

Implications for Leadership in the Evaluation of Scripture: An Ideological Review of Matthew 8:5-13

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This study examines the ideological nature of Scripture surrounding Matthew's account of the interaction between the Centurion with the sick servant and Jesus in the eighth chapter of Matthew, with the end of determining the implications for leader's use of ideology in praxis. This study reviews the sources and uses of power employed by both the Centurion and by Jesus in the Matthean text. The story of the Centurion with faith offers a clear example of power expressed at different levels and in different contexts. It also describes power as used by leaders and rulers, thereby allowing readers to consider the differences between leadership and lordship, as well as the constructs involved in the authentic use of power.

"Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Thus, in one ascribed sentence, Lord Acton expresses a fundamental axiom regarding human nature and at the same time, he arguably expresses the sum of all human fears. Many see power as a commodity of necessity for the accomplishment of any endeavor. It is by power that God and people make things happen. Yet, power also appears to present a threat, and therefore many of those same people who understand its necessity feel that the use of power requires control and limitation to ensure the safety and security of all.

This study surveys the sources and uses of power as seen in Matthew 8:5-13, using ideological texture analysis in socio-rhetorical criticism. Ideological analysis offers a particularly suitable technique for conducting a survey of power, in that ideology and political thought represent essentially the same concept (Robbins, 1996) and some scholars generally refer to power as that power primarily used in political contexts (Pfeffer, 1992, McClelland, 1975). The story of the Centurion with faith offers a clear example of power expressed at different levels and in different contexts. It also

describes power as used by leaders and rulers, thereby allowing readers to consider the differences between leadership and lordship, as well as the constructs involved in the authentic use of power.

Ideology and Rhetoric

Different types of rhetorical analyses relate to specific levels within texts. These include inner-texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture, among others (Robbins, 1992a). Both the social and cultural texture and ideological texture analyses relate to an organization's or a society's culture. Researchers categorize cultures by assessing each culture's artifacts, including behaviors and physical artifacts, as well as values articulated within that culture. From their assessments of values and artifacts, investigators determine cultural assumptions, usually through processes of data triangulation that includes in-depth (Schein, 1992; Tichy, 1992). When conducting ideological investigations, researchers primarily consider the political structures and power dynamics within the cultures. An ideology consists of a person's moral beliefs regarding social order (Robbins, 1996b). This includes values: biases, prejudices, and stereotypes, as well as beliefs based on an individual or group's experiences, regarding how people should do what they do. Ideology does not include what people do, which represent behavioral artifacts, or why they do what they do, which represent cultural assumptions, even though Robbins (1996a) offers that the answers to the question "why" might reveal fuller bases of understanding of ideological textures. Additionally, deSilva (2002) confirms the concept that ideological criticism concerns itself with the how question, when he notes, "... Rhetorical texts... seek to persuade, affirm and limit and constrain readers to respond..." The readers' responses answer the "what" questions, as the writers' rhetoric shapes how they believe readers should respond and thus suggest the ideological natures of the writers' behavioral intentions, as well as the readers' potential responses.

In his discussion of assessing ideology within texts, deSilva (2002) further suggests six areas of exploration with which researchers should begin and two specific ideological platforms of which scholars should be aware. The areas of exploration deal with the author and character interests and aims, how the author deals with questions of authority, and how he or she attempts to persuade the readers. These areas also question how the author attempts to affect readers' concerns and how he or she attempts to demarcate available response options. The two specific ideological platforms or agendas deSilva cites include "Postcolonial criticism" (pp. 677-682) and "Feminist criticism" (pp. 757-770). In his commentary, deSilva suggests that some members of both of these platforms make valid contributions to the literature through their analyses and ideological suggestions. This study agrees with his assessment, insofar as both platforms provide clear examples of ideological rhetoric that accompanies extreme positions.

