

CHRISTIAN FAITH PERSPECTIVES IN LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS

Biblical Theology for Ethical Leadership

Leaders from Beginning to End



AARON PERRY



Christian Faith Perspectives in Leadership and Business

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Leaders from Beginning to End

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Getting Theologians and Leaders Around the Table

INTRODUCTION

I felt my pulse quicken and my temperature rise. On the one hand, the stakes were low because I was surrounded by friends. I knew they would let me off the hook. On the other hand, the stakes couldn't have been higher because I was among *friends*. I knew these men and I wanted to be in their company, to impress them, and to serve them. The five of us were huddled around a slick-topped, paper place-matted table in a Greek diner in Johnson City, New York, a manufacturing town keen on knowing what to do next.

Situated just outside Binghamton, New York, with its university of growing repute, Johnson City had an air of academic life, though none of us were specifically academics (although I hurry to add that one was Harvard educated and several had advanced degrees). There were four managers—variously from manufacturing, health care, aerospace engineering, and the energy sector—and me, assistant pastor at their church and the group's convener. I had learned from each of these friends—about leadership, faithfulness, parenting, encouragement, hard work—and respected their learning through MBAs, hard knocks, and diligent reflection. So, I couldn't think of a better group with whom to journey through a technical leadership textbook.

Which brings me to my rising temp and elevated heart rate. I was sitting there, expected to lead discussion, but grossly unprepared.

I knew the jig was up. These friends came prepared to be led deeper into reflection, discussion, and analysis only to have the leader falter.

Have you ever been in that setting? I'm sure your situation is different, but you might know what it's like to have eyes on you, expecting that you see something clearly that others only see dimly. To have ears tuned into what wisdom you have to share, the fruit of reflection, analysis, and synthesis of various viewpoints. To have feet ready to move if only you can make the destination clear and compelling.

I help to train pastors. I like training pastors because they are often some of the most courageous men and women I encounter. They often lead stubborn, struggling people with only a few resources. Inevitably somewhere along the line—whether in class or at lunch, over Facebook or on the phone—we reflect together whether this is what they *really* want to be doing because at some point they have sat at the table, among friends, wondering if they are letting down those gathered around them. One of the earliest Christian leaders, Gregory of Nazianzus, Archbishop of Constantinople in the fourth century, warned people not to take up leadership in the church if they hadn't applied or learned to speak the wisdom of God. If these would-be leaders didn't see themselves in the community of the church or submit to the demands of Jesus of his followers, then they would wisely avoid leading in the church. Why? Because leadership without godly wisdom, both learned and proclaimed, might lead to success and then utter failure. For Gregory, leadership without theology was an extreme danger (Nazianzen, n.d.).

I don't know if you are a pastor or not. I like being around leaders of all sorts, so if you've picked up this book, I expect I'd like to sit down at a slick-topped table with you and talk about what you're reading. I like leaders because, whether or not they are pastors, true leaders get the stakes of leadership. Leaders *get* Gregory's warning, have heard it in the words of their own mentors and have said it to others under their influence. Regardless of the field in which you're leading, I want to help introduce you to Gregory's warning from his own perspective. I want to talk to you about theology and leadership. Which might invite this question.

WHAT'S THEOLOGY HAVE TO DO WITH LEADERSHIP?

That's the question, isn't it? Theology is about God and the implications for thinking right, believing right, and aiming right, but less concerned with getting things done...*right*? Isn't leadership about getting

things done, getting people on board, getting systems designed, getting processes implemented, holding teams and individuals accountable? So, what does theology have to do with leadership? And what does leadership have to do with theology?

This kind of question—“What does theology have to do with _____?”—has been asked for a long time. Tertullian (c. 155–c. 240), an early Christian leader *and* theologian asked it like this: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” Tertullian was asking what philosophy (represented by Athens) has to do with theology (represented by Jerusalem). Don’t they seek to know different things?¹

I expect that drawing together theologians with leadership practitioners and thinkers might prove to be tough. But I like leading, and leaders work at getting the right people speaking with each other. I also like theology and I can’t have a conversation without it. So, let’s see if we can get theology and leadership into a mutually beneficial conversation.

