there is some ambiguity around the purpose and goals of higher education and the role each person plays in achieving those goals.[9] Bergquist and Pawlak[10] described higher education as comprising various interrelated cultures—collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual, and tangible. Most traditional faculty members are part of the collegial culture, and most administrators are in the organizational culture. Understanding and appreciating the perspectives of each culture can "reduce the pervasive anxiety"[11] associated with navigating various challenges and functions in the institution.

Using a similar construct, Bolman and Gallos,[12] described varied approaches as *frames* that capture people's distinctive ways of thinking and behaving in the institution. Higher education comprises four primary frames: structural/machine, human resource/family, political/jungle, and symbolic/theater.[13] Academic and administrative leaders tend to view organizations through very different frames, with the faculty viewing the institution as a jungle to be navigated with shrewdness and political skill and administrators framing the university as a machine to be managed with structure and policies.

Conceptualizing the faculty–administration divide with these cultures or frames provides insight into the conflict experienced in most universities. Administrators, who are primarily part of the managerial culture with a structural/machine frame, are focused on efficiently and effectively monitoring the college or university's resources, including the human resources of faculty members. They tend to view the curriculum as the intellectual property of the college to be efficiently delivered to students and they approach problems with an emphasis on data, technology, and fiscal responsibility. Meanwhile, most faculty members operate in the collegial culture and experience institutional life through the political/jungle or human resource/family frame. Faculty members value differences, express their disciplinary expertise, and integrate teaching and research. They view the institution as a jungle to be negotiated politically (often in faculty governance and committees) or a family in which

[7] M.D. Cohen – J.G. March: *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college president*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 1986.

[8] P.M. Blau: *The organization of academic work*. Wiley, 1973.

[9] R.M. Hendrickson et al.: *Academic leadership and governance of higher education: A guide for trustees, leaders, and aspiring leaders of two- and four-year institutions*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2012, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/grace-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3037633 (accessed 9 January 2022).

[10] Bergquist – Pawlak: *Engaging the six cultures of the academy.*

[11] Ibid., 13.

[12] Bolman – Gallos: *Reframing academic leadership.*

[13] Ibid.

to relate (practicing collegiality and teamwork with other faculty members). Faculty members deeply value autonomy and their freedom to choose what and how they teach and research, so any regulation, observation, or interruption tends to be perceived as a potential threat to their autonomy and academic freedom.

Perspectives on Power

Another consideration for understanding the origins of the divide between faculty and administration is their understanding of power. Power is inherent, though often unmentioned, in any discussion of leadership.[14] Kellerman[15] argues that power dynamics have shifted from leaders to followers over the past fifty years. In this shift, followers demand more from their leaders, and leaders are obliged to meet those demands.

Further, there may be philosophical differences in understanding power. Crouch[16] notes that academics, particularly those in the humanities and social sciences, have taken new notice of power dynamics in institutions, influenced heavily by Michel Foucault and Fredrich Nietzsche. This new emphasis on power suggests that power is at work in every human interaction, mainly as an invisible control mechanism. Crouch posits that academics may overemphasize power at the expense of more compelling virtues such as creativity and love. Might the shift in power from positional leaders to followers and academic thinkers' renewed suspicion of power intensify the conflict between faculty and administrators?

Faculty Thriving

My interest in trustworthy leadership stems from the findings of my dissertation project, a qualitative study identifying the predictors of faculty thriving among full-time faculty members at Christian colleges and universities in the United States. A *culture of trust* emerged as the most significant contributor to the variation in faculty thriving, having the largest direct and total effects.[17]

[14] P.G. Northouse: *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Seventh Edition. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2015.

[15] B. Kellerman: *The end of leadership*. New York, NY: Harper Business, 2012.

[16] A. Crouch: *Playing God: Redeeming the gift of power*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013.

[17] A.T. Crabtree: *Pathways to thriving in Christian college and university faculty, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Ph.D./HE. Azusa Pacific University, 2024, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2915898340/abstract/A702D4A0C4464C03PQ/1 (accessed 22 January 2024).

Thriving Defined

Faculty Thriving is a valid framework for understanding faculty functioning and well-being and is theoretically grounded in positive psychology.[18] Unlike research focusing on a particular facet of the faculty experience, such as satisfaction, engagement, or productivity, faculty thriving is a holistic model integrating interpersonal, intrapersonal, and institutional aspects. Faculty thriving is measured by the Faculty Thriving Quotient and comprises five factors, each addressing an essential relationship within the faculty experience.[19]

- Meaningful Engagement describes a faculty member's relationship with their work and role. The meaningful engagement scale measures the degree to which their research, teaching, and service provide them with a sense of accomplishment and joy.
- Student Impact addresses faculty members' relationships with their students. The student impact scale measures whether faculty members believe they are making a difference and influencing students.
- Relational Support pertains to faculty members' relationships with their colleagues. On this scale, there is an emphasis on feeling valued and on the friendships developed through these interactions.
- Affirmed Value measures the faculty member's relationship with their supervisor. This scale is primarily descriptive of the affirmation and feedback they receive from their dean or department chair.
- Institutional Affinity describes the faculty member's relationship with their institution. Affinity to the institution is measured by their sense of belonging and desire to remain in that particular environment.

Culture of Trust

Prior to this study, the impact of trust in higher education had not been empirically researched; however, it was regularly theorized as essential for institutional success.[20] This study has conclusively demonstrated the importance of trust in promoting faculty well-being and optimal functioning. The

[18] T.K. Martinez: *The development and validation of the Faculty Thriving Quotient*. Azusa Pacific University, 2022.

[19] L.A. Schreiner – T.K. Martinez: *The Faculty Thriving Quotient*. Psychometric Instrument. Azusa Pacific University, 2019; Crabtree: *Pathways to thriving in Christian college and university faculty*.

[20] M.L. Pope: 'A conceptual framework of faculty trust and participation in governance', *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2004 (127), 75–84, http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/he.157; W.G. Tierney: *Trust and the public good: Examining the cultural conditions of academic work*. Peter Lang, 2006.

culture of trust scale comprised 12 survey items measuring levels of trust between faculty and administration and faculty perceptions of competence, collaboration, integrity, effective communication, and support from administrative leaders. Faculty members who scored high on this scale believed their administrators were committed to their well-being and felt their opinions mattered, giving them a voice in institutional decision-making.

A culture of trust emerged as the most significant direct predictor of faculty thriving, accounting for 55% of the variance in this outcome. It had the strongest direct effect and was twice as influential as the next most significant predictor. Additionally, a culture of trust indirectly contributed 8% to faculty thriving by influencing faculty perceptions of integrity in the hiring and onboarding process. In other words, faculty members who perceived a culture of trust were more likely to believe that the hiring and onboarding process was fair and transparent.

Trustworthy Leadership

Among my preferred definitions of trust is one from Charles Feltman, "choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person's actions".[21] Stickel,[22] and Sucher and Gupta[23] give similar definitions, which stress the presence of vulnerability in trusting others. Conceptualizing trust as an exercise in risk and vulnerability acknowledges the power of the relationship between leaders and subordinates. Trusting someone to lead you or the organization you are invested in risks your safety and livelihood. On the other side of the leadership transaction, leaders make their reputation and vision for the organization vulnerable to the actions of their employees.

To overcome the general suspicion of leaders, the distrust of organizations, and the specific leadership challenges within the higher education sector, a new leadership paradigm is needed. Trustworthy leadership is here conceptualized as a set of leadership behaviors and qualities, motivated by timeless ethical principles, and undertaken from a posture of vulnerability to others. These leadership behaviors and qualities have been empirically proven to increase trust throughout research on organizational trust.

[21] Charles Feltman: *The thin book of trust: An essential primer for building trust at work*. Second edition. Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co., 2021, 9.

[22] D. Stickel: *Building trust: Exceptional leadership in an uncertain world*. Nashville, Tennessee: Forefront Books, 2022.

[23] Sandra J. Sucher – Shalene Gupta: *The Power of Trust: How Companies Build It, Lose It, Regain It*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2021.

Organizational Trust

Research on organizational trust has observed consistent trust factors in varied cultures and industries. Although most of this research has come from corporate contexts, the need for trust and the principles of trust apply to leadership in other contexts as well, including higher education.

In the literature, organizational trust is conceptualized by the leader's ability to consistently demonstrate competence, honesty, and care, coupled with an institutional culture of reliable values and expectations. This paper will focus on the categories identified by Shockley-Zalabak et al.[24] However, a summary of trust constructs illustrates the general congruence between many frameworks and scales.

Table 1. Trust constructs

Theory/ Scale	Trust in organizational crisis Mishra (1996),	Antecedents of trust Pirson and Malhotra (2007),	Organizational Trust Index Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2010)	Components of trustworthiness Kharouf et al. (2015)	Distinctions of Trust Feltman (2021)	Qualities of Trustworthiness Stickel (2022)
Leadership competence	Competence	Perceived competency and integrity	Competent	Competence	Competence	Ability
Leadership honesty	Openness	Transparency	Open and honest	Communication	Sincerity	
Leadership care	Benevolence	Benevolence	Concerned	Benevolence	Care	Benevolence
Institutional reliability	Reliability	Repeated and consistent interactions	Reliable	Integrity	Reliability	Integrity
Institutional values		Identification	Identification	Shared values		
Other components				Consistency		

[24] P. Shockley-Zalabak et al.: *Building the high-trust organization: Strategies for supporting five key dimensions of trust.* San Francisco: IABC/Jossey-Bass, 2010.

These factors can be applied to higher education and its relationships. Furthermore, these components provide a road map for the leadership approach needed to promote unity and collaboration between faculty and administration.

Competence

Competence is "the ability of the organization through its leadership, strategy, decisions, quality, and capabilities to meet the challenges of its environment".[25] Competence is measured through results; trust is developed as the members achieve organizational objectives. Reaching a high level of trust in universities would require administrators and faculty to believe the other is competent to do their work in pursuit of shared goals and the institutional mission.

Openness and Honesty

Openness and honesty refer to the credibility built through effective communication. As emphasized by organizational culture expert Edgar Schein,[26] full and open communication is crucial for organizational health. In open and honest organizations, transparent communication is embraced at all levels.

While openness and honesty are vital in any organization, they can be particularly challenging in colleges and universities due to the diverse cultures and perspectives within the academy.[27] However, faith-based institutions may have a relative advantage. A study by Egan et al.[28] found that faculty members at religious colleges and universities were more likely to perceive their administrations as being open about policies and receptive to faculty concerns than were faculty members at nonreligious and public institutions.

[25] Ibid., 29.

[26] Edgar Schein: *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th edn., San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass, 2010.

[27] A. Kezar: 'What is more important to effective governance: Relationships, trust, and leadership, or structures and formal processes?', *New Directions for Higher Education*, 127, 2004, 35–46, http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/he.154; C. Hoppes – K. Holley: 'Organizational trust in times of challenge: The impact on faculty and administrators', *Innovative Higher Education*, 39(3), 2014, 201–216, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-013-9275-y; H. Kharouf – H. Sekhon – S.K. Roy: 'The components of trustworthiness for higher education: a transnational perspective', *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(7), 2015, 1239–1255, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.881352

[28] Gerard Egan et al.: *The Skilled Helper. A Problem-Management and Opportunity-Development Approach to Helping*, 2014.

Concern for Employees/Stakeholders

The third factor is a concern for employees, demonstrated by "the perception and reality of top management wanting to communicate regularly with employees and exhibiting a willingness to hear and act on employee concerns".[29] Concern for employees is demonstrated through effective communication, as is the second factor. However, concern is also conveyed by employment practices and initiatives that value employee welfare. Other trust frameworks have referred to this concept as benevolence.[30] In higher education, concern shown by administrators to the faculty is often demonstrated in policies designed to improve the work-life balance and compensation and reward structures.[31]

Reliability

Reliability is "a steadiness in behavior that builds the trust necessary for uncertain times".[32] Leaders demonstrate reliability when they keep commitments and are consistent in their values and actions. Bowman[33] described a commitment by faculty and administration to a reliable follow-through and taking responsibility when failing to keep a promise of simple professionalism in academia, which is necessary to rebuild the broken trust in most universities.

Identification

The final factor of organizational trust is identification, "the connection between the organization and individual employees most often based on core values".[34] Bowman expressed this sentiment as it relates to colleges and universities: "In a culture based on trust, relationships are aligned through core values, a noble

[29] Shockley-Zalabak et al.: *Building the high-trust organization*, 34–35.

[30] A.K. Mishra: 'Organizational responses to crisis: The centrality of trust', in R.M. Kramer – T.R. Tyler (eds.): *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research*. SAGE, 1996, 261–287.; M. Tschannen-Moran – W.K. Hoy: 'A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust', *Review of Educational Research*, 70(4), 2000, 547–593, https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070004547

[31] Z. Sabagh – N.C. Hall – A. Saroyan: 'Antecedents, correlates and consequences of faculty burnout', *Educational Research*, 60(2), 2018, 131–156, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2018.1461573; B.H. Roos – C.C. Borkoski: 'Attending to the teacher in the teaching: Prioritizing faculty well-being', *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 6(4), 2021, 831–840, https://doi.org/10.1044/2021_PERSP-21-00006

[32] Shockley-Zalabak et al.: *Building the high-trust organization*, 37.

[33] R. Bowman: 'The Need to Trust and to Trust More Wisely in Academe', *Education*, 132(4), 2012, 907–914.

