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Abstract

All texts contain ideological texture; even divinely inspired scripture contains ideological aspects. In addition to the ideology embedded in the text by the actual author, interpreters subsequently bring their own ideology with them to their interpretative work, and the reader approaches and understands the meaning of the text through his or her own ideological lens. A thorough examination and ideological textural analysis of Acts 8:26-40 reveals numerous examples of what, in New Testament times, was considered bold, radical, Christian ideology embedded throughout the text. This ideology is presented along the lines of four major themes: a) Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, b) Old Testament and New Testament promises were fulfilled through Christ, c) God’s endorsement of this ideology is claimed by invoking the name of the Holy Spirit throughout key moments in the narrative, and d) God created man to be free.

*Keywords*: Acts 8, Acts 8:26-40, Christian, ideology, ideological texture, socio-rhetorical, leader, Ethiopian, eunuch, Philip, Gaza, baptism, slavery, freedom, First Commandment
Acts 8:26-40 Out of the House of Bondage

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2-3, King James Version). In this first of Ten Commandments God codified His leadership relationship with His chosen people but first He reminded them of how He led them from slavery and, in so doing, taught them that freedom was their natural state in which He created them. Almost fifteen centuries later God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and His apostles after Him, once again freed God’s children; this time from slavery to sin and the law of sin and death. Likewise in so doing Jesus, the Last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), and His apostles reminded His people that freedom from sin was their natural state in which God had created them before the fall of the First Adam (Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7). This truth is pointed to in a quote attributed to Horace Greeley: “The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom”. This doctrine of freedom was one of several radical ideologies presented in the New Testament’s book of Acts chapter 8, verses 26 through 40. The ideological messages contained within this text warrant closer analysis.

Ideological textural analysis is the final frontier of Robbins (1996) system of socio-rhetorical criticism. Ideology surrounds and envelops the other three arenas of Robbins’ approach to socio-rhetorical analysis. All texts contain ideological texture; even divinely inspired scripture, as counterintuitive as that might seem, contains ideological aspects. Beyond the ideological threads woven into the text by the actual author, interpreters subsequently lend their own ideological views to their interpretative work, and ultimately the reader analyzes and assigns meaning to the text from a personal ideological perspective.
A complete examination and ideological textural analysis of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8, verses 26 through 40 uncovers many examples of what, in New Testament, Mediterranean culture, would have been considered a bold, new, and radical ideology interspersed throughout the text. This uniquely Christian ideology follows four major themes: a) Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and as such fulfilled Old Testament messianic prophecies. b) Old Testament and New Testament promises to include previously excluded individuals and groups in fellowship with God, even to the most remote parts of the Earth, were fulfilled through the coming of the Christ and His subsequent rejection by Israel. c) God’s authority over and endorsement of this overtly Christian ideology is claimed vis-à-vis the operation of His Holy Spirit to include the performance of miracles. d) God originally created man a free being, both socially and spiritually; His Word serves as a record of His efforts to reconcile man to that original state.

The author, an American, middle-aged, white, male who is also a committed, conservative, evangelical Christian admits subscribing to an ideology that believes in the literal, unerring truth of God’s Word as inspired by the Holy Spirit and embodied in Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior. He invites others to bring their own ideological perspective to the discourse on this text for the purpose of revealing and confronting their own ideological biases. It is only after an honest assessment of the text’s ideological aspects that one can then objectively assess its implications for contemporary leadership studies.

Background Overview

The Book of Acts

The book of The Acts of the Apostles is the fifth book in the New Testament Christian canon. It is most widely believed to have been written by Luke the Evangelist, a gentile
physician (Colossians 4:14), approximately 60-64 A.D. (Boa, 1985). Acts records the age of the apostles including some of the earliest history of the early Christian church from the time of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances to his disciples (Acts 1:3) through to the time of Paul’s journey to and imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30). The first half of the book covers the formation, establishment, organization, and governance of the early church and the deeds of Christ’s disciples during this period (Boa, 1985). The second half of Acts is dominated by the conversion, development, and evangelical ministry of the apostle Paul (Boa, 1985).