Tertullian was asking what philosophy and theology have to do with one another, yet asking what leadership has to do with theology is even tougher because leadership is hard to define and narrow as a field (Yukl 2002, 2–7). *Leadership Quarterly*, one of the leading journals of leadership research, champions various disciplines in leadership studies including economics, organizational behavior, management, sociology, history, anthropology, and various psychologies. Leadership reaches into many fields, but does it stretch to include theology? If leadership researchers and practitioners, interested in all potential avenues of leadership research, are asking the question, maybe they should also ask:

- “What do Washington, Beijing, Ottawa, Brasilia, and Moscow—and other *political* centers of the world—have to do with Jerusalem?” In other words, what does theology have to do with politics?

¹The question was used a decade ago by Christian philosopher and theologian James K.A. Smith to introduce a new series, the *Church and Postmodern Culture Series*, which would introduce readers to postmodern philosophy, based mainly in Europe, in a nontechnical way and illustrate postmodern philosophy’s application for church communities. Fittingly, Smith shifted the question: “What has *Paris* to do with Jerusalem?” (Smith 2006, 10). This book tries to bring subjects together, as well. While at times it will utilize philosophy, it mainly is concerned with leadership and theology. And it aims to bring them together in a largely nontechnical way.

- “What do New York, London, Amsterdam, and Hong Kong—and other *financial* centers of the world—have to do with Jerusalem?” In other words, what does theology have to do with business?
- “What do Hollywood, Bollywood, Kallywood, and Nollywood—and other *cinema* centers of the world—have to do with Jerusalem?” In other words, what does theology have to do with entertainment?

Politics, business, and entertainment: three areas where leadership is alive and well, but what does theology have to do with them?

I can hear the theologians answering the question loud and clear, “Everything! Theology has *everything* to do with those cities and questions and issues! Theology is already at work in Washington, London, and Bollywood. It’s not *whether* there’s a theology at work in those places, but *what theology* and *how good a theology* is present. And we can help.”

So, why does theology matter? Because everyone has beliefs about God. *Everyone* is a theologian! Even if a person does not believe in God, they still have beliefs about what they are not believing in or what others believe when they use the word “God.” The sum total of one’s beliefs about God is the content of their theology. Theology can be simple (“God is love”) or complex (“Jesus Christ is one person with two natures—divine and human—indivisible and unmixed”); conscious (I hold the two examples above intentionally and consciously) or embedded—beliefs about God and God’s work that are held without one’s awareness, hidden and buried and assembled from prior teaching, experience, texts, and other inputs. The discipline of theology can help make a leader’s beliefs *precise* and uncover the presence of beliefs in a system so that embedded theological beliefs can be observed, strengthened, replaced, and corrected.

Emboldened with this clear answer, the leadership experts might have a similar answer to the question, “What does leadership have to theology?” “Everything!” they shout. “Leadership is *always* at work everywhere! Wherever you have relationships, you have forms and types of leadership. It’s not whether leadership is happening in relationships and organizations—even churches—but what *kind* of leadership and what *level* of leadership. And we can help!” So, leaders have to think about theology because theology is about everything *and* theologians must think about leadership because leadership is everywhere. So far, so good. Our conversation is off to a tentative start and both theologian

and leader are present at the table—maybe even starting to see a mutual resemblance. The theologian is seeing herself as a kind of leader and the leader is seeing himself as a kind of theologian.

Now before going further, I need to make my own theology explicit. I am a Christian theologian and I operate within that frame and story.² I invite people of other faiths and no faith to read this book and to see part of why and how Christians engage in leadership. I also invite Christian leaders to read this book because mission-focused Christian leaders have been talking and thinking about leadership for a long time—sometimes without the theologians. These are the folks who know that not only has the world come to *them* through TV/Internet, investment portfolios, and pop culture, but that *they* are charged to go to the world. And they are determined to do so! If you are this kind of leader—charging ahead with the mission and focused on results, then I hope this book deepens your faith and increases your effectiveness, because while God isn't a magic genie or the X-factor of effective leadership, good theology will make a difference in your leadership.³ And your effective leadership in service to God and people will help to validate theology and its importance (Migliore 2014, 7).

But those not so theologically invested might be wondering about something written above—a little idea subtly slid into the conversation but that can't go unchallenged. Theology is about *everything*? Really? Well, from my view, yes! Since there is a God who created, then reality simply *is* theological and leadership should be thought about theologically. Let me be quick to add: this does not deny that humans form and shape reality as well. Leaders know that human action shapes reality—what is *real* is brought about to a great extent by what human beings have done—intentionally and without intention. Leadership, of course, is about forming the intentionality and increasing the effectiveness of those who are intentional. Christian theology doesn't deny that human beings play a role in crafting what is real or forming reality. Both of these

²I can't spell out my entire theology here and certainly some Christians will disagree with it, but I want to be upfront so that my claims are understood not to be made blindly or assuming that everyone agrees, but that I am self-aware.