[34] Shockley-Zalabak et al.: *Building the high-trust organization*, 40.

cause, and a generosity of spirit".[35] This factor is also similar to the concept of *institutional integrity*, described by Braxton et al. as "when a college or university remains true to its espoused mission and goals".[36] Attention to this trust factor is particularly salient during organizational change, when perceptions of shifting values or a drifting mission may deepen distrust and suspicion between faculty and administrators.[37]

Relevant Leadership Theory

Servant Leadership

Robert Greenleaf founded the servant leadership movement during a successful corporate and academic career. He believed leadership should be motivated by a desire to serve others rather than by a pursuit of personal success or prestige. Further, those desiring to become servant leaders will place themselves under systems of accountability to ensure that their motivations remain focused on others.

Many of the qualities and skills of servant leadership align with those of organizational trust. These include acceptance and care for others, communication that emphasizes listening, and a correlation between professed values and actions.[38] Above all, the servant leadership model deflects leadership outcomes to pursue organizational outcomes for the benefit of others.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership is the leadership theory that best threads the needle between role model and idol in that it requires the charisma and communication skills of a visionary (idol) and the character and relational skills of a mentor (role model). The four elements of transformational leadership are presented as four Is:

- Inspirational motivation: Forming a shared vision with clear goals and expectations.
- Idealized influence: Leading with character, charisma, and clear values.

[35] Bowman: The Need to Trust, 907

[36] J.M. Braxton et al.: *Rethinking college student retention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014, 88.

[37] J. Tagg: 'Why does the faculty resist change?', *Change*, 44(1), 2012, 6–15, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2012.635987

[38] R.K. Greenleaf – L.C. Spears: *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. 25th anniversary edn. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2002.

- Intellectual stimulation: Growth and change through creativity, curiosity, and risk-taking.
- Individualized consideration: Developing followers' potential through support and relationships.

Transformational leadership begins with a deep value of people, leading to cooperative efforts of change and growth to accomplish the vision. The four Is contain many parallels to the components of trust: shared vision and values, communicating clear expectations, integrity and identification of shared values, curiosity and risk-taking, and looking to develop their followers' potential.

Biblical Principles of Trustworthy Leadership

Trustworthy leadership is closely related to faith-based values and disciplines. Those seeking to build a culture of trust will find relevant instruction in the Christian scriptures and principles of ethical leadership, such as truthfulness, humility, and love.

Truthfulness—open and honest communication—is a foundational value of Christian practice. Paul admonishes the Ephesians, "Speak the truth to one another, with love. In this way, we will help each other grow stronger and become more like Christ." And a few verses later, "Each of you must put aside falsehood and speak truthfully to each other." Trustworthy leaders are truth-tellers, fostering expectations of candid conversations and open disclosure of information.

Humility—as an antidote to the pervasive sin of pride—is at the heart of Christian virtue. Again, Paul, in that beautiful passage in Philippians 2, encourages believers to follow the example of Jesus and "do nothing out of selfish ambition but to value others above themselves" in humility. Trustworthy leaders put the needs of the organization and the people entrusted to their leadership above their own desires.

Love—best exhibited through acts of service—is described in 1 Corinthians 13:13 as the greatest of the virtues. In the New Testament, believers are often instructed to love others by serving them. For example, Paul says in Galatians 5:13 that "You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to indulge your flesh; serve one another through love." And Jesus in John 15:12 states that "My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you."

The night he was betrayed and arrested, Jesus exemplified each of these biblical principles. He honestly told his followers about the hardships that were soon to come (John 12–16), humbly submitted his desires to his Father's will (Luke 22:42), served his disciples—including the one who was about to betray him—by washing their feet (John 13), and prayed that all the world would know that God loved them as God loved him.

Trustworthy Practices for Christian Higher Education

In light of organizational trust research, relevant leadership theory, and biblical principles, several trustworthy leadership practices are recommended. Each is intended to create opportunities for building vulnerability-based trust between administrators and faculty.

Building shared decision-making (shared governance) on trust

With an understanding of what trust requires (honest communication, competency and confidence in leaders, an open ear to faculty voices, and a commitment to care), administrators and faculty must mutually commit to shared governance processes and procedures that provide better communication and enable more feedback without the fear of retaliation or termination. Structures and policies that ensure collaboration on decisions that affect faculty members must be established and followed. When disagreements about the process arise, mutually agreed upon arbitrators should be engaged to mediate disputes and provide guidance.

Trustworthy leadership integrated into faculty development

Inviting more administrators to faculty development could build relational bridges between the administration and the faculty. Ideas include interdisciplinary dialogues, peer-to-peer learning and job shadowing, retreats, and service initiatives. The conversations in and around these learning experiences would build empathy and understanding between the two groups. In Christian colleges, providing faculty and administration with space and opportunity for reflective and collective worship and prayer experiences could also build trust.

Transparency in all hiring processes

In faculty recruitment, it is crucial to avoid making exaggerated or empty promises that could mislead potential hires. Additionally, meaningful faculty involvement in staff and administration hiring, and particularly in that of the presidential, can significantly enhance the recruitment process and contribute to a thriving work environment.

Meaningful faculty involvement in institutional planning

Faculty engagement in planning must be genuine, not symbolic or performative. By valuing and incorporating their insights, one can build trust and increase well-being among the faculty, demonstrating their importance to the institution's growth. Because clear communication is a two-way process, the faculty should also intentionally share departmental or school-level plans and program review results with senior administrators.

Intentional support of underrepresented faculty members

Supporting historically underrepresented and underserved faculty members, specifically women and faculty of color, could build a more equitable campus environment and foster greater trust among all faculty. Administrators and academic leaders who are culturally aware and responsive can advocate for specific practices that improve the experiences of faculty of color. Initiatives such as funding for personal and professional development, course release for programs that promote diverse scholarship, and regular invitations to share their perspectives and ideas with leadership would celebrate multicultural teaching and learning, and acknowledge the cultural wealth that minority students and employees contribute to the university. This may increase trust between faculty and administration.

Conclusion

Trustworthy leadership is a developing concept that has been contextually considered only in my American, faith-based, higher education setting. However, the principles emerging from organizational trust, servant leadership, and transformational leadership theories can be applied in all leadership settings. I hope this introductory reflection on this topic will challenge readers to become more trustworthy leaders and to be more willing to risk vulnerability by trusting the leaders God has placed over them.

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THE INTERPLAY OF CHURCH TEACHINGS AND PUBLIC FINANCE IN HUNGARY: INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT COURSE

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of ethical management principles into church-led institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary. With the transition from socialism to a market economy, church-based organizations face challenges in balancing financial sustainability with Christian values. The study emphasizes Virtue Economics, drawing from Catholic and Protestant teachings, to propose an ethical leadership model that prioritizes public service over profit maximization. It also examines historical and contemporary Church doctrines on economic ethics, highlighting the role of moral responsibility in financial management. A case study on the Church Leadership and Management degree at Károli Gáspár Reformed University illustrates practical efforts to train leaders in ethical governance. The study critiques mainstream economic approaches, advocating for a value-driven alternative that aligns financial stewardship with a Christian mission. Ultimately, it argues for a management paradigm that emphasizes human dignity, transparency, and social responsibility in ecclesiastical institutions.

Keywords: *Christian principles, church institutions, leadership, management education, virtue economics*

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Introduction

In the Central and Eastern European countries that have transitioned from a socialist to a market economy in the last three and a half decades (as is the case in many developed countries), it is common to see a shift in economic organisation towards ethical management principles and even a revival of Church-based management practices being employed in times of crisis. A kind of reincarnation of Church teachings is taking place, but as crises ease, ethical principles are pushed into the background. In our research, we present the main principles of management that emerge from Church teachings. These we treat as the theoretical foundations of our postgraduate course in Church Leadership and Management, launched in 2024, on which we have built a pioneering course in Church Management. Our training course attempts to teach a morally higher management approach for institutions operating under a budgetary order (i.e., non-business organizations), in which the use of public funds is subject to the standard and requirements for efficiency imposed by Hungarian law.

Our pathfinding educational work is of particular significance because although the teachings of the Church are not reflected in Hungarian legislation, it is important for us, as an institution of higher education with a Reformed Church background, that the retirement homes, schools, kindergartens, health care institutions, and congregations themselves, which are run by the Reformed Church, should also practice sound management and apply Christian principles. We are attempting to achieve this by not only teaching existing legislation, but by going beyond it to train leaders who feel responsible for society, based on Christian principles of ethical leadership and management. (See Figure 1.)

In principle, "only" management based on legislation can be prudent, transparent and accountable. It can therefore have all the characteristics that one expects in moral and even religious terms. Moreover, the manager of a for-profit company, in the interests of profit, in order to maximize profit, can also act prudently and responsibly, and transparently, in order to keep his business going and to make a profit for as long as possible. In contrast, in non-business (which includes ecclesiastical) institutions, a humane, strong ethical leadership attitude should be taught and developed, based on mission, vocation, and meeting the needs of our fellow human beings as broadly and qualitatively as possible, rather than on the pursuit of profit.

In our times of crisis (2007–2010: the subprime mortgage collapse and its subsequent impact on Europe; 2020–present: the global disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the war between Russia and Ukraine), leadership—and, by extension, management—must demonstrate continuity.[1] A coherent leadership

[1] Csaba Lentner: Enforcement of the Principle of Going Concern: with Special Regard to Public Service Providers, in E. Hyránek – L. Nagy (eds.): *Zborník Vedeckých Statí : Priebežné výsledky*

Figure 1. Logical framework for a degree in ecclesiastical leadership

vision must prevail, and, particularly in our training, Church teaching should be grounded in the strengthening of public service. This constitutes the central priority of our ecclesiastical management course. The following discussion therefore reviews the principal ecclesial doctrines that provide a virtuous foundation for sustainable management.

The Catholic and Protestant Church Teachings on Leadership and Governance

Defining the ultimate purpose of the economy is a key issue. Neoliberal economics holds that the ultimate goal is to maximise profit—this has been known since Milton Friedman—and that economics neglects the moral dimensions of human interactions.[2] In contrast, Virtue Economics takes a different approach, namely that the ultimate goal of economic activity is to promote human

riešenia grantovej úlohy VEGA č. 1/0004/13: Aktuálne trendy a metódy vo finančnom riadení podnikov a ich vplyv na finančnú stabilitu podniku, Bratislava, Vydavatelstvo Ekonóm, 2013, 9–17.

[2] Luigino Bruni – Robert Sugden: Reclaiming virtue ethics for economics, *Journal of economic Perspectives*, 27. 4 (2013), 141–164.

happiness, to serve the common good. Individual fulfillment[3] occurs within a hierarchy of values, with material goods at the lowest level and intellectual and moral values at the highest.[4]

As a discipline in its own right, economic ethics plays a significant role in the interpretation of economic processes. Prominent scholars such as Amartya Sen,[5] Joseph Stiglitz,[6] and Thomas Piketty[7] have emphasised the social and moral consequences of economics, including issues of poverty, inequality, and employment. Taking the moral dimension into account is essential, since the economy is not an abstract system but is based on concrete choices shaped by social and ethical norms.

The issue of private property is also at the heart of Virtue Economics. Following in the footsteps of St Thomas Aquinas, Virtue Economics recognises the legitimacy of private property, but also points out its communal implications: the owner has a responsibility towards the community.[8]

The notion of the common good is closely linked to the principle of an inclusive economy, which Pope Francis argues should involve all people, including the disadvantaged, in the economic process.[9] For Virtue Economics, profit is not an end but a means to achieving the common good. The motto of social entrepreneurs reflects this way of thinking: "We do not create jobs to generate profit, we generate profit to create jobs."[10]

Economic systems are based on anthropological and ethical foundations, and the development of economics has always returned to the moral dimension. Modern economics, although it has long sought to disassociate itself from ethics, has come to recognise that economic activity cannot be separated from questions of morality, law and social responsibility. As a consequence, there

[3] Antonio Argandoña: *The common good of the company and the theory of organization*, IESE Research Papers D/777, IESE Business School, 2009, 7.; Ferenc Beran: *Etika. Az értékek tisztelete,* Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 2007, 53.

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[5] Ignazio Musu: A Piacgazdaság Etikai Vonatkozásairól, *Társadalom És Gazdaság Közép- És Kelet-Európában / Society and Economy in Central and Eastern Europe,* 16. no. 5 (1994), 185–187, http://www.jstor.org/stable/45240065 (accessed 15 December 2024).

[6] Róbert Tóth – Richárd Kása – Csaba Lentner: Identifying the Influencing Factors of Financial Literacy Across Pre-and "Post" Pandemic Times at the Hungarian SMEs, *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica,* Vol. 19, No. 8 (2022), 14.

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[8] Argandoña: *The common good.*

[9] Luca Sandonà: Francis' Economic Thought: His Case for an Inclusive Economy, *Forum for Social Economics* 49. 4 (2017) 430–445, https://doi.org/10.1080/07360932.2017.1279557

[10] György Pataki – László Radácsi: *Alternatív kapitalisták*, Szentendre, Új Paradigma Kiadó, 2000.

is a growing emphasis on social economics, environmental economics and corporate responsibility.

Ultimately, Virtue Economics is based on the hypothesis that the human person takes precedence over the economic structure. This claim also follows from the distinction between behaviorist and humanistic psychology: whereas behaviorists believe that the environment determines the individual, humanistic psychologists (Maslow, Rogers) believe that the individual actively shapes his or her environment.[11]

Man's freedom and responsibility guarantee that he does not become a mere tool in the economic system. This view of moral economics is also in line with the tradition of classical Christian thought, which emphasises the importance of individual moral choices in shaping social structures.