Power in Leadership

When addressing the subject of power, especially in organizations, many scholars turn to French and Raven's typology (as cited in Furnham, 1997). In their typology, they establish a standard

for analyzing power dynamics by presenting several constructs including reward, legitimate, referent, expert, coercive, and positional forms of power. Additionally, later developments caused Raven, Schwarzwald, and Koslowsky (1998) to identify informational power as a construct of power in its own right, where it had previously existed in the French and Raven typology as a component of expert power. This is important for consideration, because the "who knows what" question often suggests an answer to the ideological "how" question. In their study, French and Raven also theorize the existence of three aspects of control associated with power, all of which concern resources. These include importance, scarcity, and non-substitutability. This fits what both Barney (1986) and Pfeffer (1992) suggest regarding resources as bases of power. Pfeffer additionally describes two other constructs related to the acquisition of power, including one's joining with other already powerful people, and one's ascendance into a position of functional authority. Additionally, Tichy & Devanna (1986) describe how a leader's power stems from the development of his or her organization's mission and strategy. They further describe how the control of structure directs the distribution of subordinates' power within an organization. Helgesen (1996) further describes how successful leaders must distribute power appropriately, rather than simply retaining power within functional positions in order to achieve effectiveness, with the implication of winning subordinates over.

Terry (1993) defines power as potential or actual expenditure of energy. He also suggests that members use power to control resources. However, his definition of resources goes beyond the typical definition regarding general physical or human resources (Barney, 1986; Pfeffer, 1992) and includes the potential to use skills, abilities, and gifts that any members brings into their relationship with the organization. As some of the power theorists cited earlier suggest, Terry (1982) also concludes that everyone has power. Some people have more power than others do, but one is only powerless from an organizational or societal perspective when he or she no longer associates with the organization or society. In this regard, power is a feature of action and it is not in itself good or bad, authentic or inauthentic. Organizations and societies maximize their effectiveness when they place power, no matter how theorists define or categorize it, in its true position of relative importance, with power as a mediator between mission and structure. Many theorists place structure in the position of mediator between mission and power. Those who do, imply that leaders need only fill available positions with the "right" people and then control their efforts through structural devices to maximize effectiveness in accomplishing the mission. Theorists such as Helgesen (1996) suggest that they would have power controlled and arguably manipulated by managers or others who possess functional authority. Terry (1982) conversely suggests that each individual's potential power is relatively unlimited and that therefore, leaders should focus on unleashing and channeling whatever power members have on accomplishing the mission, rather than attempting to constrain members' power with predetermined structures. This, he argues, will maximize effectiveness. He further argues that leaders who leave members' power unacknowledged wind up with members who are apathetic and who consequently offer only a minimum standard of effort or become dysfunctional and therefore contribute activities that passively or actively work against the accomplishment of the mission. By recognizing, soliciting,

channeling, and focusing individuals' personal power, an organization or society can tap into that power for greater levels of effectiveness and mission accomplishment. This becomes possible as members of the organization or society help to shape, buy into, then commit to the mission, and afterward, work toward its accomplishment without the encumbrances of artificial structures. With mission, resource availability, and environmental factors remaining equal, members are thereby more likely to provide discretionary effort to mission accomplishment, rather than limiting their work to minimum acceptable standards.

Assessment of Ideologies from Scriptural Text: Matthew 8:5-13

The story begins with Jesus coming down from the Sermon on the Mount. He heals a leper and charges him to tell no one, but to go and take the appropriate steps to fulfill the law. He then enters Capernaum and a Centurion approaches, describing the affliction of one of his servants. This event is rare in the Scriptures. Roman officials do not routinely approach Jesus, because a power distance exists between Roman officials and common persons in occupied Judea (Hanson and Oakman, 1998; Jennings and Liew, 2004). The rhetoric further suggests that the Centurion acknowledges that Jesus is more than a common person. It also suggests that the Centurion knows that Jesus possesses the gift of healing by command and that He possesses authority greater than his own, which he describes as considerable. By these acknowledgements, Matthew demonstrates that Gentiles in positions of governmental, military authority can know and understand the person and the power of Christ (Hendriksen, 1974). He also reveals that Christ acknowledges the Centurion's position, by lack of argument, as well as his great faith, and thereby implies once again that all are persons of worth within His realm of authority.