³Some missional theologians and scholars are even reclaiming space for the act of God in the study of history. (See Noll 2014, 99–108.) In a Christian worldview, at least some successful leadership not only *may*, but *must* be attributed to divine intervention and specific aid.

thoughts are put together in what Christians call the Incarnation, the teaching that the invisible God became visible in a specific man—Jesus of Nazareth, a first century Jew. The Incarnation means that God, who is spirit, became flesh without ceasing to be God. Notice how this theological teaching captures both ideas—that reality is theological and that human beings contribute to reality.⁴ One of the earliest Christian writers, theologians, and leaders, Paul of Tarsus, wrote that all things were created through Jesus and are in Jesus (Colossians 1:16–18). Yet Jesus, as a human being, impacts this reality—living, breathing, teaching, eating, and leading. The invisible God contains all of what is real and has taken on flesh to act, forming reality within God’s self and forming reality from within the creation. All this to say, Christian theology does not deny that human activity really matters; in fact, it invites human activity and validates human activity.

This talk about reality is not foreign to leadership and leaders. By now the leaders in this conversation are thinking about Max DePree and his famous description of the first responsibility of the leader: *to define reality* (1989, 11). But while defining reality might simply mean observing it and saying what it is, DePree may have had in mind that *defining* reality involves *constructing* reality.

Let’s dig a little deeper into this idea of defining and constructing reality. When we *define* a word, we don’t *give* meaning to it, but we *state* its meaning—how the word is being used and what it is being used to convey. When defining reality, leaders don’t simply *give* meaning to reality, but *see* what is truly there. However, words change meaning over time—not because somebody who said it meant something radically new with it, but simply because the word came to be used in a new way. And just like words change meaning, so does reality change. Just like defining words in current use and constructing new meaning of words over time are not unrelated acts, so defining reality and constructing reality are not completely separate acts, either. Leaders define and construct reality. When a leader looks at a state of affairs and defines it one way when someone else might define it another way, they are not just seeing reality, but constructing reality. Christian theology doesn’t deny this truth, but it does draw a helpful distinction: Some reality can only

⁴For a deeper theological investigation, see O’Donovan (1994).

be defined and cannot be changed (we might call this Reality—with a capital R) and some reality can—no *should* and *must*—be changed. The key is knowing which is which—and theologians and leaders can help one another *know Reality* and discover how to *change reality*. Essentially what I’m saying is that theology and leadership mix—they *must* mix from my point of view. I want Christian leaders to know it; I want theologians to know it; I want non-Christian leaders to be intrigued by the claim and to keep reading.

WHY SHOULD I KEEP READING?

Perhaps those last few paragraphs got a bit heady and some are still questioning whether or not they are theologians. So, let’s slow it down a little bit. Do an experiment with me. Consider yourself a theologian *and* a leader and see which of the following claims resonates with you about why leaders should care about theology and how theology can help leaders.

Theology Can Keep Leaders Going

More than hoping you read this book, I hope this book keeps you going. I hope it gives you something you need. I recently recovered some notes from my very first systematic theology course from about fifteen years ago. My professor, Dr. Ken Gavel, was previously a pastor, a leader of a local church. It showed in the way he taught theology. Scratched across the top of one of my many pages of handwritten notes, underlined, *and* boxed in for effect was this statement: “Theology helps to gird people up for death.”⁵

That’s some strong stuff. I hope this book’s theology gives you a reason (a God-logic or *theology!*) to get out of bed those mornings when the world seems too dark and too far-gone. When leaders meet dead ends, a strong theology will carry them forward. Is your theology strong enough? Does it penetrate with sufficient depth into why you do what you do so that when you’ve forgotten or grown apathetic you still find yourself with a logic—a theology—that overcomes breakdowns and breakups? You know the challenges leaders face: Projects die.

⁵Karl Barth speaks of this same idea in an address given at the meeting of the “Friends of the Christian World.” He states that the people of church “do not need us [ministers of the Word] to help them live, but seem rather to need us to help them die” (1957, 188).

People quit. Plans fade. Good theology will keep a leader going, will sustain a leader, will help them recover when their leadership efforts hit dead ends.