The Views of Catholic Authors on Economic Ethics

The roots of economics go back to the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. Aristotle, as the forerunner of the virtuous economic paradigm, developed a philosophy of virtue ethics, which he applied to economic questions. His works, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, form the foundation of virtue-based economic thought.[12]

In the Middle Ages, virtue economics became mainstream with the important works of St Thomas Aquinas, such as the economic sections of his *Summa Theologiae* [Summary of Theology].[13] *St. Antonin of Florence*[14] and *St. Bernardin of Siena*[15] also contributed to the deepening of virtue ethics in economics.

The concept of a virtue-based economy flourished between the 15th and 18th centuries, particularly in the Italian city-states and in the broader region of Southern Europe. Unlike the profit-driven principles of emerging capitalist systems, the Civil Economy movement, championed by scholars such as Cesare Beccaria, Pietro Verri, Achille Loria, Carlo Cattaneo, Gian Domenico Romagnosi, and Ferdinando Paoletti, placed moral integrity at the heart of economic thought. These economists argued that a just and well-functioning economy

[11] Richard M. Ryan – Edward L. Deci: Self Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55, No.1 (2000), 68–78.

[12] Imre Orthmayr: Erényetika, in G. Boros (ed.): *Filozófia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2016, https://mersz.hu/dokumentum/filozofia__473/?kiadvany_oldal_mod=1#filozofia_part03_art02 (accessed 22 January 2025).

[13] Christopher A. Franks: *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas's Economic Teachings,* Grand Rapids-Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans, 2009.

[14] Bede Jarrett: *San Antonino and Mediaeval Economics*, Barcelona–Singapore, Athena University Press, 2004.

[15] Raymond De Roover: Scholastic Economics: Survival and Lasting Influence from the Sixteenth Century to Adam Smith, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 69. 2 (1955) 164–166.

should be built upon the ethical character of individuals, with its primary objective being the advancement of the "public good"—a notion that later evolved into the common good in Virtue Economics.

One of the most influential figures of this movement was Antonio Genovesi, a Catholic priest and economist who sought to reconcile economic activity with ethical and philosophical principles. As a professor at the University of Naples, he pioneered ideas on how economic policies could serve not just material wealth but also societal well-being. His teachings, which encouraged a balance between commerce, morality, and civic responsibility, were compiled in his seminal work, *Lezioni* [Lectures], published between 1765 and 1769. Genovesi's approach to economics underscored cooperation and mutual benefit over competition and self-interest.[16]

In the 18th and 19th centuries, utilitarian Anglo-Saxon political economy became dominant, but virtue ethics did not disappear.

According to Catholic economists, the emergence of modern capitalism led to the erosion of traditional social norms, for which they hold politicians responsible. The bourgeois changes of the French Revolution involved an ideological transformation of society. The first critics conflated the political and economic revolutions, rejecting both.

In 1803, Adam Heinrich Müller outlined a just economic system in his *Elemente der Staatskunst*.[17] Similarly, Franz Josef von Buss in the 1820s felt that the economy lacked a social dimension and solidarity. Catholic economic thought was based on scholastic and Neo-Thomistic principles, which later influenced the economic ethical approaches of the late 19th century.[18]

The first Catholic critique of modern capitalism was the encyclical *Vix pervenit* [On Usury and Other Dishonest Profits] of 1745, which sought a middle way in the controversy over the collection of interest.[19] The Jesuits' particular economic system had not developed into a model, and new theories had to be formulated. It was only after 1848 that the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the spread of free market principles provoked a wider Catholic reaction. At the time, economic thinkers focused on building national markets rather than an integrated continental market.

By the end of the 19th century, the Jesuits had also become increasingly involved in economic and social issues. Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio[20] and Johann

[16] Luigino Bruni – Stefano Zamagni: *Civil Economy, Efficiency, Equity, Public Happiness*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2007.

[17] Jakob Baxa: *Adam Müller. Ausgewählte Abhandlungen,* Jena, Verlag Gustav Fischer, 1931.

[18] Franz Josef Stegmann: Economic Liberalism, Marxism and Critical Judgement, *St. Augustine Papers,* Vol. 5, No. 1 (2004), 25–26.

[19] Maria-Gaia Soana: The relationship between corporate social performance and corporate financial performance in the banking sector, *Journal of business ethics* 104 (2011), 134.

[20] Thomas Behr: *Social Justice and Subsidiarity: Luigi Taparelli and the Origins of Modern Catholic Social Thought*, Washington DC, Catholic University of American Press, 2019.

Baptist Franzelin[21] strengthened the theoretical foundations of Catholic economics and social policy. At the turn of the century, Heinrich Pesch developed a system of solidarism that put the economy at the service of human welfare and the common good. Pesch's work had a major influence on later papal encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum* [On Capital and Labor] and *Quadragesimo Anno* [Reconstruction of the Social Order].[22]

Since the present study is about budgetary institutions, it is necessary to mention among the economic antecedents, at least tangentially, how the state's involvement in the economy is viewed from the perspective of a conservative Catholic conception of the state. Here one must think of the members of the influential 19th century school, the Fribourg Union, which sought to synthesise continental Catholic conservatism. They formulated a position opposing both liberalism and socialism and also had a major influence on the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* [On Capital and Labor]. The ideology's origins lie in the combination of conservative thinking and social programmes, with the central actor being the well-structured state. This idea is complemented by the principle of a hierarchical, corporatist structure of society and the economy, which is expressed politically through the representation of professional interests. However, the theory of a corporatist system of representation, in addition to emphasising traditional values, also identified the need to increase social harmony and thus overall economic efficiency as the necessary justification for its creation.[23]

At the beginning of the 20th century, Oswald von Nell-Breuning[24] and Gustav Gundlach[25] further developed Pesch's theories. The influence of the Jesuit school of economics was particularly significant in Germany, where it formed the basis of Christian social and Christian democratic thought. Economic policy, based on the principles of solidarity, emphasised the principles of human dignity and social justice and formed the basis of modern economic ethics discourse, so much so that the social market economy in West Germany after the Second World War was characterized by another emblematic era of virtue-based economics, when Virtue Economics became the official ideology of the CDU/CSU in the West German parliament.

[21] Georg Cantor: On the Theory of the Transfinite, *Fidelio* 3. 3 (1994), 97.

[22] Peter Koslowski: Solidarism, capitalism, and economic ethics in Heinrich Pesch, in P. Koslowski (ed.): *The theory of capitalism in the German economic tradition: Historism, ordo-liberalism, critical theory, solidarism,* Berlin – Heidelberg, Springer, 2000, 371–396.

[23] Michael Walsh: The Myth of Rerum Novarum, *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1044 (2012), 155–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2011.01473.x. (accessed 3 January 2025).

[24] Johannes Wallacher: Oswald von Nell-Breuning. Prophet of contemporary ethics in economics and finance, in J. Herzgsell – J. Percic (eds.): *Major Jesuit Thinkers*, Leiden, Brill, Schöningh, 2019. 52–53, https://doi.org/10.30965/9783657788927_006

[25] Anton Rauscher: Theory and Critique of Capitalism in Gustav Gundlach, in P. Koslowski (ed.): *The theory of capitalism in the German economic tradition*, 397–415.

One can see, therefore, that the encyclicals of the Church's social teachings also represent the trend towards virtue ethics from 1891 onwards. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* [On Capital and Labor] opened up this line of thought, which was continued by Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* [Praise be to you – On Care for Our Common Home] in 2015.

John Paul II's reflections on the economy deserve special mention. Pope John Paul II approached the world's problems from a global perspective, paying particular attention to the socio-economic differences between rich and poor countries. In addition to his conservative theological approach, he was also modern in his application of the Church's teaching to contemporary social conditions.

In his encyclical *Laborem exercens* [On Human Work],[26] he saw work as a fundamental factor for human dignity and moral development. He stressed that work is not merely an economic necessity; it is also a creative and self-expressive activity that brings man closer to God. The Church therefore rejected systems that treated man as a mere means of production and stressed a subjective, human-centered understanding of work. The Pope rejected an antagonistic understanding of the opposition between capital and labor, and all violent social transformation. He held that economic injustices must be remedied by ensuring solidarity between worker and capital and fair working conditions. The Church's aim is to create a society in which the dignity of work is primary and in which people have the possibility of acquiring ownership of the means of production. John Paul II stressed that economic systems must respect the dignity of the human person and that property rights cannot be absolute, but must rather be subordinated to the principle of the common good. He envisaged a solution to social problems that involved education and social responsibility, which could lead to the strengthening of a culture of work.

In his encyclical *Centesimus annus* [On the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* – On Capital and Labor],[27] the Pope rejected Marxism and dictatorships that restrict freedom and oppose a democratic market economy. However, the encyclical takes a nuanced position on capitalism: if it recognises the market economy and freedom of enterprise as part of an ethical and religiously based political order, it is acceptable; if it emphasises only economic freedom without regard for human values, it is to be rejected. The Church does not offer concrete models, but its teaching can serve as a compass for the creation of a just society. The encyclical draws parallels between the

[26] Miklós Tomka – János Goják: *Az Egyház társadalmi tanítása*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2005, 367–414; Miroslav Volf: On Human Work: An Evaluation of the Key Ideas of the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 37(1), 1984, 65–79.

[27] Tomka–Goják: *Az Egyház társadalmi tanítása*, 531–585; Oliver F. Williams: Catholic social teaching: A communitarian democratic capitalism for the new world order, *Journal of Business Ethics,* 12 (1993), 919–932.

last century's conflicts between capitalists and workers and the current conflict between the Global North and the Global South, highlighting the problem of exploitation in developing countries. The document stresses the role of enterprises in society: they are not just capitalistic societies, but rather communities created to serve society. Finally, it stresses that the purpose of human labour is the liberation and development of the human person, which requires a new value-based labour movement. True freedom can only be achieved when man is able to control his instincts and obey the truth.

The feudal system in Europe was gradually dismantled and with the emergence of modern capitalism, the traditional forms of social self-organisation disappeared. Industrialization did not create social protection, which became one of the major shortcomings of the new economic system. The Church, invoking the Christian principle of charity, criticised free trade capitalism, stressing the primacy of labour over capital. Modern financial systems, on the other hand, were a critique of ill-gotten gains based on medieval Christian monetary theory.

The Economic Ethics of the Protestant Reformers

Luther and Calvin expressed their views in different historical and economic contexts, which is one of the bases of their differences. While Calvin operated in more developed economic trading cities, Luther worked in a more feudal economic structure.[28] Calvin had a broader legal and humanistic education, which helped him to better understand economic relations and the role of capital.[29]

Luther saw work as a divine calling, an equal and honourable task for all men: the purpose of work is to glorify God and serve humanity, regardless of its nature. In his German translation of the Bible, the concepts of vocation and work are closely linked. Luther, however, allowed little room for social mobility and held that a man should remain in the occupation to which he is called.[30] His economic views were conservative: he denounced speculation and unfair profiteering and favoured agriculture. He considered commerce to be necessary, but he thought it important that it should be conducted in a godly manner.[31]

[28] B. András Szabó: A gazdaság etikája, in S. Fazakas (ed.): *A protestáns etika kézikönyve,* Budapest, Kálvin Kiadó, Luther Kiadó, 2017, 303.

[29] György Kovács: *Protestantizmus és kapitalizmus: Magyar gazdaság- és eszmetörténeti tanulságok,* Szeged, DRHE Szegedre kihelyezett Vallástani Tanszék-Ethelbert Stauffer Teológiai Kutatóintézet, 2011, 43–55.

[30] Antal Birkás: Luther és Kálvin politikai és gazdasági nézetei, *Polgári Szemle*, 11. 4–6 (2015), 41–51.

[31] Martin Luther: On Trade and Usury, *The Open Court*, Vol. 1897, No. 1 (1897), 16–34, https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ocj/vol1897/iss1/2 (accessed 19 January 2025)

Luther condemned usury and believed that money, by its very nature, could not prosper by itself.

Calvin, on the other hand, was more permissive about usury. He believed that money-lending occurred in the Old Testament for purposes of solidarity, but that interest could be justified in the case of investment loans. The Genevan reformer linked the rate of interest to state regulation, and considered an interest rate of 5-6.67% acceptable, and even founded a Christian bank.[32] He also played a role in promoting the accumulation of capital by linking work and asceticism to one another. He accepted the possibility of social mobility and considered performance to be key. He encouraged disciplined work while minimizing consumption.[33] He did not consider wealth to be a problem in itself, but believed that its use was a great responsibility and should be for the benefit of others.

Although there is a close link between Protestant ethics and early capitalism, the later development of capitalism can no longer be clearly traced back to Calvin's teachings. The Calvinist work ethic, moderate interest rates. and the modern understanding of money contributed to the development of capitalism, but the structure of late capitalism departed from the original Protestant ethic.

Max Weber explored the relationship between Protestant ethics and capitalism and found that the economic rationalism of Protestants, especially that of the Puritans, helped capitalism to develop. He emphasised three main factors: a sense of vocation, worldly asceticism, and a positive valuation of the accumulation of money. Weber's theory has been criticized by many, including Richard Tawney,[34] who argues that the roots of capitalism can be traced back to pre-Reformation Europe. Later research (e.g., Becker and Wössmann)[35] emphasized the link between literacy and economic development. In the 20th century, Protestant social ethics dealt with the ethical challenges of capitalism and various trends emerged to address social problems, such as the involvement of the social conservative state or religious socialism.