**Acts 8:26-40: The Gaza Road**

Acts 8:26 opens with an angel, analogous to the Holy Spirit, (Acts 8:29; 8:39) speaking to the apostle Philip and instructing him to descend from Jerusalem toward the coastal desert area of Gaza (Acts 8:26), almost 70 miles walking distance, south by southwest of Jerusalem (Holman, 2005) and Philip obeys (Acts 8:27). This opening verse is a remarkable demonstration of the influence of the Holy Spirit in the early church. Note that the Spirit did not reveal the reason Philip had been dispatched to this remote desert town until the 29th verse. He is simply stepping out on faith in obedience to the prompting of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 8:26-27). On his mission Philip encountered an Ethiopian man sitting in a chariot, reading from the book of Isaiah. This man, a eunuch, who is identified as treasurer to the queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27-28) was on his way home after having worshipped in Jerusalem (Acts 8:27). At this point the Spirit reveals the purpose behind Philip’s journey when it instructs him to join the Ethiopian in his chariot. It is interesting to consider that, if one assumes Philip was traveling on foot, and given the treasurer was traveling by chariot, the Spirit may have set Philip on this journey from Jerusalem to Gaza while the eunuch was still in Jerusalem. Upon hearing what the Ethiopian man was reading from the book of Isaiah, Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading
(Acts 8:30). The man confessed his ignorance and asked Philip to sit with him and interpret the scripture for him (Acts 8:31). The scripture the eunuch read was Isaiah 53:7-8. The treasurer enquired as to whom the scripture referred (Acts 8:34). Philip proceeded to explain how the prophecy had been fulfilled through Jesus Christ (Acts 8:35). After some distance Philip and the eunuch came upon a body of water and the Ethiopian man asked Phillip if there was anything preventing him from being baptized (Acts 8:36). Philip confirmed his conviction and the man declared, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God” (Acts 8:37). At the Ethiopian man’s command the chariot halted and he and Philip entered the water where Philip baptized him (Acts 8:38). As they emerged from the water the Spirit snatched Philip away, supernaturally transporting him, as the eunuch joyfully continued on his journey home (Acts 8:39). Phillip reappeared in the nearby city of Azotus, modern Ashdod almost 30 miles to the north (Holman, 2005), where he continued to preach in all the cities he passed from there to Caesarea, more than 60 miles further to the north (Acts 8:40; Holman, 2005).

The Mysterious Ethiopian Nobleman

Much has been written about this biblical account over the centuries (Martin, 1989; Shauf, 2009). Speculation abounds regarding who was this Ethiopian pilgrim (Martin, 1989; Shauf, 2009). Was he a god-fearing pagan? Was he a believing stranger that sojourned among the Jews? Was he proselyte? Was he an Ethiopian Jew? Was he in fact even from Ethiopia? What did he look like? Was he really a eunuch in the physical sense? These questions and their answers have ideological implications making an ideological textural analysis most instructive for fully understanding their meaning (Martin, 1989; Shauf, 2009).
Ideological Texture Analysis

Ideological texture is the fourth and final arena Robbins (1996) describes in his system of socio-rhetorical criticism:

The ideological texture of texts features the arena between the implied reader and the narrator and characters. The particular way in which the narrator and characters evoke the message and the particular way in which the implied reader and real reader/audience receive it concerns ideology (Robbins, 1996, pp. 36-37).

Robbins’ description of the arenas comprising his system of analysis starts from the inside and moves outward (Robbins, 1996). He begins at the center with inner texture, moves outward to intertexture, and proceeds further outward to social and cultural texture (Robbins, 1996). “Investigation of social and cultural texture takes the analyst to the doorstep of ideological texture” (Robbins, 1996, p. 36). Ideological texture surrounds and envelopes all of the system’s inward textures. It is important to note that the word “ideology” in this context does not carry with it the negative connotation its current popular use bears. In its most basic form the word ideology, in the context of socio-rhetorical criticism, simply refers to the meaning authors, interpreters, and readers attach to a text based on the sum of their experiences (Robbins, 1996). Specifically, according to Robbins, “Ideology concerns the particular ways in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power” (p. 36) and ideological texture deals with “the particular alliances and conflicts nurtured and evoked by the language of the text and the language of the interpretation as well as the way the text itself and interpreters of the text position themselves in relation to other individuals and groups” (Robbins, No date).
Ideology Located in Texts