Theology Can Clarify a Leader's Vision

Vision is about the future—what the leader wants and believes should be achieved. Theology is always thinking about the future and has developed thoughts and logic about the future. Theologians call this “eschatology”—the study or logic of the end. Among other things, “end” can mean finale or boundary—as in, “The play came to its end” or “That is the end of the property.” But “end” can also mean purpose, as in, “You want to be rich? To what end?” Theology brings these two meanings together: Eschatology is about the end—the end of reality as we know it; and eschatology is also about purpose—God’s purposes for this world. Leadership is about both as well. Theology can help leaders realize what they do not want to see come to an end and so must work to sustain, prolong, and increase. Theology can also help leaders realize what they see as the purpose of what they are doing—what the late nights, large dollars, and long hours have been about. Purpose and finality. It is not whether or not there is an eschatology in your leadership, but what eschatology exists. Theology can help.

Theology Can Expand the Leader's Imagination

A logic that involves God is already a big topic. Because leadership is such hard work, it can become easy to get tunnel vision, focusing strictly on the problems directly in front of us or the people that shout loudest. The squeaky wheel gets the leadership grease. But leaders know that learning matters. Ongoing learning is a mark of being human and provides competitive advantage to organizations (Senge 2006; Lencioni 2012). So, leadership can be analyzed psychologically, sociologically, culturally, and from other angles.⁶ Each of these vantage points could provide a set of questions to study leadership. Theology is concerned

⁶These are a few of the different angles of study offered on the website for *Leadership Quarterly*. <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/the-leadership-quarterly/>. Accessed September 7, 2017.

with learning as well. Theology, as the word implies, is a kind of *logic*.⁷ Theology, no less than any other approach, is a potential route into the field of leadership. It provides a new posture, a new logic, for leaders to use. Theology can help expand the leader's vision to reevaluate priorities and directions, to expand the leader's imagination for solutions and also what she sees as problems and potentialities.

Andy Stanley (2015), communications expert, pastor, and leader says that leaders learn to ask "What would my replacement do?" This kind of question drives us to reexamine what we see is reality—just like Max DePree demanded. But it also causes a kind of imagination—a putting on not just our own thinking cap, but some else's. "What would my replacement do?" gets me out of my head and into another's. This kind of expanded imagination takes reaching up to scratch your head, but then moving your hand out to scratch six inches into the air, forcing your imagination to extend that far.⁸

But imagination isn't simply about thinking "out there." It's also about seeing "in here." Imagination is not simply about the big, but about the small. Here's what I mean. Human beings have found that reality extends out very far, so we have invented telescopes and rockets and satellites and rovers. We take pictures of far off places. But reality also extends in very deep, so we have microscopes and nanobots. We have functional magnetic resonance imaging to capture places previously hidden. Human beings have a drive to *know*. Leaders know that imagination doesn't just go *out*, but *in*. Leaders might call this a kind of second look or a *second loop in the learning cycle*. Leadership scholar Chris Argyris notes that double loop learning means correcting and changing underlying values revealed in actions and systems (1977). Theology can reveal (or create) underlying values in leadership. As a lens of value inspection, theo-logic reveals values that may otherwise have gone undetected. It helps give an imagination for a new world that lies beneath the

⁷There are various ways to "do theology," including systematic theology, which analyzes different teachings (doctrines) in light of other teachings, presenting conclusions in orderly, consistent manners. In this book, we will delve into a certain kind of theology, biblical theology, which involves the analysis of texts from the Bible for what they reveal about God and God's work.

⁸I was given the image by Professor Clinton Branscombe when talking about philosophy. "Sometimes when you're thinking about philosophy, you scratch your head *out here*," he said, scratching about 6 inches away from his head. Leadership is no different!

surface. As a method of value formation, theo-logic creates values that may otherwise go unformed.

Let's see how what goes unnoticed might be unearthed with theology. Peter Senge (2006) famously described three levels of observation: event, behavior, and structure. The hardest of these to observe is *structure* because observers inhabit the structures they are trying to observe. It is like looking at one's own face from within the mirror. You know the mirror is there, but you can't observe it or with it because your face is in it. However, with a little help and without haste, we can observe structures. For instance, in my pastoral counseling work, I would often find people wanting to get to the bottom of an event, even the most heartbreaking of events—perhaps infidelity in marriage, dishonesty in the home, the urge to quit yet another job, and so on. To help get a sense of understanding, I would try to help the person to stop thinking about the event (for example, “My daughter lied to me about her grades!”) and stop thinking about the behavior (“My daughter's been lying to me since she turned 13!”), and instead to think about the structure of their home. In this case, the structure of the home would involve its values and norms. I might ask questions like: “What's considered to be important in your home?” “What's expected about what's important?” In this example, if successful grades outweigh honesty in practical terms for this family, then the daughter's behavior is quite reasonable! Does honesty, even in reporting hard to hear truths, get rewarded or does what the honesty *revealed* get punished? Or, is there a complex relationship when both reward and discipline are affected? If honesty doesn't outweigh success in how it is valued in the home, then the daughter's behavior makes sense and will continue leading to more painful events. The *structure* contributed to the behavior and can only be changed by being observed. Theology gives people an opportunity to observe the leadership structure—not simply events, whether desired or not, or behaviors, whether good or bad, but the structure of thought and the co-inherence of values that led to behaviors and contributed to events—because *theology* expands the leader's imagination.