Protestant churches continue to take a stand on economic issues in the 21st century, especially neoliberalism and sustainability.

[32] Erzsébet Teréz Varga: Kálvin János és a reformáció jelentősége a mai közgazdasági gondolkodásban, *Köz-Gazdaság*, 13. 3 (2018), 63.

[33] Gyula Dávid: *Kálvin gazdasági etikája*, Cluj-Kolozsvár, Minerva, 1931., 18–19.

[34] Richard Henry Tawney: *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1926, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/71223/pg71223-images.html (accessed 19 January 2025).

[35] Sascha O. Becker – Ludger Wössmann: Was Weber wrong? A human capital theory of protestant economic history, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124. 2 (2007), 531–596.

Macroeconomic Conditions and Regulatory Frameworks Surrounding the Management of Church Institutions

The macro-economic environment after 2020 has become more difficult, just as it was after the US sub-prime crisis of 2007-2008, raising three requirements for the leaders who manage the finances of our ecclesiastical institutions. Legal compliance, efficient use of public funds, and adherence to relevant Christian principles, as discussed in this paper, are all core requirements. Over-borrowing, one-sided profit-maximising management practices that ignored banking and ethical norms were a major trigger in the crisis that erupted at the end of the first decade of the 2000s, causing a global crisis and sovereign debt problems. In the 2020s, the Covid epidemic and the effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on energy markets and the national budget sector caused public debt growth, deficits, and even record European inflation in Hungary.[36] All these factors have significantly reduced the purchasing value of Churches' funds and the ecclesiastical institutions funded from the national budget. In other words, in real terms, less money is available for the maintenance and even increase of the level of services. In addition to the management principles adopted from practicing business (social responsibility, integrity), it is appropriate to adopt an ethical management approach based on Church teachings, which in our view is more sustainable.

In 2010, Hungary started a wide-ranging reform of public finances. The key rules of sustainable public management, including predictable institutional budget management, were put in place. Public finance management, the achievement and longer-term maintenance of fiscal balance, and the reduction of public debt are among the country's primary economic policy objectives, which are set out in the public finance chapter of the Fundamental Law of Hungary. The Stability Law, which was intended as an implementation of the provisions of the Fundamental Law, was adopted to regulate and continuously control the central budget law, from which the Churches and their institutions receive normative and task-based funding. The Law on Public Finances is a guarantee for the balance of public finances and the transparent, efficient, and controllable management of public funds. The Hungarian Parliament, exercising its budgetary powers, approves an annual budget plan on the proposal of the Government, called the Act on the Central Budget of Hungary. At the end of the budgetary year, the Government prepares a draft final accounts bill, which is audited by the State Audit Office, debated by Parliament and passed into law. The budget plan law and the final accounts law contain the budget appropriations and implementation data for the Churches and Church-run

[36] Csaba Lentner: The Silver Age, *Polgári Szemle*, Vol. 19, No. 1–3 (2023), 10–12, https://doi.org/10.24307/psz.2023.0902

institutions. The micro-level accounting reports of the state budget and the Church institutions operating under the budget order should be synergetic and interdependent.

It is essential that the state and its budgetary institutions manage public money efficiently and transparently.[37] In order to achieve this goal, it is obviously necessary to have the previously described framework laws and the legal regulations that are subordinate to them in the legal regulatory hierarchy, including specific legal norms that apply to ecclesiastical institutions. In addition to compliance with the law, the management requirements must also be met by complying with the relevant management principles. Public finance principles are operational norms that all public entities must follow in planning and implementing the budget, accounting for revenue and expenditure, and reporting on the accounts. Their function is achieved when they appear simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing way. The purpose of the principles is to act as guiding principles with legal guarantees. The legislation giving effect to the principles sets out the procedural rules for drawing up the budget (including the institutional budget) and for the accounts. It also lays down rules of conduct for the implementation and management of the budget. Thirdly, it sets out the accounting treatment of financial flows.

The management of the ecclesiastical institutions in a given macroeconomic environment, in accordance with specific legislation and management principles, is a pre-condition (the macroeconomic and public financial context), a legal obligation (compliance with legislation, efficient use of public funds) and a prudent and ethical choice of management. The professional portfolio of our ecclesiastical management and administration course seeks to put this triple principle into practice.

Case Study: A Profile of the Church Leadership and Management Degree[38] at Károli Gáspár Reformed University

Our three-semester postgraduate program in Church Leadership and Management was established in 2023 at Károli Gáspár Reformed University. The host institution is a key player in Reformed higher education in Hungary, having been founded in 1993 during the early years of the post-Communist transition. Its legal predecessor, the Pest Theological Academy (later the Budapest Reformed Theological Academy), had existed since 1855. The university is named after Gáspár Károli (1529–1592), a Reformed pastor, Bible translator, and church

[37] Gyula Pulay: *Integritásmenedzsment: A bizalom megteremtése és megőrzése*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2021.

[38] In Hungarian: egyházi vezetés és gazdálkodás szaktanácsadó szakirányú továbbképzési szak

organizer. According to Dávid Czvittinger, Hungary's first literary historian, Károli was "the most outstanding Hungarian philosopher, linguist, and religious scholar of his time, and the most prominent preacher of the Word of God among his followers."

The aim of the program is to ensure that the management of social and educational institutions maintained by churches and congregations adheres not only to legal and efficiency requirements but also aligns with the Church's teachings. Additionally, the program seeks to train financial managers with a thorough understanding of church-specific financial and administrative matters.

Since the regime change, Hungarian churches have developed an extensive network of social and educational institutions, which are legally classified as entities operating under the ecclesiastical budget system. Over the past three and a half decades, the number and significance of these institutions have steadily increased. Their management is characterized by strict legal compliance, efficiency in the use of public funds, and a strong emphasis on Christian principles, reflecting their ecclesiastical status.

This specialized training in church management and administration is designed for pastors, presbyters, caretakers, parish priests, and managers overseeing both the spiritual and material life of congregations, as well as leaders of ecclesiastical legal entities and budget-managed congregations. Many of these individuals are not trained economists, yet they bear significant responsibility for managing the increasingly complex financial affairs of their communities. When reporting to various authorities, they cannot claim ignorance of economics or management, nor can they delegate these responsibilities entirely. Instead, they must work closely with financial professionals, despite often lacking expertise in financial, legal, and administrative matters. This situation also applies to directors and managers of ecclesiastical institutions, as well as to members of governing bodies within higher church organizations.

The Church Leadership and Management program equips church, ecclesiastical, and institutional leaders with the knowledge and skills they need to perform their management duties effectively while maintaining their ecclesiastical mission. The program addresses the challenges of leadership and the administration of Church-affiliated institutions, providing comprehensive training in financial, accounting, and tax regulations specific to ecclesiastical entities. Graduates will be able to prepare institutional budgets, interpret financial reports, and navigate audits in compliance with applicable regulations. They will also be trained to manage resources effectively in accordance with legal requirements, modern management methods, and Christian principles.

The program's curriculum aligns with its objectives, offering a structured approach to professional training. Students must complete 24 credits in foundational ecclesiastical leadership studies, which include courses such as Value-Driven Leadership, Budgetary Finance and Accounting Control, Conflict

Management, Peacebuilding, Leadership Ethics, and Church Law Fundamentals. The second module, Advanced Church Finance and Accounting Fundamentals, requires students to accumulate 36 credits and covers essential topics such as ecclesiastical finance and accounting (including annual account preparation, budgeting, and monitoring), taxation, grant-specific accounting, and institutional and external audits. In the third semester, students are required to complete a 30-credit thesis.

The thesis may focus on any subject covered in the program. Students work under the supervision of faculty members specializing in their chosen topic. Alternatively, students may select an external consultant for thesis guidance, with oversight provided by an internal faculty member. The thesis must be at least 80,000 characters in length and must adhere to the Reformed University's Regulations for Studies and Examinations. The thesis defense is conducted in addition to the final examination, which includes core subjects such as Value-Driven Leadership, Leadership Ethics, Fundamentals of Church Law, Budgetary Finance and Accounting Control, and Institutional and External Audits.

The first cohort of the program commenced in February 2024 with 20 enrolled students. Given the strong interest and anticipated demand, a new intake is scheduled for September 2025. Half of the applicants come from congregational backgrounds, while the other half are from Church-administered budgetary institutions. Enrollment is open nationwide, with a geographically diverse applicant pool. A typical student in the program is a Reformed pastor managing a significant budget, a church administrator, or a leader in a Church-run institution. The students of the program express a unified goal: to become experts in ethical financial management within Church and Church-affiliated institutions while remaining committed to their faith and public service.

Summary

In contrast to mainstream economics and the "Homo economicus" approach to management, our study emphasizes the importance of operating Church-run institutions based on the social teachings of the Church. In Hungary, the transition from a planned economy to a market economy brought about a widespread adoption of market-driven management principles, especially in the public sector before 2010. However, in contrast to the relentless pursuit of growth and profit maximization inherent in mainstream economics, the authors of this study advocate for a management approach grounded in Church teachings, virtue ethics, Aristotelian and Thomistic principles, and Lutheran and Calvinist vocational ethics.

Mainstream economics often prioritizes profit maximization, sometimes masked by corporate social responsibility (CSR) rhetoric. The business-driven

approach to management that accompanied Hungary's transition to a market economy inevitably influenced public institutions, including Church-affiliated entities. As a result, an "alternative management approach deficit" has emerged, with budgetary institutions increasingly dominated by utilitarian market principles. The development of Church-based management methods, rooted in ethical and theological traditions, is still in its infancy in Central Europe, particularly in Hungary.

This study highlights the limitations of applying the 3E principle (Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Economics) as the sole guiding framework for managing church budget institutions. In a virtuous economy, the human person is the foundation of the economic system, rather than a mere instrument for maximizing profit or efficiency. Instead of prioritizing profit, the goal is to maximize the fulfillment of public needs and promote the common good through ethical management principles. Our study outlines the training model, principles, and theoretical foundation that support this vision.

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VALUES WORK IN LEADERSHIP: A GENERIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Generic leadership perspectives from which Christian Leadership can be approached include those of leadership traits, leadership styles, and New Leadership. Under the New Leadership concept, one can investigate the connections between Christian Leadership and, for example, Ethical Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, Servant Leadership, and Values-Oriented Leadership. This paper deals with certain theoretical problems of Value-Oriented Leadership, more precisely, issues of values representation *and* values work. *Values work is normally defined by researchers from the perspective of specific processes of values protection and promotion. This study is based on previous theoretical research conducted by the author with the aim to provide an alternative interpretation of values work in a generic sense and to define it as a broad term within the phenomenon of leadership. The paper will continue with an examination of the topic "Leaders between role model and idol" from a generic values-work perspective.*

Analysis in the previously conducted theoretical research is primarily based on relevant leadership theories. The research methods included argumentation and analytical framework development. Based on a generic values-work framework developed by the underlying theoretical research, this paper interprets leadership as values work and presents certain characteristics of the roles of leadership and idol from this aspect.

This paper highlights the importance to leadership of a values-related perspective in contrast to one related to power/influence. It also underlines a need for more research on values work as a generic leadership phenomenon. Based on the presented conceptual model of values work, conclusions will be drawn regarding Christian leaders as role models and idols.

Keywords: *leadership, values-oriented leadership, values work*

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Introduction

As early as in 1957, Selznick, in his classic study "Leadership in administration: a sociological interpretation", portrayed the leader as "an expert in the promotion and protection of values".[1] From certain sociological and philosophical aspects, especially from a religious, Christian perspective, it has always been an evident statement, as well as a spiritually experienced truth, that the substance of leadership cannot be deduced merely from leaders' practices of executing power and exerting influence. According to this postulation and respective experiences, *beyond*, and logically, *before power* and *influence,* it is a search for and a representation of appropriate *values* that essentially constitute leadership. In this context, an important question is whether modern behavioral science leadership theory concepts and – more specifically – related definitions duly and substantially reflect the value-embeddedness of the field.

The main theoretical leadership perspectives from which Christian Leadership can be approached include those of leadership traits, leadership styles, and New Leadership. From these perspectives, values representation and values work are primarily linked to New Leadership. Under the New Leadership concept, interrelationship between Christian Leadership and, for example, Ethical Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, and Servant Leadership, – in connection with – Values-Oriented Leadership can be investigated. This paper targets certain theoretical problems of Values-Oriented Leadership, more specifically, issues of values representation[2,3] and values work.[4,5]

The aim of this paper is:

- to highlight certain concepts in the literature regarding the notions of values representation and values work in leadership, and to draw attention to a possible generic interpretation of these phenomena,
- to reflect on the topic "Leaders between role model and idol" from the examined theoretical perspective.

[1] Philip Selznick: *Leadership in administration: a sociological interpretation.* Harper & Row, New York, 1957, 28.

[2] Ronald H. Humphrey: *Effective Leadership. Theory, Cases and Applications.* Los Angeles, etc.: Sage. 2014, 6–7.

