UPPER ECHELONS THEORY AT WORK IN THE EPHESIAN CHURCH

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This study relates Proposition 21 of Hambrick and Mason's (1984) Upper Echelons Theory (UET) to Paul and Timothy's leadership of the Ephesian church. Proposition 21 states, "In turbulent environments, team heterogeneity will be positively associated with profitability."[1] Using the texts of Acts, Ephesians, and I and II Timothy, this study demonstrates the merit of this proposition as evidenced in the historical, ministry context of Paul and Timothy as a leadership team in the turbulent environment of the first century and provides rationale for translating these concepts into a contemporary ministry context. A brief sketch of Paul and Timothy's personal backgrounds (birthplace, family, education, and conversion experience) and leadership experiences provides evidence for the heterogeneity of their leadership relationship. Evidence of heresy and persecution support the contention that theirs was a turbulent environment. The conduct of the Ephesian church in the years after the instruction (documented in Acts, Ephesians, and I and II Timothy) and leadership of Paul and Timothy provides supporting evidence of the profitability of that leadership. A summary of the study, its benefits, and suggestions for future research conclude this study.

Christians view the Bible as a source of spiritual truth, inspiration, comfort, and guidance as they attempt to apply its teachings to the turbulent environments in which they live. A newer application is the use of the Bible in validating effective organizational

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[1] Donald Hambrick and Phyllis Mason, "Upper Echelons: The Organization as Reflection of Its Top Managers," *Academy of Management Review* 9 (1984): 193-206.

leadership principles.[2] Unfortunately, such methods often approach the Bible in a proof-text manner, ignoring the various contexts in which the Bible was written. Rarely, though, have researchers looked through the lens backwards and considered a specific biblical or ministerial context through the lens of organizational leadership theories and propositions.

Gerald Brown[3] translated a model recommended by Harvard Business School professor John Kotter[4] in *Leading Change* to prompt change within a ministry in Kansas City, Missouri.[5] His dissertation, *Leadership Behaviors and Personal Transitions that Occur in the Lives of Pastors Who Have Led Churches through Significant Growth*, utilized several sources including "scripture, theological writings, church growth literature, *books on leadership, management, transition, and change theory*" [italics added].[6]

Shope[7] implemented situational leadership concepts developed by Kenneth Blanchard[8] in a ministry context. Johnson,[9] drawing on recent trends in church growth and research in various leadership choices from biblical and secular viewpoints, designed a leadership development strategy for a local congregation. Wallace[10] utilized Katz and Lazarsfeld's[11] "personal influence" model of communication and tested the model within a ministry context in Kentucky. Morris[12] proposed a new church growth

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[2] Hans Finzel, *The Top 10 Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Publications, 2000); John C. Maxwell, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001); Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993); Roy M. Oswald, *New Beginnings: The Pastoral Start Up Workbook* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1989); Roy M. Oswald and Otto Kroeger, *Personality Types and Religious Worship* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1988), Alexander Stauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (New York: Lewis & Roth, 1995); Lorin Woolfe, *Bible on Leadership: From Moses to Matthew: Management Lessons for Contemporary Leaders* (Washington, DC: Amacom, 2002).

[3] Gerald E. Brown, following a model recommended by Harvard Business School Professor John P. Kotter in the book *Leading Change* (1996), the pastor endeavors to "establish a sense of urgency" for change in order to prompt congregational renewal in the historic Antioch Community Church in Kansas City, Missouri (Doctoral dissertation, Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2000).

[4] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

[5] Andre J. Snodgrass, *Leadership Behaviors and Personal Transitions that Occur in the Lives of Pastors Who Have Led Churches Through Significant Growth* (Doctoral dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2003).

[6] Ibid. 8.

[7] F. W. Shope, Jr., *Equipping Church Staff from Central Baptist Association to Implement Situational Leadership Concepts Within the Local Church* (Doctoral dissertation, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

[8] Kenneth H. Blanchard and Patricia Zigarmi, *Leadership and the One-Minute Manager: Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985).

[9] D. C. Johnson, *A Design and Implementation of a Leadership Development Strategy for a Growing Independent Community Church* (Doctoral dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997).

[10] Green L. Wallace, *Testing the Personal Influence Model of Communication in the First Church of God, Mount Sterling, Kentucky* (Doctoral dissertation, Anderson University School of Theology, 1997).

[11] Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* (Somerset, NJ, 1955).

[12] D. L. Morris, Sr., *Building a Healthy Foundation for Long-term Church Growth at Centerville Baptist Church, Chesapeake, Virginia* (Doctoral dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996).

strategy for a ministry context in Virginia using both biblical principles and the leadership principles of Kouzes and Posner.[13] Mexcur[14] followed by adapting "a secular model of leadership proposed by Kouzes & Posner for use in developing leadership potential of a congregation's board of deacons."[15]

Probably most notable is the work of Myers[16] who demonstrated the great effectiveness of evangelism through the synthesis of business principles and ethics with the exegesis of scripture. Thus, there is strong support that partnering a secular leadership theory with a ministerial context is a reputable method of research.