Robbins (1996) states, “the spectrum of ideology for socio-rhetorical criticism occurs in four special locations: (a) in texts; (b) in authoritative traditions of interpretation; (c) in intellectual discourse; and (d) in individuals and groups” (p. 192). For the purpose of this analysis the present piece will focus on early Christian ideology located in texts; namely Acts 8:26-40. In a simplified approach to the analysis of ideological texture in texts one must ask three questions: a) what was the author’s intent or agenda b) what was the interpreter’s agenda? c) what is the reader’s agenda? This approach, albeit simplified, is consistent with Robbins’ citation of Fiorenza (1988; 1989) who “has emphasized for some years that interpreters should investigate the ‘ideological script’ of a text” (p. 194). The author of the current piece argues asking and answering these three questions is the basic form of investigation into the “ideological script”. Note here the questions are one of “what”, not “if”. The analyst is not searching to determine if there is an agenda driven by ideology embedded in the text; the assumption is that ideology is always present and that part of the investigator’s job is to understand the what, the nature of this ideological texture, including that brought to the work by the reader/analyst (Robbins, 1996). Robbins notes “the word is out that all interpretations of text are ideologically located” (p. 236). The notion of ideology being present in every text, especially those inspired by the Holy Ghost, may seem repugnant to the believing reader but it need not be so. Such reaction, if present, is the result of one’s ideology of ideology. That is to say, the meaning, in this case negative, that one attaches to the word “ideology” and brings to the discourse, influences one’s own reaction. Much of God’s unerring Word, embodied in Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and recorded by faithful believers is rich in ideological texture that reveals an agenda of love, grace, and reconciliation for the salvation of all mankind and the
everlasting glory of the one, true God; the plan of salvation is God’s agenda that underpins the ideology expressed in much of Holy Scripture. Even so, for those not convinced or comforted by this provocative reality, Robbins goes on to state, “This need not mean, however, that interpretations are ‘just’ ideological” (p. 236). That is, even if every text inherently contains some ideological aspects, there is more to every text than ideology alone (Robbins, 1996).

**Early Christian Ideology**

In the earliest days of the Christian church Christianity was not viewed as a new, separate religion but rather a sect of Judaism (Krauss, 1892, pp. 133-134). In fact, initially, salvation through Jesus Christ was held by the early Christians to be available only to Jews (Acts 11:19; Schott, 1996). In that early day, nascent Christian ideology was driven primarily by an agenda to convince faithful Jews that the rejected, crucified, and risen Christ was in fact the awaited Messiah to the end that they might repent and enjoy the promise of everlasting life through Him (Hultgren, 1976). This early perception influenced Christian reaction to other Jews and Gentiles; Roman reaction to Christians and other Jews; and Jews’, often violent, reaction to Christians (Keller, 1980). As Christianity rapidly evolved into a system of faith, separate and distinct from Judaism, its ideology changed as well (Taylor, 1990). No longer confined by manifold Jewish restrictions on who could worship, where, and when, Christians began to view Christianity as the vehicle for fulfilling many Old and New Testament promises of an expansive and more inclusive community of God’s children (Gilbert, 2002; Smith, 1994). This change in perspective was key to Christianity’s growth in size and influence (Smith, 1994). In support of this ideology early Christians interpreted certain Old Testament texts as Messianic prophecies fulfilled in the person, ministry, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth (Bruce, 1974). Likewise, they interpreted Old and New Testament references to a promised sea change in God’s
relationship with non-Jews, and ineligible members of Jewish descent, to be fulfilled in reaction to Jewish rejection of the Christ (Ellis, 1991). In substantiation of these claims, and to further legitimize their standing as a separate and distinct religion, Christians invoked the authority, not of Jesus alone, but also of God through His Holy Spirit; co-opting the same agents of the Godhead familiar to and accepted by the Jewish faith (Ellis, 1991). These four agendas are revealed in the following analysis of the Christian ideological texture present in Acts 8:26-40.