[3] Selznick: *Leadership in administration.*

[4] Joel Gehma – Linda K. Trevino – Raghu Garud: Values work: a process study of the emergence and performance of organizational values practices. *Academy of Management Journal*, 2013, 56(1), 84–112. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0628

[5] April L. Wright – Gemma Irving – Kalai Selvan Thevatas: Professional Values and Managerialist Practices: Values work by nurses in the emergency department, *Organization Studies*, 2020-09-09. http://doi. org/10.1177/0170840620950079

The paper includes the following main topics:

1. The relevance of the problem of values representation in leadership theory
2. The notion and certain dimensions of values work – a generic perspective
3. Values work and Christian values
4. Results and summary

The relevance of the problem of values representation in leadership theory

Section 1, which deals with issues related to values representation in leadership theory, is divided into two parts:

1 Perspectives on defining leadership
2 Research on values representation and values work

Perspectives on defining leadership

The term *leadership* is commonly defined from the perspective of *power/influence*.[6] In the evolution of thought on the concept of leadership, it has become clear that the perspective of *values* (e.g., representation of followers' and other stakeholders' values) could also be of key importance for conceptualizing the phenomenon of leadership.

When talking about various perspectives on defining leadership, it ought to be noted that leaders' power and influence and the representation of followers' values (among others) do not necessarily contradict one another. Rather, they work together in a functionally synergetic way. As suggested by Bakacsi[7] with reference to Burns,[8] the two leadership behaviors of will assertion and adaptation (e.g., accommodation of followers' values) do not mutually exclude one another but, instead, are interrelated.

In a monograph reviewing the literature on leadership, Yukl states that "most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people…"[9]

Nevertheless, there are authors who offer a dual approach by defining leadership from both the perspectives of both *power/influence* and *values*, for

[6] János Fehér: An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions, *Journal of Management, Informatics and Human Resources, 55*. 4. (November) 2022, 322–332, https://doi.org/10.2478/orga-2022-0021

[7] Gyula Bakacsi: *Szervezeti magatartás* [Organizational Behavior], Budapest, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1996.

[8] James MacGregor Burns: *Leadership*, New York, Harper & Row, 1978, 18.

[9] Gary Yukl: *Leadership in Organizations. Global Edition,* Edinburgh Gate, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2013, 18.

example: "giving purpose, meaning, and guidance",[10] "showing the way and helping or inducing others to pursue it… envisioning a desirable future, promoting a clear purpose or mission, supportive values and intelligent strategies…"[11]

Humphrey[12] categorizes leadership definitions from the perspectives of "power" and "leaders as representatives".

> According to a **power perspective definition of leadership**, leaders command, control, direct, and influence followers to achieve group, organizational, or societal goals.
>
> … From the **leaders as representatives perspective**, leaders are those who (1) best represent the values of their followers and (2) are better at solving their followers' problems and achieving their goals. (Humphrey[13]; cited by Fehér [see, for example, Fehér, 2022,[14] and Fehér, 2023.[15]])

Regarding the *leaders as representatives perspective,* Humphrey[16] notes that – beyond commanding, controlling, directing, and influencing – leadership can be perceived as "articulating the values and desires of the group, [e.g.,] representing the organization's core culture" and showing mastery "in carrying out the organization's core mission."

While Humphrey[17] approaches the issue of values from the angle of how followers' values are *represented* by the leader, Selznick,[18] cited above, emphasizes that it is values *infusion* that is necessary for organizations to develop distinct institutional characters.[19]

With reference to Selznick's pioneering thoughts, Hughes[20] notes the following some decades later:

[10] Robert J. House – Ram M. Aditya: The social scientific study of leadership: Quo Vadis? *Journal of Management*, 1997, 23, 409–473. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063(97)90037-4, 444–445.
[11] Roger Gill: *Theory and Practice of Leadership*, London, Sage Publications Ltd., 2011, 9.
[12] Ronald H. Humphrey: *Effective Leadership. Theory, Cases and Applications*, Los Angeles, etc.: Sage, 2014, 6–7.
[13] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership,* 6–7.
[14] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332.
[15] János Fehér: *Leadership – A Values-work Perspective,* Akadémiai Kiadó (Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Budapest, 2023. https://mersz.hu/feher-leadership-a-values-work-perspective//
[16] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership.*
[17] Ibid.
[18] Selznick: *Leadership in administration*
[19] Ibid.
[20] Mark Hughes: *The Leadership of Organizational Changes,* New York and London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2016.

"Selznick, as a professor of sociology … regarded leaders as primarily experts in the promotion and protection of values, yet this emphasis was lost in the transition into management and organization studies leadership narratives."

In the search for further theoretical roots of values-related leadership conceptualizations, one can refer, for instance, to Leadership-followership theory. In this theory, leadership is an exchange between "meaning making" offered by the leader and status recognition and idiosyncrasy credit offered by the followers.[21] To refer to some more recent leadership approaches, the theoretical core of certain New Leadership streams, such as Transformational, Spiritual, Ethical and Servant Leadership, is based on specific or generic values. For example, a central idea of Transformational leadership theory is that "Leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation".[22] The values-related substance of leadership is also mirrored by Steward Leadership theory.[23] April et al.'s stewardship framework involves, among others, dimensions of personal mastery, personal vision, shared vision, mentoring, risk-taking/experimenting, and vulnerability and maturity.[24] From these dimensions, for instance, the dimension of mentoring – as related to community building – is introduced by April et al. as follows:

> The goal of mentoring is to nurture environments wherein protégés may develop more completely and commit to a set of values that serve the greater good. The focus, therefore, is on community building. The hypothesis here is that mentoring is positively correlated to community building because we are able to impact stages of progression by attending to the needs and potential of others.[25]

As shown by illustrations from key literature sources, a *values-centered* – as opposed to a dominant, *power/influence-related* – perspective can be seen as an essential historical and contemporary alternative from which to approach and conceptualize leadership. According to certain authors, values-related activities may even be seen as a definitive characteristic[26] or primary role of leaders.[27]

[21] Edwin P. Hollander: Conformity, status, and idiosyncrasy credit, *Psychological Review*, 1958, 65, 117–127. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/h0042501
[22] Burns: *Leadership*, 18.
[23] Kurt A. April – Julia Kukard – Kai Peters: *Steward Leadership. A Maturational Perspective*. Cape Town, UCT Press, 2013.
[24] April–Kukard–Peters: *Steward Leadership,* 7.
[25] Ibid., 22.
[26] E.g. Humphrey: *Effective Leadership*, 6–7.
[27] Selznick: *Leadership in administration.*

Research on values representation and values work

Leaders' personal values and the process of the representation of leaders' and stakeholders' values are currently investigated in different societal and organizational segments from diverse aspects.

One of the reasons for the marked increase in research on the representation and formation of leaders' and followers' values, as well as on culture building in organizations, was the impact of the 2019–2021 pandemic. To meet challenges in the organizational environment, Clifton and Harter, in their book *Culture Shock*, based on their Gallup research, call for a need for building organizational cultures of caring.[28] They also claim that the key way to build a caring culture is to "build trust in leadership by making decisions that reflect the [...] organizations' values."[29]

As for an example of research on leaders' personal values, the impact of values on opinion leadership was investigated recently by Lührmann et al. in German private and public corporations. The authors found that specific personal values predicted opinion leadership and positive behavioral effects between managers and employees.[30]

To quote an example from research on cultural values, Cheng Yong Tan conducted a meta-analysis to study how values shaped school leadership in Singapore. Research has found a connection between values and leadership style and has shown that the "confluence of different cultural values resulted in school leaders adopting a meta-strategic leadership perspective."[31]

An example of practical work on values and culture is provided by Tye & Dent, authors of the book *Building a Culture of Ownership in Healthcare*. They identify a need for and offer instruments to construct an "Invisible Architecture" for organizations.[32] In their interpretation, Invisible Architecture is built from core values, organizational culture, and workplace attitude.[33] They state that "financial growth is an outcome that is a result of working on values and culture" and show how organizational culture and business success indicators

[28] Jim Clifton – Jim Harter: *Culture Shock: An unstoppable force is changing how we work and live. Gallup's solution to the biggest leadership issue of our time.* Simon and Schuster, 2023. 85.

[29] Clifton–Harter: *Culture Shock*, 86.

[30] Julia Lührmann – Helena Stehle – Volker Gehrau – Ulrike Röttger: Personal Values and Their Impact on the Opinion Leadership of Managers and Employees in Internal Communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research,* 2025, 37:1-2, 151–172, https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2024.2409652

[31] Cheng Yong Tan: Influence of Cultural Values on Singapore School Leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* 2022, Volume 52, Issue 2. https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211073414

[32] Joe Tye – Bob Dent: *Building a Culture of Ownership in Healthcare – The Invisible Architecture of Core Values, Attitude, and Self-Empowerment.* Sigma Theta Tau, 2024. 10.

[33] Tye–Dent: *Building a Culture of Ownership in Healthcare*, 11.

are positively related by using examples of hospitals operating as competitors in the same service market.[34]

Through an analysis of further sources, it may be concluded that a growing interest can be found in defining and investigating leadership from a values-related perspective. However, it may be noted, too, that in accordance with what Yukl (op. cit.[35]) suggests, the power/influence perspective still seems to dominate.

Turning to the key term investigated in this paper, *values work* (see, for example, Gehman et al.,[36] Wright et al.,[37] Larson,[38] Chan & Hedden[39]), it is normally defined by values-oriented research streams as a *specific process* of values representation and transfer (Lašáková et al. cited by Fehér, 2022[40]). Paradoxically, a gap can be seen in *generic* interpretations of the significance and descriptions of *overall* characteristics of values work.[41]

As this study aims to draw attention to a generic interpretation of values work, it uses a conceptual framework of the author's research on generic values-work dimensions[42] for this purpose.

The notion and certain dimensions of values work – a generic perspective

In line with Humphrey's "leaders as representatives" perspective[43] and especially with the *values-representation* sub-perspective, a *broad* interpretation of values work, namely *"Leadership as Values Work, LaVW"* was proposed by Fehér (2022)[44] as a way to identify leaders' primary role.

In the suggested interpretation of Leadership as Values Work (LaVW), leaders' primary role is meant to be:

[34] Ibid., 13, 24.
[35] Yukl: *Leadership in Organizations*, 18.
[36] Gehman–Trevino–Garud: *Values work*, 84–112.
[37] Wright–Irving–Thevatas: *Professional Values and Managerialist Practices*
[38] Jeffrey D. Larson: *Maintaining Values Through Performance in Daily Organizational Work.* The University of Arizona ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2024. 20–22.
[39] Curtis K. Chan – Luke N. Hedden: The Role of Discernment and Modulation in Enacting Occupational Values: How Career Advising Professionals Navigate Tensions with Clients. *Academy of Management Journal,* 2023, 66, 276–305, https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2020.1014
[40] Anna Lašáková – Lubica Bajzíková – Ivana Blahunková: Values oriented leadership – Conceptualization and preliminary results in Slovakia, 2019, cited by Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332.
[41] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership*, 6–7.
[44] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332.

> Conceptualizing and making personal strategic choices about values and acting as a mover within the dynamic (organizational) processes of (1) identifying/constructing, further elaborating, sharing values, and (2) using them as guiding principles in solving problems and achieving goals.[45]

As for the sectorial relevance of the *leaders as representatives* (LaR) perspective and the notion of Leadership as Values Work (LaVW), it is suggested that LaR and LaVW concern leadership as a generic phenomenon. Their relevance is therefore not restricted to problems of leading in a societal sense, e.g., public organizations, or social-political movements.[46]

For characterizing Leadership as Values Work (LaVW) in the author's theoretical research cited here, the following dimensions were suggested:[47]

1. Content characteristics of values.
   Values can be classified by their content, for example, as religion-based/secular; ethically related/ethically non- or non-directly related (e.g., some types of functional/pragmatic values); other types of values.
2. Generality of values.[48]
   For classification by level of generality, universal, regional, national cultural, subcultural, local, and other levels (as, for example, organizational, group, and individual levels) can be proposed.
3. Multiplicity and diversity.
   For understanding leadership as values work, an important dimension can be the multiplicity (high/low) and diversity (high/low) of the values to be interpreted and promoted/resisted by the leader. High multiplicity and diversity of values means multiple values of a broad (or indefinite) scope/array (for example: ethical values in a generic sense), whereas low multiplicity and diversity means fewer values of a narrow, special values segment (for example: values related to certain specific ethical, spiritual or pragmatic contexts).[49]
4. Origin of values to be represented.
   From an organizational perspective, by their origin, values may be imported or intra-organizationally generated.
5. Time of origin of values – historical, emerging, currently defined.
   Also, from an organizational perspective, by time of origin, values may be historical, emerging or currently defined.

[45] Ibid.
[46] János Fehér: Certain aspects of the "leaders as representatives" leadership perspective. *Glossa Iuridica*, 2018. V. 3-4., 173–185.
[47] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

6. Elements of values work.
   For working definitions for different, interrelated values-work elements, the following are suggested. *Inner (intra-personal) values work* is suggested to mean an intra-personal work of the leader on the conceptualization, harmonization, and operationalization of his/her own, owners'/governors', and other stakeholders' and generic social values.[50] *Fundamental values work* is proposed to be the following: moving / participating in the moving of dynamic group / organizational processes of identifying / constructing, further elaborating, and sharing values, whereas *applied values work* can be interpreted as using values as guiding principles in solving problems and achieving goals.[51,52]
7. Consistency between leaders' and followers' values.
   Depending on the level of value-consistency between leader and followers (High/Low), the leader's role options can be the following: high consistency – a *representation of followers' values*; low consistency – an *infusion* of alternative values (for *values infusion* see Hollander, 1958).[53]
8. Differences in role distributions / levels of involvement between leaders and followers and other stakeholders in identifying and cultivating values (e.g., promoting, transmitting or confronting values or infusing alternative values).[54]
   Role distributions / levels of involvement between leaders and followers and other stakeholders in identifying and cultivating values may, for example, show the following patterns: leader's initiatives and involvement; followers' or other parties' dominance in values work; or multiple initiatives and involvements.[55]
9. Authenticity of the leader's behavior in representing values (high/low).[56]
10. Credibility implications of the values work (positive/negative).[57]

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership*, 6–7.
[53] Hollander: *Conformity, status, and idiosyncrasy credit*, 117–127.
[54] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions,* 322–332.
[55] Ibid.
[56] William L. Gardner et al.: "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 2005, 16, 343–372. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.003
[57] James M. Kouzes – Barry Z. Posner: *Credibility. How leaders gain and lose it. Why people demand it.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Values work and Christian values

As shown in Section 1, certain authors of classical sources and, recently, of new works on leadership, have placed great emphasis on the topics of representation of values and culture building in leadership. As also discussed, in the development of this process, leadership has increasingly been articulated as values work, in the broad sense of the term.