Throughout this passage, power exists and Matthew exploits its existence to convey the central theme of its legitimacy. The Centurion acknowledges Jesus' power and position by calling Him "Lord," mentioning that he lacks the worthiness for Him to come to his home, and explicitly stating that Jesus only has to "say the word," even from afar and his servant's health will be restored (Matthew 8:8, RSV). Commentaries typically contend or imply that the Centurion perceived Jesus as a religious leader or the day or even as the Messiah (Smillie, 2004). Conversely, Jennings and Liew (2004) suggest that the Centurion might have actually perceived Christ as a "commander in a demonic chain-of-command" (p.486), who could cast demons out in the power of Beelzebub, much as the Pharisees suggested in several passages (e.g., Matthew 9:32-34; 12:24). They also suggest and Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003) support that he could have called Jesus "Lord" because of the patron-client relationship he was establishing, with Jesus as the patron and himself as the client. One cannot know the underlying beliefs the Centurion possessed about Jesus from the information provided in the Gospels, thus relegating point (a) to the realm of "who knows." However, Saddington (2006) contends that formal patron-client relationships would not have extended beyond nobility or to outlying provinces. Therefore, whether as Lord of Darkness, Lord of Light, or simply Lord of something he could not do himself, the Centurion acknowledges Jesus as Lord.

The Centurion goes on to state that he controls the behaviors of soldiers placed under his military authority and of slaves under his personal authority. In return, Jesus does not attempt to discount or undermine in any way the description the Centurion provides regarding his own power and position. Neither does He question the Centurion's perception of who He is. He just goes ahead and exercises His power and authority by healing the servant from afar. Matthew thereby reveals the contextual conditions for faith and for the applications of power regarding the Centurion's servant. In some contexts, the Centurion exercises power and controls the servant's behavior. In the context related to this example, where the Centurion does not possess the expertise required to direct the behavior of the servant in the healing process, he calls on Jesus, who does possess the appropriate power and expertise. Notice that even if in this example the Centurion's motives involve skepticism or sarcasm, or whether he sees Jesus as the Lord of Darkness or of Light, the contextual nature of the application of power remains the same.

Even as Jesus makes room for the Centurion and applauds his faith, He further implies that heaven's banquet table will provide room for Gentiles, as well as believing Jews (Hendriksen, 1974; Gundry, 1994). Moreover, He marginalizes the many Jews and presumably pseudo-believers who, because of their unbelief will not find a place at that same table, but who will otherwise suffer a fate of separation in darkness. Here, as in many other passages, Matthew reveals that one finds salvation and life only in belief and not in the keeping of traditional law, belonging to the correct race or socio-economic group, or practicing a particular method of worship.

The Centurion sets an example of humility when asking Jesus to exercise His power on his (the Centurion) servant's behalf (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003). He was, after all, a Centurion and was therefore Jesus' social superior. Arguably, he could have tried to use any of a broad array of techniques to solicit Jesus' cooperation. Herein, Matthew shows that the application of power from positions of functional authority include facets beyond the employment of coercive and authoritarian behaviors or transactional or transformational leadership techniques. In effect, the Centurion sets aside his lordship, takes upon himself the role of a servant (client), and yields to the Person who possesses expert power that he does not himself possess.

Jesus sets an example of compassion in the use of His power. His compassion specifically extends to the servant, but more importantly, it also extends to the believing Centurion. Jesus could have replied to the Centurion's request as He first did to the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:26) and discussed the impropriety of sharing the gifts of God with non-Jews. He could also have suggested to the Centurion to find another line of work or to give all he had to the poor and to follow Him, as He suggested to the young ruler (Matthew 19:21). However, in His compassion, Jesus implicitly defined belief as the singular requirement for this miraculous healing. He further delineated humility as the standard for its accomplishment. When combined, these served to establish a meaningful, power-sharing relationship that resulted in profound, miraculous work of God.