**Ideological Texture Analysis of Acts Chapter 8**

The presence of this ideology is made immediately apparent and runs throughout Acts 8:26:40 (deSilva, 2004). In the opening verse of the text the narrator, Luke, invokes God’s authority for what proceeds with the words, “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip….” (Acts 8:26). This is intended to establish at the outset credibility for both the account itself and the ideology it represents based on God’s authority (O’Toole, 1983). The angel instructs Philip to “go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert” (Acts 8:26). This detail adds factual credibility to the coming story because it describes the path familiar to those transiting between Jerusalem and the African continent (Grant, 1986). In recognition of God’s authority Philip submits to the Spirit’s command without question, “And he arose and went” (Acts 8:27). Philip encounters a figure that could not have been more foreign to Jewish and early Christian sensibilities (Shauf, 2009). This figure, an Ethiopian man, as rare as he was in Judea, was not just any Ethiopian. Unlike the Nubian slaves with whom Jews may have had some contact during their Egyptian captivity (Grant, 1986; Keller, 1980), this man was “an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship” (Acts 8:27). He “was returning, and sitting in his chariot read[ing] Esaias the prophet” (Acts 8:28). This paradoxical character
presents a strong challenge to those of traditional Judean Jewish heritage: An important, albeit mutilated, male with Negroid features, possibly an Ethiopian Jew (Brueggemann, 2001), traveling to what was then believed to be the southern end of the earth (Gilbert, 2002), reading the book of Isaiah, from his own scroll, as he returned in his chariot from having worshipped the God of Abraham in Jerusalem. A Jew of that day likely would not have known where to even begin to try to understand and assimilate the scene Philip saw (Shauf, 2009). In stark contrast Philip, a newly converted Christian Gentile and freshly ordained deacon (Spranger, 2010), ran to join himself with this foreigner, again in obedience to God’s authority through the Spirit. Wisely, Philip opened the conversation with this man of means, authority, and power not with a bold statement, which may have been received as a challenge, but a simple question: “Understandest thou what thou readest” (Acts 8:30)? The man, possibly a Jew (Brueggemann, 2001), quickly responded in welcome of Philip’s guidance and instruction by inviting him to join him in his chariot, indicating his acceptance of Philip as his social equal and his superior in scriptural understanding (Mitchell, 1983): “And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:31). The part of Isaiah the treasurer had been reading at the time of Philip’s approach was, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation” (Isaiah 53:7-8; Acts 8:32-33)? The Ethiopian man asked Philip of whom the scripture referred. Consistent with then relatively new Christian ideology, Philip interpreted the scripture as a Messianic prophecy fulfilled in the person of Jesus and used that as an opportunity to preach the good news of Christ to the man, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Approaching a source of water, “the eunuch said, See, here is water;
what doth hinder me to be baptized” (Acts 8:36)? Almost unthinkable from a Jewish perspective, given the man’s condition (Deuteronomy 23:1; Shauf, 2009), Philip responded in the affirmative, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:37). In accordance with Christian ideology the man openly and verbally professed his faith in the Lord’s relationship with God by declaring “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). In obedience to Jesus’ example and instruction this black eunuch, perhaps an Ethiopian Jew (Brueggemann, 2001), exercising faith in the operation, received baptism, “and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38). In so doing, from a Christian ideological perspective, at least five Old and New Testament promises were fulfilled, further legitimizing Christianity as the successor to Judaism and path for fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. These promises include a) Ultimate inclusion of previously excluded eunuchs,

Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off (Isaiah 56:3-5),

and,

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Matthew 19:12),
b) Ethiopia embracing God, “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” (Psalms 68:31), and c) carrying the good news of salvation through Christ, “his holy arm”, to the ends of the Earth “The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10), and “For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth” Acts 13:47. As further evidence of God’s authority over and endorsement of the proceedings, Luke then reported Philip’s sudden and mysterious disappearance from the scene and reappearance in a city 30 miles distant, “And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus:” (Acts 8:39-40). The report of this supernatural event likely added further credence to the validity of the Christian ideology presented in this pericope (O’Toole, 983). Finally, apparently as if to, at least symbolically, underscore the point of fulfilling the prophecy of preaching to the ends of the Earth, Philip struck off in the opposite direction from the Ethiopian and continued to preach in all the cities he passed for almost 100 miles to the north (Holman, 2005), “and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea” (Acts 8:40).

**Acts Chapter 8: Implications for Contemporary Leadership Studies**

From a leadership perspective this story from the Gaza road is, in many ways, emblematic of the story of Exodus; a micro exodus in reverse. Philip, as the Moses figure, led to perform God’s will by the Holy Spirit, convinced one of God’s children, possibly a Jew (Brueggemann, 2001), through his faith, words, deeds, and understanding of scripture to follow him. Like Moses, leading the children of Israel through the Red Sea, Philip led the Ethiopian into and out of the water. He abode with him for part of the journey in the desert out of Judea (the
Promised Land) into Africa (Ethiopia) whereas Moses traveled with the children of Israel for part of the journey in the desert out of Africa (Egypt) into the Promised Land that would later become Judea. Moses led Israel out of slavery into freedom and Philip led the eunuch out of slavery to the law of sin and death into the law of liberty through Christ. Israel rejoiced as they walked out of slavery and the Ethiopian “went on his way rejoicing” into liberty (Acts 8:37).