Section 2 proposed an interpretation of *leadership as values work* and presented certain generic values-work dimensions,[58] including *contents of values* represented, *elements of values-work*, and other characteristics.

Regarding the *contents* of values, New Leadership and related conceptual currents of thought suggest that non-traditional means of (leadership) influence are centered around positive ethical and functional values, e.g., morality, responsibility, stewardship, service, care, and community building. It may be noted that many – if not all – of the leadership values with ethical implications reflected on by New Leadership can be traced back to the Christian values system and may be consciously followed/used by Christian leaders.

Regarding values-work in secular organizations through different – *intra-personal, fundamental and applied*[59] – *values-work elements*, it can be assumed that the core Christian values of Christian confession may normally be of more intensive and direct use for *inner (intra-personal)* values work, while the Christian values derived from belief may be of direct use both for *intra-personal* and other (*fundamental* and *applied)* values work of Christian leaders.

Further, the aforementioned generic values-work dimensions include, among others, *authenticity* and *credibility*. Leaders may also turn to the Christian system of values for guidance on how to be authentic[60] in the representation of targeted positive values, and on how to obtain credibility[61] among their followers.

It can be concluded that executing spiritually well-based, ethical, and functional values work offers a solid foundation for leaders in becoming role models and may help preserve them from the dangers of idolization.

Values work can be helpful for leaders and followers, in a generic sense, through creating a less subjective, more de-personalized framework for (organizational) interactions and the leader–follower relationship. Concretely, values work can place values like honesty, authenticity, openness, recognizing the "vulnerability" of leaders (acknowledging that leaders are not infallible) center stage, making followers feel interdependence, ownership and responsibility and may help them avoid degenerative idolism.

[58] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 326–328.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Gardner et al.: "Can you see the real me?", 343–372.
[61] Kouzes–Posner: *Credibility*.

Results and summary

Based on a review of certain key sources in the evolution of leadership thought, and, especially, value-oriented leadership, this paper highlighted the importance of *values representation for interpreting and defining leadership* (for example, Selznick,[62] April et al.,[63] Humphrey,[64] Clifton and Harter,[65] Tye and Dent[66]), in contrast to the *power/influence* perspective.[67] It was stated that even until recently, the literature overemphasized the role of the power/influence perspective of leadership.

This paper suggested a broad interpretation of the notions *values representation* and *values work* for the identification of the primary role of leaders. For presenting leadership from a generic perspective of values work, an outline of certain generic values-work dimensions was proposed.[68,69,70,71]

It was concluded that under the *leadership as a values work* paradigm, the essence of leadership lies firstly in the quality of the values identified; followed/resisted; in case of acceptance/consent represented, or else infused authentically; guarded; and further developed for use in a dynamic process of interactions between leaders and followers.

It was stated that the Christian values system supports leaders' values work by offering guidance, especially, for voting for *spiritually right* values, deepening *intra-personal* work on values, representing values *consciously*, *explicitly* and *authentically*[72] and obtaining *credibility*[73] among followers.

It was suggested that executing a spiritually well-based, ethical and functional values work would offer a solid foundation for leaders to become role models and could help prevent them from succumbing to the dangers of idolization.

[62] Selznick: *Leadership in administration.*
[63] April–Kukard–Peters: *Steward Leadership.*
[64] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership*, 6–7.
[65] Clifton–Harter: *Culture Shock*, 86.
[66] Tye–Dent: *Building a Culture of Ownership in Healthcare*, 13.
[67] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership*, 6–7, as referred to by Fehér. *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332.
[68] Fehér: *An outline of certain generic values-work dimensions*, 322–332, with reference to Hollander: *Conformity, status, and idiosyncrasy credit*, 117–127.
[69] Gardner et al.: "Can you see the real me?", 343–372.
[70] Kouzes–Posner: *Credibility.*
[71] Humphrey: *Effective Leadership*, 6–7.
[72] Gardner et al.: "Can you see the real me?", 343–372.
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THE LIFELONG LEARNER: PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN LEADERSHIP[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines the relevance of Jesuit leadership principles in teaching and leadership, with a specific focus on their application within teacher education. The study introduces an integrated model that combines the professional identity frameworks of Manon Ruijters and Júlia Szarka with key Jesuit leadership pillars—self-awareness, love, ingenuity, and heroism. Emphasizing self-awareness and reflection, the paper argues these pillars provide a distinctive foundation for leadership development in educational settings. The integrated Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model enhances the understanding of teacher identity and professional commitment by incorporating spiritual dimensions. Additionally, the model integrates new elements such as positive psychological coaching tools and Kubanyiova's concept of possible selves to further enrich professional identity. The next phase of research will involve validating the model using

[1] For a related discussion, see: Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Spiritualitás, elkötelezettség és identitás Az önsegítő eszközök szerepe a vezetésben, in Tóth, E. – Csontos, T. (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024, 53–68.

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data from teachers involved in the Simonyi competition, as part of the "Language Competencies in Space and Time" project.

Keywords: *value-driven leadership, self-awareness, spirituality, positive psychological coaching tools, Simonyi Zsigmond Carpathian Basin spelling competition*

Introduction

Our humanity and identity are fundamentally shaped by the connection between our past and present. Since we live in a world of contradictions and constant change, we must find a balance between honoring the values of tradition and embracing the flexibility to learn and adapt. This requires living in the present and adapting to the challenges posed by our life circumstances and environment. To navigate these complexities successfully, one must take on the role of being the leader of their own life, which necessitates a strong (professional) identity. Leadership, in this sense, is not a static trait but an evolving process that demands continuous learning and self-development. The process of becoming a leader never truly ends; leading oneself requires ongoing learning and development. The formation of professional identity plays a crucial role in this process, supported by models and frameworks that draw on both religious traditions and modern pedagogical and psychological approaches.

In the postmodern era religious traditions that can provide guidance for spiritual and leadership development are experiencing a revival, as the field of psychology and mental health is rediscovering the benefits of these practices.[2] While mindfulness[3] and meditation originate from Eastern, Buddhist traditions and have become some of the most popular methods for mental well-being today, it is important to note that meditation and contemplation are also integral parts of Christian traditions,[4] dating back to the Desert Fathers.[5] Saint Ignatius's spiritual exercises, particularly the "examen" from Ignatian spiritual practice demonstrate how these traditions can be integrated into modern leadership and learning models.[6]

This paper focuses on the Jesuit leadership framework, due to its lasting relevance and alignment with the Christian leadership theme of this volume. By examining its capacity to provide spiritual, ethical, and pedagogical guidance, the Jesuit model bridges Christian traditions with the contemporary challenges

[2] Tornyai, Erika: *A lélek súlya*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2024, 12.

[3] Conscious presence with all of our being in the present moment or situation.

[4] Patsch, Ferenc: Működni hagyni Istent: A keresztény kontempláció fogalma, története és mai újjáéledése, *Embertárs*, 21 (4), 2023, 397–414.

[5] Brendan D. Kelly: Contemplative Traditions and Meditation, in Lisa J. Miller (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, online edition, 2012, 307–325.

[6] Kiss, Ulrich: *Szolgáló vezető a tanuló vállalkozásban*. Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2017, 125–135.

faced by today's leaders. While this integrated model incorporates elements from Simons and Ruijters' professional identity framework, as well as Szarka's perspectives, the Jesuit model remains the primary focus of this paper. The other two models are briefly outlined to provide context and support for the discussion.

The article also draws on findings from the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (KRE) research project, specifically the Simonyi Zsigmond Carpathian Basin Orthographic Competition Questionnaire Research,[7] which focuses on teacher motivation and the coaching approach. This research forms part of the broader project *Language Competences in Space and Time*,[8] supported by KRE. Insights from the research project highlight how motivation and professional identity are cultivated in educational contexts, offering practical applications for the integrated model explored in this article.

Previous publications in Hungarian within the project volume *Language Competences in Space and Time* and other writings in English[9] have provided in-depth analyses of the Simons–Ruijters model and Szarka's approach, exploring how professional learning influences identity, particularly in educational and professional context.[10] These works also explore methods and practical self-help tools for teachers and professionals to refine both their knowledge and character. Furthermore, an analysis of Kubanyiova's research[11] on teacher self-concepts—specifically the ideal, ought-to, and feared selves—has also been published in Hungarian in the above-mentioned project volume.[12] It provides an in-depth exploration of how these psychological constructs contribute to professional identity formation and complements the broader discussion on leadership development.

[7] Tóth, Etelka: Értékőrzés, hagyománytisztelet digitális keretekben. *Magyaróra*, 3(3), 2021, 365–372; Tóth, Etelka: Új utakon a Simonyi-verseny. *Anyanyelv-pedagógia*, 14(1), 2021, 122–125, https://www.anyanyelv-pedagogia.hu/pdf/Anyp_XIV_2021_1_12.pdf (accessed 20 April 2024)

[8] In Hungarian "*Nyelvi kompetenciák térben és időben*", the project topic number at KRE is 66010R800. See: Tóth, Etelka – Csontos, Tamás (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024. https://portal.kre.hu/images/kutatas/nyelv-es-digitalis-kompetenciak/simonyi_uj_dimenziokban.pdf

[9] Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Long-term teacher motivation, tools for creating a successful professional identity, in Puskás, A. – Nagy, M. (eds.): *Promoting Tolerance : Encounters of Education, Literature and Culture,* Komárno, Slovakia, János Selye University, 2024, 223–236; Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Crafting a Professional Teacher Learner through Models of Learning and Positive Psychological Coaching Tools, *Argumentum* 20 (2024), 420–437, https://doi.org/10.34103/ARGUMENTUM/2024/25

[10] See: Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Sikeres professzionális identitás a tanárképzésben, in Tóth, E. – Csontos, T. (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024, 43–52.

[11] Magdalena Kubanyiova: Possible Selves in Language Teacher Development, in Z. Dörnyei – E. Ushioda (eds.): *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit, Multilingual Matters, 2009, 314–332.

[12] Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Az énképek szerepe in Tóth, E. – Csontos, T. (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024, 33–42.

By emphasizing the Jesuit leadership approach, this article aims to expand the dialogue on professional identity and leadership development, connecting spiritual traditions with contemporary challenges. The interplay of these models underscores the importance of an integrated approach to fostering the growth and resilience of leaders and educators, building on previous works that provide a strong foundation for further exploration.

The Success of Ignatian Leadership

Chris Lowney, a former Jesuit who became an investment director and the author of *Heroic Leadership*, asserts that we are all leaders: as teachers, parents, friends, or colleagues, we are always leading—either well or poorly.[13] Lowney's experiences in corporate settings inspired him to revisit the "leadership secrets"[14] he learned with the Jesuits. He realized that the 470-year-old Jesuit order had successfully addressed very similar challenges to those faced by modern organizations and educational institutions today.[15]

In his work, Lowney examines the characteristics of the Jesuit "way of proceeding" that enabled the order to thrive, posing the essential question: why have the Jesuits been so successful, and what can they teach modern leaders? While most leadership literature focuses on external tasks—such as providing direction, making decisions, motivating teams, and fostering change—the Jesuits emphasize who leaders are as individuals and how they live.[16] Leadership, in their view, is not merely about actions but reflects one's entire life, rooted in self-awareness, integrity, and continuous self-development.[17] Values define both self-perception and identity; true leaders embody these principles authentically, shaping their leadership through lived conviction rather than strategy alone. Saint Ignatius believed that opportunities for leadership arise in everyday life, underscoring the importance of the whole person, particularly in teacher-leaders whose identity and relational presence are as crucial as their knowledge.[18]

This approach closely aligns with contemporary *ethical leadership* theory. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison define ethical leadership as demonstrating

[13] Chris Lowney: *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World*, Chicago, Loyola Press, 2003, 2.

[14] Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 3; St. Ignatius of Loyola: *A zarándok – Napló – Önéletrajzi visszaemlékezések– Lelki feljegyzések*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2015, 8, 142.

[15] After spending seven years as a Jesuit seminarian, practicing his vow of poverty, chastity and obedience, Chris Lowney became a corporate professional working as an investment banker at JP Morgan.

[16] Ibid., 15–20; Sylvie Robert: *Isten útjain Loyolai Szent Ignáccal*, Budapest, Vigilia Kiadó, 2010, 16–17.

[17] Chris Lowney: *Heroic Living: Discover Your Purpose and Change the World*, Chicago, Loyola Press, 2010, 70.