Implications for Leadership

Regardless of one's definition of power and regardless if one believes that power resides within every individual or only with those in functional positions of authority, on one can escape the fact that power is instrumental to leadership. McClelland (1975) goes so far as to describe power as the principal social motive necessary for leaders to succeed. Several researchers have also found at least some theoretical correlations between leadership, functional position, the use of power, and authority (Becker, 2007; Leavitt, 2005; Davidson, 2003; Eagan, 2000; Adler, 1997; Katzenbach and Smith, 1992; Winter, 1991). Of these studies cited, some argue that the current nature of understanding limits most people from thinking about leadership in practically any other ways. Others, like Katzenbach and Smith suggest, "Leadership has traditionally been synonymous with authority, and authority has traditionally been understood as the ability to command others, control subordinates, and make all of the truly important decisions yourself" (p. 129). Still others argue of the unfairness of it all that their special interest groups have not had a chance sit at the pinnacle to wield the power (deSilva, 2002). Concerning power, some who advocate for the empowerment of members throughout organizations sometimes vilify Machiavelli (1961) or his Prince because of what potential leaders, rulers, and potential monsters learn from it. However, they do so without regard for the fundamental differences that necessarily exist between the constructs of leadership and lordship.

Leadership, as a word, provides a surrogate function in the vernacular of the industrial and post-industrial ages for that of lordship (or ruler-ship). This study defines lordship, *a priori*, as the exercise of authority based solely on functional position. It is a directive role, much like Molina (1996, p. 126) describes that of a manager. It is also the natural outgrowth of systems one might find in historical texts from the Middle Ages that reflect the behaviors of people from throughout much of Europe. In feudal cultures, slaves, serfs, and other indentured servants swore an oath of fealty and performed the bidding of their masters or lords. In return, their lords provided basic services and products to accomplish their goals and to perpetuate the systems. Furthermore, this is not far from how Hanson and Oakman (1998) describe the relationship between the power elite and peasants in Jesus' day.

Traditional leadership theories generally represent an outgrowth of these types of relationships. In some of these theories, managers appear analogous to lords (exempts) who the organization positions atop a hierarchy to rule over the employees (non-exempts) to realize some vision or accomplish some mission or goal. In modern cultures, lords typically achieve their positions through noble birth or through the rites of passage that many know as graduate school, followed by selection processes. Organizations and societies assume lords know more, have better visions, and have the single-handed ability to influence outcomes. Lords typically receive more compensation and many people generally think of them as deserving greater deference and respect than common employees (Barker, 2002).

This study argues that lordship and leadership differ. Arguably, lords are lords, managers are managers, and influencers are influencers, whether they exercise leadership or not and even if many

people do not see any differences between them and leadership generally. Lords might have opportunities to lead and they may avail themselves of those opportunities. Furthermore, Scripture teaches that there is a season for exercising lordship, as seen by our God having made believers "... kings and priests" (Revelation 5:10, KJV). However, in all fairness, one should arguably call it what it is, not what he or she might desire it to be... Lordship in and of itself is not leadership.

Mescon (1958) suggests that leadership is a situational construct where "authority is granted to an individual by a group or an enterprise in proportion to the ability of the individual to satisfy the needs of the group or enterprise." He goes on to add that "Leadership... is not a permanent possession of a particular individual..." and that the authority given by the group to the individual "is withdrawn and transferred to other individuals..." when there is no "... observable progress toward goals attainment" (p. 13). Note that authority relates to the legitimate use of power. Also, notice that one finds the source of this power in some form of relationship where those led cede their will to the leader or lord. This corresponds closely with Malina's (1996) observation that there exists no permanency in leadership. Rather, crises present opportunities for the creation of leadership roles based on group need and other variables. When needs no longer present, there remains no further requirement for continued leadership.

One finds this principle in the text of this study as the Centurion defers his authority to Jesus, who in return acknowledges, by His silence, the fact that the Centurion did indeed have the legitimate authority to direct the behaviors of his subordinates. Other Scriptures of note present similar applications of power-sharing include: (a) Peter's preaching the fulfillment of Joel's prophesy (Acts 2:18) to effectively promote all believers to a leadership status, and (b) Jesus' statement that His followers will have power to accomplish the things He does and more (John 14:12). Therefore, this study suggests that no one person's leadership is generally more important than another person's leadership, because leadership is contextual.