*Theology Can Contribute to a Leader's Accurate Self-Perception
and Perception of Others*

What does it mean to be you and how do you know you are being truly yourself? These are key questions because authenticity has become a key concept and word, especially in leadership circles (Gardner et al. 2011).

People don't like fake; they want *real, authentic*. Leaders should be people who are genuine.

But what is genuine? Christian theology has its own approach to the question. Valuing authenticity in the Christian community means valuing a place where you can be exactly who you are. But leaders know that authenticity does not mean license to be at your worst—worst attitude, worst language, and worst behavior. Christians, too, believe that authenticity matters because God is transforming people into their authentic selves and theology gives authenticity an aim: Jesus of Nazareth. For Christians, being an authentic person is being like Jesus, who is our model. But anyone who is aiming at becoming like Jesus knows there's a tension between who you are now and who you are becoming. So, we might say it like this: authenticity in Christian community is more *becoming* real than *being* real. Authenticity is more about *becoming* a certain kind of person than revealing the person I am today. Authenticity is not permission to be your worst self, but permission to aim at being your best self right where you are—without us condemning you as pretentious. Authenticity in Christian community is not simply accepting who a person is, but an unwavering commitment to seeing a person become their authentic self who is like Jesus. This takes effort. It may even feel like someone is acting like a new person as they practice being a new kind of person in Christ.

Leaders know this tension between *being* and *acting*. Self-leadership is about keeping oneself in a kind of tension between who the leader is and who the leader is becoming. If transformation is real and self-leadership is possible, then who you are is not as *authentic*, not as *real*, as who we are becoming. So, theology can give leaders their aim. Leaders know that sometimes they need to act into a person they are not yet—a person they have not yet become. If leaders haven't thought about their aim in authenticity, then theology can help clarify.

Theology can help with authenticity by giving others the picture we want to become and allowing them to hold us accountable to this aim. Here's what I mean. Not only did Tertullian proffer the famous quote we used near the start of this conversation, but he also noted the "rule of faith"—the affirmation that religious belief was the final authority for Christian life and devotion. When there is the "rule of law," it means that the law and not whoever is in charge has the final say. Likewise, the early church championed that the common faith has the final say. The rule of faith may take different forms, but for one whose faith is formed theologically, then theology will provide guidelines and values

when issues of effectiveness in leadership come into tension with issues of faithfulness to the faith. The faith rules, so pragmatism doesn't. The faith rules, so the whims of leaders don't. Leaders can look at themselves and ask, "Am I living up to the deepest part of who I am?" and can ask of others the same. "Does what you say you believe about God influence how you act in the world?"

But theology helps us not only perceive ourselves but also perceive others—and how they ought to be treated. Theology can help tease out the depth of leadership and hold leadership practices against what a leader claims to believe. Here's an example. Orthodox Christians affirm that God is three persons in one being in perfect relationship (Migliore 2014, 83). God does not have three parts; God is one who is three. This belief, once fleshed out and clarified, forms the doctrine of the Trinity. At the center of all reality then, God forms the basis of self-understanding, the importance of relationship, love, and communality. If God is three-in-one, then human beings are also relational beings; if God has not three parts, then perhaps integrity is vital to being human. Specifically, when applied to leadership, the doctrine of the Trinity might address forms of totalitarianism or the dark side of charisma in leadership. The dark side of charismatic leadership can include risky behavior leading to failure, lack of awareness of weaknesses, overly cautious followers, insecure followers, and lack of leadership succession (Yukl 2002, 251–252). By contrast, the relational nature of God can illuminate the destructive behaviors of dark charismatic leadership, such as a lack of submission, dearth of humility, shortage of freedom for followers, or the shortage of dignity afforded followers. This is individualism and idolatry (Migliore 2014, 83). Further, the doctrine of the Trinity reveals that violence is not the core of reality and that its use, whether rhetorical or physical, may reveal an attempt to set oneself in the place of God (Ramachandra 2008, 84). The Triune nature of God, of mutual giving, being given and other receiving, undermines any notion of the utilitarian nature of a human being. Human beings are not meant to be utilized! There are not multiple ways to put a human being to use. Leadership is not about utilizing people, but enabling, empowering, and inspiring right action! Thus, even if one does not claim the doctrine of the Trinity as part of their own confession, they may be given new lenses to see the misuse of influence and the malpractice of leadership among those who claim Christian faith.