[18] Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 21.

normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and promoting it among others within a social learning framework.[19] Similarly, Ciulla emphasizes that leadership must be grounded in moral purpose and authenticity, beginning with the question: "What is the right thing to do?"[20] The Jesuit model, centered on self-awareness, a loving mindset, ingenuity, and heroic ambition, supports and extends these views by embedding ethical action within a lived vocation.[21] Through inner transformation and reflective practices like the *examen*, the Jesuit tradition offers a spiritually grounded foundation for leadership that is both inwardly reflective and outwardly responsible, enriching modern theories with its long-standing tradition of character formation.

The Significance of the Spiritual Exercises

Saint Ignatius of Loyola lived at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era.[22] His desire to help others inspired his book *Spiritual Exercises*, which became central to the Jesuit order and later practitioners.[23] Unlike his other writings, Ignatius initiated this work himself and considered its publication of utmost importance, as he believed its primary mission was "to help souls."[24] Teaching others to pray, a key element of the *Exercises,* was essential to the apostolic work of the first Jesuits and remains one of the main goals and characteristics of Ignatian spirituality today.[25] The Spiritual Exercises serve as a tool for all believers, promoting a deeper faith and self-awareness while fostering ingenuity, love, and heroism.[26] The practices developed by

[19] Michael E. Brown – Linda K. Treviño – David A. Harrison: *Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing,* Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 97(2), 2005, 117–134, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002

[20] Joanne B. Ciulla: *Ethics, the Heart of Leadership,* Santa Barbara, California, Praeger 2004, 2020, 3–30.

[21] Kiss: Szolgáló vezető, 145.

[22] John W. O'Malley: *Az első jezsuiták*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2006, 293.
The era, historical context and mentality of St. Ignatius of Loyola are excellently presented in several well-known works of cultural history, from various perspectives and approaches, for example: Marc Bloch: *Land and Work in Mediaeval Europe,* Fernand Braudel: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II,* Peter Burke: How to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint, Peter Burke: *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe,* John W. O'Malley: *A jezsuiták története*, Szabó, Ferenc – Bartók, Tibor: *Jezsuiták Szent Ignác nyomdokain*, in Thomas Worcester (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits.*

[23] Peter Burke: *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London, Temple Smith, 1978. (2nd edn.: Aldershot, 1994, 3rd edn.: Ashgate, 2009), 207.

[24] St. Ignatius of Loyola: *A zarándok – Napló*, 8, 142; José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras: *Egyedül, gyalog. Loyolai Szent Ignác élete*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2022, 169–172.

[25] André Ravier: *Loyolai Szent Ignác megalapítja Jézus Társaságát*, Budapest, Hungarian Province of the Society of Jesus (Jézus Társasága Magyarországi Rendtartománya), 1994.

[26] Szabó, Ferenc – Bartók, Tibor: *Jezsuiták Szent Ignác nyomdokain*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2005, 25–28.

Ignatius are meant to inspire concrete actions rather than being theoretical rules to study.[27]

The *examen* provides an opportunity to reflect on what we have done, what we are doing, and what we will do.[28] In practice, this involves consciously recalling personal goals every morning and pausing twice a day for a brief prayer or quiet reflection. The process begins with gratitude, where one gives thanks for the gifts and blessings received throughout the day, reflecting on specific moments of joy and appreciation. It continues with a review of the day's events, as though watching a film, paying attention to feelings, actions, and interactions, while reflecting on the choices made in response to opportunities and challenges.[29] Identifying emotions and exploring how different situations evoke particular feelings and reactions are central to this process. Following this, one acknowledges any mistakes or shortcomings, seeking forgiveness for moments when personal values may have been compromised or negative responses given. Finally, the exercise concludes with setting a resolution for the next day—intending to grow, respond differently, and be more mindful of God's presence. For non-believers, this would involve focusing on personal growth and aspirations with greater mindfulness.

This simple yet effective exercise helps break down goals into smaller steps. Regularly reviewing goals and spending five to ten minutes twice a day in reflection makes it easier to draw lessons, analyze setbacks, and strengthen commitment to self-reflection and personal growth. Ignatian spirituality integrates a continuous cycle of reflection and action.[30]

Recent studies underscore the importance of self-awareness and reflection,[31] asserting that advanced reflexivity is far more critical for leadership success than IQ or other competencies, such as technological or digital skills.[32] Daniel Goleman's research emphasizes the significance of emotional intelligence in both leadership and learning roles.[33] Ignatian spirituality has always recognized and highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in learning, spiritual growth, and the leadership of oneself and others.[34]

[27] Cándido de Dalmases: *Loyolai Szent Ignác*, Budapest, Hungarian Province of the Society of Jesus (Jézus Társasága Magyarországi Rendtartománya), 1995.

[28] St. Ignatius of Loyola: *Lelkigyakorlatok*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2019, 45.

[29] Patsch: Működni hagyni Istent, 397–414.

[30] James Martin: *Jezsuita spiritualitás – Gyakorlati útmutatás a hétköznapi élethez*, Budapest, Ursus Libris, 2013, 368.

[31] Nemes, Ödön – Perczel Forintos, Dóra: *A lelkivezetés művészete*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2013, 5–7.

[32] Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 109.

[33] Daniel Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, Random House, 1996; Daniel Goleman: *Primal Leadership*, Boston, Harvard Business Review Press, 2013, 24–29.

[34] Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 108–110.

The Four Pillars

The Jesuits' "leadership secrets" and successes are founded on four fundamental principles consistently evident in their historical narratives, activities, and writings.[35] Among these, two principles—self-awareness and love— particularly stand out as they are not always evident in other models, and play a crucial role in shaping teacher leadership, professional identity, and success.

The principles of *self-awareness and reflexivity* are fundamental to personal and professional growth, empowering leaders to understand themselves, recognize obstacles to their freedom, and respond to challenges in their environment effectively.[36] In contrast, the principle of *love* is essential in fostering positive and supportive relationships with others. These two principles stand out, "As leaders, we succeed when we become aware of who we are and what we hold dear, when we recognize the flaws and weaknesses that can lead us astray, and when we consistently reflect on ourselves and never stop learning."[37]

According to Saint Ignatius, leaders should lead "with greater love than fear."[38] At the heart of the Ignatian approach lies respect for the dignity of the individual, where love and trust define the quality of relationships. This sharply contrasts with Machiavelli's contemporary 16th-century view, which focused on fear and manipulation.[39] In Ignatian leadership, *love and a loving mindset* take center stage, reflected in leaders' positive and caring attitudes that encourage participation in learning and work processes. This approach respects the dignity and potential of every individual, promoting the full realization of human capabilities.[40] Loving leaders recognize and value the talents, gifts, and inherent dignity of their colleagues and students, supporting their growth with courage, passion, and commitment. For Saint Ignatius, Jesuit leadership meant passionately supporting others and providing opportunities for the continuous pursuit of excellence.[41]

The third pillar is *ingenuity and innovative adaptation*, which combines creativity, flexibility, boldness, and sound judgment. This principle highlights the importance of flexible and creative problem-solving, along with the ability to adapt and innovate. For the Jesuits, ingenuity means being able to respond quickly and effectively to changing circumstances, finding new solutions to challenges and using available resources efficiently while remaining free from fear and external constraints.[42] This principle involves recognizing opportunities and embracing different cultures, requiring a kind of indifference that

[35] Ibid., 25–28.
[36] Martin: *Jezsuita spiritualitás*, 368.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 31.
[39] Ibid., 27.
[40] Ibid., 122–124.
[41] Ibid., 33.
[42] Ibid., 119–120.

frees one from prejudices and fears. It is characterized by deep trust in the world, rooted in the belief that it offers many favorable opportunities.[43]

Ingenuity, therefore, has two vital components: indifference, which frees one from prejudices and narrow-mindedness, and deep trust and optimism, which assume the world offers favorable possibilities. Leaders who genuinely care about their team's well-being inspire respect and trust, unlocking both their own potential and that of others.[44] This principle is especially important for teachers, who must continually adapt to changes in the educational environment and develop new methods to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

The fourth fundamental trait is *heroism*. "Leaders have an exciting future vision before them and aim to actively shape the future rather than passively observe it take shape. Heroes excel by seizing available opportunities rather than waiting for perfect opportunities to present themselves."[45] The Latin root of 'excel' means rising above, and heroic leaders embody this by elevating themselves and others, bringing out the best in their talents and gifts.[46] They inspire with visionary ambition and inner motivation, leading by example and prioritizing the team's goals and colleagues' success over their own self-interest.[47] By combining self-awareness, a loving mindset, ingenuity, and heroic leadership,[48] we can cultivate a coherent, consistent identity and authentic leadership in guiding ourselves and others.[49]

This emphasis on continuous self-awareness and intentional growth in Ignatian leadership aligns with Simons' and Ruijters' perspective, which views professionalism as an ongoing learning process. Building on Gardner and Schulman's earlier work[50] and international literature, Simons and Ruijters emphasize that "the real professional is a learning professional".[51] The framework identifies eight key characteristics of professionals, including commitment to personal growth and societal contributions, integrity in handling uncertainty, and the ability to maintain a solid body of theoretical and practical knowledge while generating new insights. Autonomy, professional community engagement, and authority further strengthen their professional practice, while resilience, wisdom, excellence and self-management provide the capacity to adapt, discern, and continuously

[43] Ibid., 30.
[44] Ibid., 31.
[45] Martin: *Jezsuita spiritualitás*, 368.
[46] Lowney: *Heroic Living*, 78.
[47] Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 34.
[48] The equivalent of *heroism* appears here and in the combined model as *ambition*, which is a concept that can be better understood in a secularized environment.
[49] Kiss: *Szolgáló vezető*, 145.
[50] Howard Gardner – Lee S. Shulman: The professions in America today: Crucial but fragile, *Daedalus*, 134(3), 2005, 13–18. https://doi.org/10.1162/0011526054622132
[51] P. Robert-Jan Simons – Manon C. P. Ruijters: The real professional is a learning professional, in S. Billet – Harteis, C. – Gruber, H. (eds.): *International Handbook of research in professional and practice-based learning*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014, 955, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8902-8_35

grow.[52] This integration of the Ruijters model highlights its role in professional identity formation and its connection to lifelong learning and leadership.

Figure 1 illustrates the evolving integration of the personal and social self into the professional self over time.

Figure 1. Ruijters' model of professional identity[53]

Figure 2 highlights the key traits of a learning professional, emphasizing continuous growth, autonomy, authority, resilience, and ethical commitment.

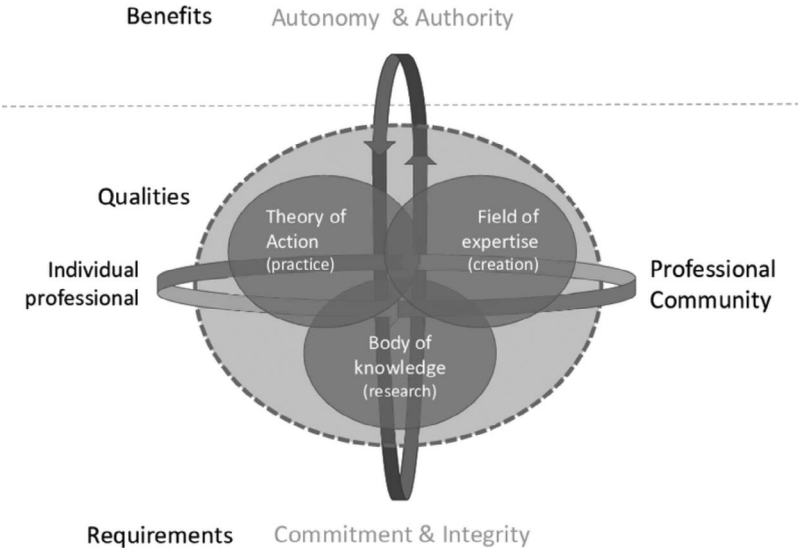

Figure 2. Traits of a professional learner[54]

[52] Manon C. P. Ruijters – P. Robert-Jan Simons: Connecting professionalism, learning and identity, *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri, Estonian Journal of Education*, 8 (2), 2020, 46–48.

[53] Ruijters – Simons: Connecting professionalism, 48 (Figure 3). https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-model-of-professional-identity_fig3_346382568

[54] Simons – Ruijters: The real professional, 969. (Fig. 35.1.)

The Concept of "Commitment" in the Context of a Hungarian Model

The Szarka model, developed in the context of Hungary's educational reforms, highlights the relational and personal aspects of commitment, providing a valuable framework for understanding how professionals navigate their roles. Júlia Szarka's research on preschool teachers highlights how dedication, responsibility, and attachment influence professional growth and resilience.

The model emerged in response to the introduction of new Bachelor's degree (BA) training requirements for preschool education in 2002.[55] These changes led to a significant influx of professionals into higher education programs. Their dedication and enthusiasm became central to studies on professional commitment, highlighting how professionals maintain their roles through effort, responsibility, and perseverance.[56]

Empirical research confirms that preschool teachers recognize the importance of their work, which requires a solid professional concept, a value system, and authority. They prioritize the emotional, moral, social, and physical development of children over academic preparation. The Szarka model identifies the key traits of committed professionals as: strong faith in the task's goals and values; efforts exceeding minimal expectations; psychological attachment to the profession, institutions, and entrusted children; responsibility as a moral obligation; alignment of professional duties with personal ideals; independence in decision-making, planning, and resourcefulness; perseverance characterized by ambition and emotional stability; acceptance reflected in empathy and differentiated problem-solving; and identification through strong interpersonal skills, reliability, and prioritization of humanity in professional relationships. Preschool teachers demonstrate commitment through ongoing knowledge acquisition, professional development, and effective communication, while consciously rejecting egoism, impatience, and aggression in favor of an accepting pedagogical approach.