Given this metaphor of Moses, a number of contemporary leadership theories are illustrated through Philip in Acts 8:26-40. These include charismatic, transformational, and ethical leadership theories. The following is a brief summary of each and description of how they relate to Acts 8.

**Charismatic Leadership**

Yukl (2010) cites Weber (1947) who states,

Charisma occurs during a social crisis, when a leader emerges with a radical vision that offers a solution to the crisis and attracts followers who believe in the vision. The followers experience some successes that make the vision attainable, and they come to perceive the leader as extraordinary (p. 261).

Few contemporary leadership theories are more descriptive of Christ’s ministry than Weber’s description of charisma. What could be more extraordinary than, not just the perception, but the reality of success over death? In Acts 8:26-40, speaking within the context of Isaiah 53:7-8, Philip explained how Christ conquered death and fulfilled the prophecy the eunuch was reading. By then transitioning from a focus on the leader, Jesus, to one on the followers, the Ethiopian eunuch, one may identify the charismatic influences on follower behavior. They are,

(1) articulating an appealing vision, (2) using strong, expressive forms of communication…., (3) taking personal risks and making self-sacrifices…, (4)
communicating high expectations, (5) expressing optimism and confidence in followers, (6) modeling behaviors consistent with the vision, (7) managing follower impressions of the leader, (8) building identification with the group…, and (9) empowering followers (Yukl, 2010, p. 265).

Many of these influences may be observed in Acts 8:26. Philip not only answers the Ethiopian’s question, he strongly communicates an appealing vision, high expectations, and confidence in the man’s sincerity by baptizing him, likely with the expectation that he would carry forth the good news beyond Jerusalem to what was then believed the southern edge of the Earth (Support). This transformative message is punctuated by Philip’s dramatic departure. Philip faced some personal risk by immediately striking out alone in the desert with no knowledge of his destination or purpose. The behaviors Philip modeled were consistent with both Jesus’ shared vision and Christian ideology. Whatever group the Ethiopian treasurer may have identified with before, Acts 8:26-40 leaves no doubt that he returned home identifying with the community of Christian believers. He began that journey by following Christ’s example of baptism with the help of Philip’s leadership. Lastly, the eunuch departed the scene empowered; no longer a slave to sin and death but a free and whole man.

**Transformational Leadership**

Similar to charismatic leadership, the guidelines for transformational leaders feature a number of the same or similar behaviors described above as charismatic influences on follower behavior. According to Yukl (2010) these transformational leadership guidelines are, “articulate a clear and appealing vision, explain how the vision can be attained, act confident and optimistic, express confidence in followers, use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values, lead by
example” (p. 289). The significant overlap between these two sets of behaviors becomes obvious when presented in a tabular format as presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5

Comparison of Behaviors of Charismatic versus Transformational Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charismatic</th>
<th>Transformational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulate an appealing vision</td>
<td>Articulate a clear and appealing vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using strong, expressive forms of communication</td>
<td>Use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking personal risks, and making self-sacrifices</td>
<td>Lead by example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating high expectations</td>
<td>Explain how the vision can be attained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing optimism and confidence in followers</td>
<td>Express confidence in followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling behaviors consistent with the vision</td>
<td>Lead by example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing follower impressions of the leader</td>
<td>Act confident and optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building identification with the group</td>
<td>Use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering followers</td>
<td>Express confidence in followers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Bass and Riggio (2006) describe transformational leaders as those who, “empower followers and pay attention to their individual needs and personal development, helping followers to develop their own leadership potential” (as cited in Hickman, 2010, p. 77). This description appears to correlate strongly to Philip’s reaction to the Ethiopian eunuch. It is the last part of Bass and Riggo’s description that appears to distinguish transformational leadership from other leadership theories. Focusing on “followers… personal development [and] helping followers to develop their own leadership potential” (Bass & Riggio, 2006 as cited in Hickman, 2010, p. 77). As with charismatic leadership, we again find evidence of these behaviors documented in Acts 8:26-40 with Philip identification of the eunuch’s need for personal
development and putting him on the path to develop his own potential as both a follower of Christ and possibly a Christian leader in his own land.