Theology Takes Us Deep

It's easy to mistake *deep* for *complex*. But depth is not about complexity; it is about profundity. Depth is about greatness, intensity, and weight. Relationships are deep. (They are complex, too, of course, which is why we want to study relationships from a number of angles.) Leaders who treat relationships as light and shallow have missed a great deal about leadership. Theology helps us examine the profundity of everything. Nothing is light and shallow. Yet, we are presented with shallow at every turn. Spiritual theologian Richard Foster (2001) writes, "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people" (1).

Leaders must be deep people, people who recognize how profound it is to be a human being, made up of will, emotion, and intellect. But individuals are not simply profound; the *world* is profound. Further, the world is *religious* and the world is *interconnected* (Jenkins 2006, 2011; Senge 2006, 3). As a result, theology is part of the world's approach to leadership. If we do not use theology to go deep, we will ignore important differences between groups and cultures, masking differences and denigrating them with an unhelpful superficiality.

Even if not all readers will share the theology included in this book, God remains a subject of deeply held beliefs throughout parts of the world and in leadership systems. People must be known and understood deeply.⁹ Even though there are deep differences, the world is interconnected. Under stress, teams disintegrate (Senge 2006, 25). Stress creates environments where people do not know what to do and do not want to admit they do not know what to do. There is a (sometimes literally) deadly combination of ignorance and arrogance. Theology, on the other hand, because it helps us see people in deep ways, can help leaders know people and maintain a level of coherence and unity. A shared theology does not ignore differences, but can work to see similarities and provide common goals and language.

Here's an illustration that might help. Have you ever met Star Trek fans who called themselves "Trekkies," argued Kirk vs. Picard, wished that one another would "live long and prosper," asked an invisible

⁹See Gortner (2009), to see how human beings are made up of multiple realities and must learn to coexist alongside others of multiple realities.

“Scotty” to “beam them up,” and who wanted to “boldly go where no man has gone before” all the while saying that it was *your ideas* that were “highly illogical”? *That’s a TV show’s text creating community*. My family and I watch a lot of cooking shows—in part because they entertain, educate, and elicit conversation between adult and children alike. I recently noticed cooking phrases from the TV show *Chopped* being stirred into our dinnertime conversation: To the meal’s preparer: “What have you prepared for us today?” or “You have been chopped! Just kidding!” “The gravy has a smooth texture and the lime on the chicken adds a pop of flavor.” The texts created by the movies and TV shows form communities of the fans.¹⁰ Likewise, theology when it is used to know people deeply and provide language for people to share about the depth and profundity of their beliefs and thoughts can help teams share language and selves to keep them united in common purpose.¹¹

THEOLOGIAN AND LEADERS WORKING TOGETHER: A POST-CRITICAL CONVERSATION

Leadership is a complex phenomenon—it has multiple causes, effects, angles for examination, and lenses to focus observation. Theology, as seen in the list above, is a useful addition to this matrix. While some pragmatic approaches to leadership simply focus on increasing the effectiveness of the leader without considering the leader’s character or direction, theology reminds leadership that justice is always a consideration for good leadership. Theology serves to name and confront idols, including efficiency, effectiveness, and economic returns.¹²

But perhaps you simply couldn’t see yourself as a theologian and consider the reasons listed above for putting theology and leadership

¹⁰Philosopher-theologian Merold Westphal (2009, 115–118) follows the philosophy of a German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1900–2002) affirmation that texts create communities as people use them to model their conversation.

¹¹It could be said that theology contributes to groupthink, a phenomenon where people set aside outside perspectives, assume their own moral and intellectual superiority, hide information from leaders, and refuse to voice disagreement. Of course, it can! Yet, as I recently heard from my brother Tim, the solution to groupthink is not more “silo-ed” groupthink.

¹²Theology is that consistent reminder that secularist paradigms can encroach, even in contexts where they might not be expected (Ramachandra 2008, 9).