The *SUN (Szarka) model* visually represents these findings, summarizing the interplay between the elements of professional commitment. The model's unnamed eighth ray symbolizes its flexibility and openness to further analysis and development.

[55] Baska, Gabriella – Hegedűs, Judit: *A magyarországi pedagógusképzés története recepciós hatások tükrében*, TÁMOP 4.1.2.B.2-13/1-2013-0007 „Országos koordinációval a pedagógusképzés megújításáért", Budapest, ELTE, 2013.

[56] Szarka, Júlia*: Az óvónők szakmai elkötelezettsége*, Doctoral (PhD) thesis, Budapest, 2004.

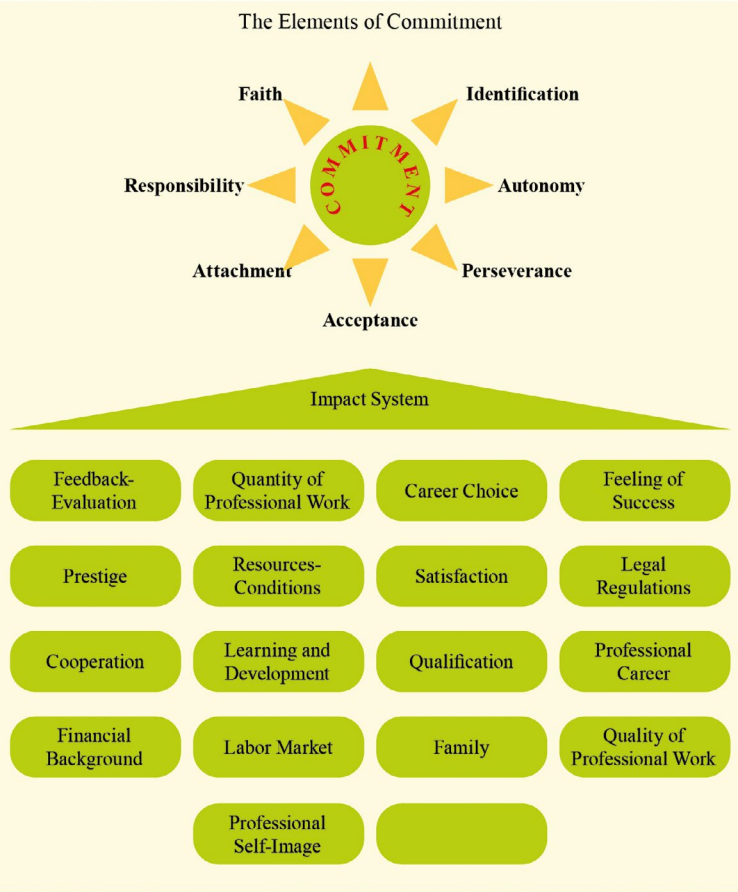

Figure 3. The Szarka model

Implications of the Szarka Model

The Szarka model, emphasizing attachment, responsibility, and perseverance, enriches discussions on professional identity and lifelong learning. Its relational and moral focus complements the Jesuit pillars and Ruijters' framework, offering practical insights for educators and leaders in complex environments.

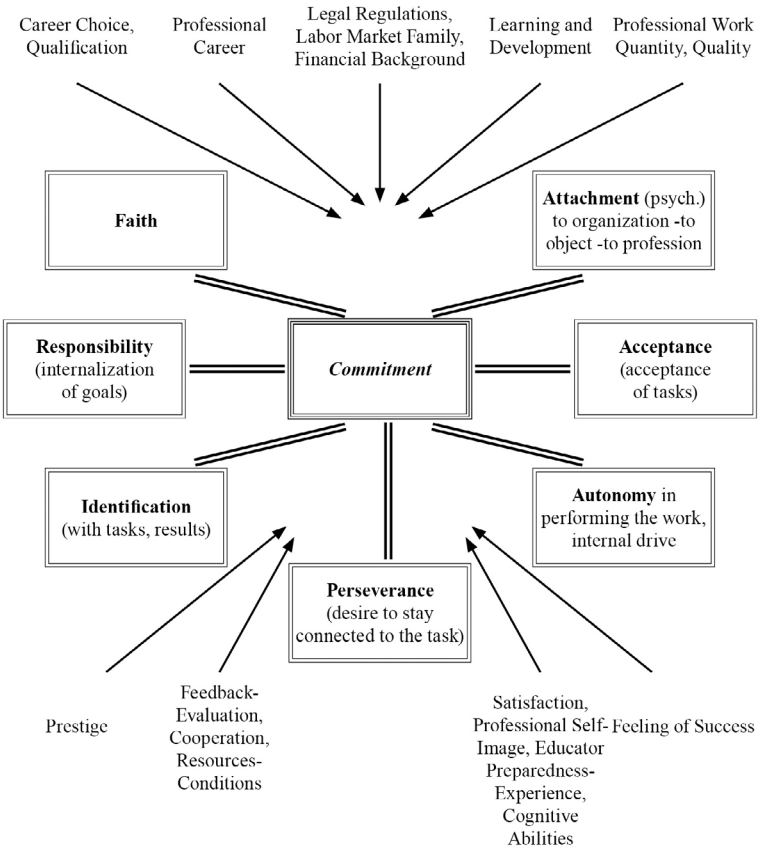

Figure 4. Impact system

The Unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model — Description and Analysis of the Model

The Unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model was developed based on existing literature and the previously mentioned models. We anticipate that its validity will be supported by data collected from questionnaires completed by teachers preparing students for the Simonyi competition, as part of the above-mentioned research project titled *Language Competencies in Space and Time.* Analyzing this data will be the next step for our research group.

The Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model is sun-shaped, with its red outer frame reflecting the Jesuit logo and lighter orange rays inspired by the Szarka model (see Figure 5). The darker orange arrows reference Ruijters' model of the learning professional, while the light-yellow rays represent new elements.

At the center of the model, four key concepts are highlighted: learning and development, leadership and change which are supported by a wide range of personal and professional qualities. *Self-awareness* forms the foundation, incorporating elements such as *self-help tools, (possible) selves, resilience, (self) reflection, identity, autonomy*, emphasizing the continuous cycle of introspection and growth. *Loving mindset* extends this foundation by including *responsibility, attachment, acceptance, wisdom, commitment, integrity,* highlighting the relational, ethical, and value-driven aspects of leadership.

Ingenuity supports adaptability and creativity *through creation, practice, and research expertise, flexibility* and *adaptability* enabling leaders to navigate change with courage and innovation. *Ambition*, as the final pillar, reinforces sustained excellence through *self-management* and *commitment to excellence, faith and spirituality, professional power, perseverance,* and *daring boldness* ensuring that leaders remain motivated, goal-oriented, and resilient over time. These concepts emphasize the importance of lifelong, self-regulated learning, particularly in teacher education, where 21st-century objectives focus on fostering change, developing teachers' professional identity, and cultivating leadership and self-directed attitudes.

The Jesuit Pillars, the Szarka and the Ruijters Model

The Jesuit pillars encompass four fundamental elements: ***self-awareness and reflexivity, a loving mindset, ingenuity, and heroic ambition***, emphasizing a reflective, value-driven approach to self-leadership. The Szarka model, originally focused on the professional commitment of preschool teachers, identifies seven core traits: ***faith, attachment, responsibility, acceptance, identification, autonomy, and perseverance***, highlighting the relational and personal dimensions of professional identity. Simons and Ruijters further enrich this discussion by characterizing the learning professional as an evolving integration of personal development, professional expertise and community responsibility.

At the Pedagogical Faculty of Károli University, spiritual dimension of the model—expressed through ***faith, love, self-awareness and reflexivity***—adds further depth, aligning personal growth with ethical leadership and creating a nurturing educational environment.

Integration and Overlaps Between Components

The combined framework expands and interrelates the core elements of the three models. ***Faith*** from the Szarka model evolves into a vocation-driven commitment through Jesuit spirituality; ***attachment***, understood in the Szarka

model as a strong emotional bond to one's profession, entrusted individuals, and institutions, is further strengthened by Ruijters' emphasis on belonging to professional communities; ***identification*** deepens through the development of a committed professional identity. ***Autonomy***, as emphasized by Szarka, aligns with ***self-directedness*** in Ruijters' model, fostering proactive agency, innovation, and adaptability.

Further, critical overlaps reinforce the integrated structure: ***reflexivity*** is central to both the Jesuit tradition and Ruijters' learning model; ***commitment*** sustains motivation in Szarka and Ruijters alike; ***flexibility*** is vital for adaptability across all three frameworks; and ***resilience*** and ***perseverance*** reflect the enduring inner strength required for long-term professional success. Together, these dimensions support a cohesive, future-oriented model of leadership and identity development.

Innovative Elements in the Model

The inclusion of innovative elements further enriches this integrated framework. *Self-help tools* derived from positive psychological coaching emphasize practical strategies for enhancing self-awareness, resilience, and emotional agility. These tools are especially effective in teacher education, helping individuals navigate complex professional demands

Kubanyiova's concept of English teachers' *possible selves*—ideal, ought-to, and feared selves—adds depth to the identity-building process by encouraging individuals to envision their future selves and set meaningful goals for personal and professional growth. These are complemented by Ruijters' focus on *personal, social, and professional selves*, emphasizing a holistic understanding of identity within various contexts. The Jesuit principles of *daring boldness* and *ingenuity* emerge as defining traits of 21st-century teachers and leaders. This boldness encourages a courageous, innovative approach to practice, enabling individuals to take risks, embrace challenges, and create impactful change in their fields.

While each of the individual models—Jesuit leadership, Ruijters' professionalism, and Szarka's commitment framework—provides unique insights into professional growth, they address different facets of leadership. To build a coherent and contextually responsive approach for educational professionals, we developed an ***integrated model*** that synthesizes these dimensions. The resulting framework, visualized in Figure 5, brings together ***spiritual depth, relational commitment, and professional agency*** in a single structure.

Figure 5. The Unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model

Conclusion

By synthesizing the Jesuit pillars, the Szarka model, and Ruijters' framework, we propose a cohesive model that captures the spiritual, relational, and professional dimensions of leadership. Reflexivity and self-awareness form the foundation for personal and professional growth, while commitment, flexibility, autonomy, and resilience create the dynamic structure needed to navigate the complexities of educational leadership. Integrating innovative elements such as self-help tools, the concept of possible selves, and daring boldness further strengthens the model's future-oriented nature.

Crucially, this integrated framework not only addresses individual development but also aligns closely with contemporary ethical leadership theories, which emphasize authenticity, moral purpose, and the modeling of values

through everyday actions.[57] By embedding ethical conduct into the very fabric of professional identity, the unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model offers a holistic, humanistic, and sustainable approach to leadership and lifelong learning. It aspires to form leaders who are not only skilled practitioners but also reflective, resilient, and ethically grounded individuals capable of inspiring change within their communities.

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Her research is on health and development, human security, research methodology, demography, and social entrepreneurship.

Among her publications is: Gretchen Erika du Plessis: Gendered human (in)security in South Africa: What can ubuntu feminism offer?. *Acta Academica*, *51*(2), 2019, 41–63.

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One of his major publications is: Pulay, G.: *The three legged system of organisational integrity.* Review of Economic Studies and Research Virgil Madgearu, 10(2), 2017, 159–175. DOI: https://doi.org/10.24193/rvm.2017.10.14

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One of her recent publications is: H. Khabbache, L. El Alami, K. Ouazizi, D. Ait Ali, H. El Ghouat, M. Makkaoui, M. Saidi, A. El Meniari, K. Khabbache, E. Shenouda, R. Mrabeti, A. Cherqui, M. Yildrim, E. Chirico, G. Nucera, K. Sazarpak, N.L. Bragazzi: The effect of COVID-19 home confinement on the psychological well-being of the Moroccan population: Regular versus irregular dynamics. *Journal of Health and Social Sciences*, 2023; 8(2):151–169. DOI: https://doi.org/10.19204/2023/THFF7

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One of her publications is: *Exploring Narratives of Coping and Resilience with Socio-Economic and Emotional Challenges in a Group of Zimbabwean Migrants: A Qualitative Study*, July 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.12860.00649

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One of his major publications is: Zsolt Szabó: *Constitution and Government at the Western Balkans* (Verlag, Berlin, Germany, 2023) ISBN: 9783830555483, https://www.steiner-verlag.de/Constitution-and-Government-at-the-Western-Balkans/9783830555483

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A significant stage in her studies was the doctoral school in Educational Sciences at ELTE, and the obtaining of her doctoral degree in 2004. Her topic was "The commitment of kindergarten teachers", explored in a broader pedagogical sense (her advisor was Iván Falus). She has been teaching at Károli Gáspár University since 2006. Her students gladly and often choose this topic, and the diagram of the "commitment model" she developed helps their own research.

Her own life and career path indicate the processes that determined her pedagogical commitment.

One of her most important publications is: Golyán, Szilvia; Szarka, Júlia: *Óvodai tevékenységi formák (foglalkozások) tervezete* [Planned Forms of Kindergarten Activities (Sessions)]. Budapest: ELTE Tanító- és Óvóképző Kar, 2016.

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Field of research: Corpus linguistics, lexicology, lexicography, orthography, ICT, the process of language learning and sociolinguistics.

Her most significant publication is: *Magyar helyesírási szótár. A magyar helyesírás szabályai 12. kiadása szerint* [Hungarian Orthography Dictionary. According to the 12th edition of The Rules of Hungarian Orthography]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2017.

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