In the text, the Centurion as a ruler or lord has authority over the behaviors of particular people in particular situations. Jesus also has authority over the behaviors of those same people in other situations. Jesus does not argue with the Centurion regarding the legitimacy of his authority, the rule of Rome, or the kingdoms of this world becoming the "Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15, RSV). Moreover, Jesus does not verbalize moral judgments about the facts that: (a) The Centurion is a citizen of a generally pagan state, (b) that he serves in a position of authority in that state's military, or (c) that he possesses slaves. Hence, Jesus' silence regarding the Centurion's power and position actually serves to legitimize the Centurion's authority. Jesus heals the servant, but if these other attributes cited are as important ailments as some scholars would have us believe, why does Jesus not also heal the Centurion or demand that he change? In that regard, this study suggests that legitimate physical, temporal structures exist that some believers may participate in and that other believers, in their judgment, might question membership in (Romans 14). This point might contain special relevance for those in positions of authority who perceive that their calling appoints them as a totalitarian judge rather than as a compassionate leader. God is love (1 John 1:9). The love

of God and love of neighbors perfect all the laws of all the prophets (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus' love provides a different way, another paradigm for the believer that should transcend the everyday structures of this world. In that way, rendering to Caesar that which is Caesar's (Matthew 22:21) becomes yet another conduit through which one may avail to achieve love as an end, rather than as a means to an end.

Jesus implements authority and allows others to exercise the authority vested in them. This implies more about ultimate accountability than it does about leadership in praxis. God calls, sanctifies, and ultimately holds accountable those in functional positions of authority for their behavioral intents and behaviors – or the lack thereof. Consequently, those who criticize the Scriptures or their interpretations regarding Euro-centrism or sexism or any other "-ism" from a post-positivistic perspective apparently miss some important points. These points include:

1. Unlike any other document on the face of the planet, regardless of positivist and post-positivist teachings, like it or not, the Bible, in its original form, content, and context is the indisputable, undeniable, absolute Truth (John 1:1, 14; John 14:6). For the believer in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:16), it contains no margin of error (1 Timothy 3:16).
2. Since most -ism complaints occur at the cultural level, little or nothing that one says or writes about will affect the change they desire. That type of change only comes through significant emotional events on the parts of the culture carriers (Massey, 1979).
3. Scriptures instruct believers to carry out several tasks. The list of these tasks does not include whining about the Bible's lack of fairness to a particular race, country of origin, economic group, sex, or other biological or socio-political affiliation.
4. The vast majority of real believers work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, without the help of current scholarly literature or those who read it (Philippians 2:12).
5. God repays injustice (Galatians 6:7).

Some have apparently sacrificed the best to accomplish the good, choosing to worship the created, their intellectual ideology, over their Creator. They concern themselves with using the power given to them by God to unravel incomprehensible mysteries, like, for instance, why some people or groups have more power than other people or groups, rather than implementing that which they know, such as the simple truth of sharing the Gospel. Some go as far as to substitute cultural relevance and political correctness for developing personal relationships with absolute Truth. In this effort, they fulfill the Scriptures, which say, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but in its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12, RSV). Regrettably, for them, Scripture does not teach that learned helplessness or attempts to achieve relative fairness at the expense of carrying out God's explicit instructions will ever provide for their absolution. In the end, will they not ask the question, "... did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" (Matthew 7:22, RSV).

Conclusion

This study reviewed the ideological rhetoric of Matthew 8:5-13. It further identified the sources and uses of power of the two principal characters in the narrative, the Centurion and Jesus Christ. It noted that their authority overlapped and both of them acknowledged the other's areas of expertise. It also suggested an implication of the contextual nature involved in opportunities to apply power in the application of lordship and leadership, and further suggested the existence of a dichotomy between authority in the physical realm and the Spiritual realm. These findings challenge all believers in every occupation to discern leadership opportunities that confront them and subsequently to access the power of God to provide contextually relevant, appropriate, and compassionate leadership. These findings also suggest the need for further study in determining the relationship between power and love in both secular and religious applications.

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