**Ethical Leadership**

Yukl (2010), citing Trevino, Brown, and Hartman, (2003), notes that “When asked to describe ethical leaders, executives identified several aspects of behavior and motives (e.g., honest, trustworthy, altruistic, fair), but they also identified aspects of behavior involving attempts to influence the ethical behavior of others” (p. 409). Yukl goes on to describe several similar leadership theories as different conceptions of ethical leadership (Yukl, 2010). These theories are authentic, servant, and spiritual leadership. Behaviours associated with each of these ethical behavior conceptions are illustrated in Acts 8:26-40.

**Authentic leadership.**

Yukl (2010) identifies the distinguishing characteristic of authentic leadership in this way, “The behavior of authentic leaders, including their espoused values, is consistent with their actual values” (p. 424). Philip models this behavior by putting himself at personal risk, in obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He demonstrates this commitment to the Ethiopian man by his very appearance before he espoused any values.

Yukl states that,

The core values for authentic leaders motivate them to do what is right and fair for followers, and to create a special kind of relationship with them that includes high mutual trust, transparency…, guidance toward worthy shared objectives, and emphasis on follower welfare and development…. An authentic relationship also means that followers share the leader’s values and beliefs, and followers recognize that the leader’s behavior is consistent with their shared values (p. 424).
Servant leadership.

Yukl (2010) states that, “Servant leadership in the workplace is about helping others to accomplish shared objectives by facilitating individual development, empowerment, and collective work that is consistent with the health and long-term welfare of followers” (p. 419). According to Greenleaf (1977), “The servant-leader is servant first…. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first….” (as cited in Hickman, 2010, p. 90). Key leader values associated with servant leadership share similarities with those documented for charismatic and transformational leadership. They include: “1. Integrity… 2. Altruism… 3. Humility… 4. Empathy and healing… 5. Personal growth… 6. Fairness and justice… 7. Empowerment…” (Yukl, 2010, p. 420).

While Jesus may have been the original servant leader, Philip certainly appears to follow closely after his example. Philip, already an ordained servant, deacon, continues to personify the selfless shepherd who steps out on faith, at risk to himself, to rescue a single lamb for Christ. Rather than immediately returning home after completing this mission, he continues serving Jesus and his fellow man by preaching the Word throughout the coasts of Judea. Philip demonstrated integrity by obeying the calling of the Spirit. He modeled the values of empathy and healing by welcoming a man who Judaism would likely have rejected and showing him how to heal his sinful nature through faith in Christ. Lastly, He displayed the behavior of empowerment by assenting to the man’s baptism after such a brief encounter and sending him on his way alone.
Spiritual leadership.

“Spiritual leadership describes how leaders can enhance the intrinsic motivation of followers by creating conditions that increase their sense of spiritual meaning….” (Yukl, 2010, p. 421). Dent, Higgins, & Wharff (2005) observe, “Many authors and scholars link spirituality to… leadership (Fairholm, 1998; Fry, 2003; Strack, Fottler, Wheatley, & Sodomka, 2002)” (p. 627). Yukl (2010) cites Fry (2003; 2005) who states “spirituality… includes two essential elements in a person’s life. Transcendence of self is manifest in a sense of ‘calling’ or destiny, and the belief that one’s activities… have meaning and value beyond… obtaining economic benefits or self-gratification” (p. 422). Certainly, it can be said that Philip’s dramatic encounter with this paradoxical figure in the middle of the desert enhanced the Ethiopian eunuch’s already evident intrinsic motivation. The spiritual leadership behavior Philip modeled, however briefly, by transcending self and following the calling of the Spirit, had immediate meaning and value for this man who was obviously seeking guidance and spiritual direction.

Conclusion

The behaviors associated with several contemporary leadership theories may all be revealed in Holy Scripture through socio-rhetorical criticism. The approach to the operationalization of these constructs from a Christian worldview is more clearly defined once the ideological texture interwoven through these texts is identified and understood. Through the example of Philip’s response to the quickening of the Holy Spirit, one witnesses a man who Christ led out of slavery freeing his brother in the same manner that God used Moses to free his brethren from bondage; returning them to their natural state. One may also observe many of the behaviors described by these theories enacted in the New Testament story of the Gaza Road. Acts 8:26-40 is just one of many such examples of ideological laden texts that inform leadership
formation and development. Christian leaders who wish to understand and run to follow the example of Jesus, and apostles such as Philip, as authentic, charismatic, transformational, spiritual servant leaders would be well served by studying this pericope.
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