This study synthesizes Proposition 21 of Upper Echelons Leadership Theory[17] with the Ephesian ministerial context of Paul and Timothy in the first century. Proposition 21 of UET states, "In turbulent environments, team heterogeneity will be positively associated with profitability."[18] Heterogeneity was of interest to researchers prior to the formation of UET.[19] Hambrick and Mason[20] synthesized the previous research, concluding that a homogeneous group best handles routine problem-solving and is profitable in leading in a stable environment, and a heterogeneous group best handles ill-defined, novel problem-solving and is profitable in leading in a turbulent environment. Since the formation of UET, there has been a continued interest in the study of heterogeneity.[21]

The study presented here is of the church at Ephesus in Asia Minor from the post-II Timothy era (circa 70 AD) through the late-apostolic era (circa 90-96 AD) and into the post-apostolic era (circa 120 AD). It involved an exegesis of Ephesians and I and II Timothy and an exploration of other biblical passages and historical documents for evidence of turbulence during the leadership of Paul and Timothy, evidence of the heterogeneity of their leadership team, and evidence of the profitability of that leadership. This study demonstrates that in the turbulent environment of the first

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[13] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986).

[14] Dwight E. Mexcur, *Nurturing the Leadership Potential of the Board of Deacons for Effective Ministry with and through the Congregation* (Doctoral dissertation, Hartford Seminary, 1997).

[15] Ibid. 8.

[16] K. D. Myers, *Leading a Congregation in Designing and Implementing a Business Ethics Ministry for Its Community* (Doctoral dissertation, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1994).

[17] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons."

[18] Ibid. 203.

[19] W. Gary Wagner, Jeffrey Pfeffer, and Charles. A. O'Reilly, III, "Organizational Demography and Turnover in Top-management Groups," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 29 (1984): 74-92; Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Fiascoes*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972); Alan C. Filley and Robert J. House, *Managerial Process and Organizational Behavior* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1976); Kenneth McNeil and James D. Thompson, "The Regeneration of Social Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 36 (1971): 624-637; Jeffery Pfeffer, "Some Consequences of Organizational Demography: Potential Impacts of an Aging Work Force on Formal Organizations," in *Aging: Social Change*, ed. Sara B. Kiesler, James N. Morgan, and Valerie K. Oppenheimer (New York: Academic Press, 1981): 291-329.

[20] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons."

[21] L. J. Bourgeois, III and Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, "Strategic Decision Processes in High Velocity Environments: Four Cases in the Microcomputer Industry," *Management Science* 34 no. 7 (1988): 816-836; John G. Michael and Donald C. Hambrick, "Diversification Posture and Top Management Team Characteristics," *Academy of Management Journal* 2 (1992): 9-37.

century, the team heterogeneity of Paul and Timothy's leadership is positively associated with the profitability of the church at Ephesus. This study was motivated by (1) the research done on the observable characteristics of group heterogeneity, [22] (2) current interest in the subject of heterogeneity,[23] (3) the ease of defining the terms of Proposition 21 (heterogeneous, turbulent environment, and profitability) in a ministry context, and (4) the evidence of these concepts in the specific, ministerial context of Paul and Timothy.

I: Definition of Terms

Upper Echelons Theory

Upper Echelons Theory was introduced by Donald Hambrick and Phyllis Mason in 1984 as an endeavor to "synthesize the previously fragmented literatures [from various fields about the characteristics of top managers] around a more general 'upper echelons perspective.'" [24] One of the authors' objectives in espousing this theory was to provide scholars a greater ability to predict and understand organizational outcomes. Two subordinate ideas of this theory have each "stimulated major streams of research,"[25] and both are relevant here: (1) "a focus on the characteristics of the top management team"[26] rather than on the individual top executive will better inform understanding of organizational outcomes and (2) "demographic profiles of executives . . . are highly related to strategy and performance outcomes."[27] There is a significant stream of empirical investigation verifying these ideas in multiple cultural and organizational contexts and verifying the profitability of homogeneity of leadership teams in stable times and the profitability of heterogeneous teams in turbulent times.

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[22] Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*; Alan C. Filley and Robert J. House, *Managerial Process and Organizational Behavior*: McNeil and Thompson, "The Regeneration of Social Organizations"; J. Pfeffer, "Some Consequences of Organizational Demography."

[23] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons," 193.

[24] Donald Hambrick, "Upper Echelons Theory: An Update," *Academy of Management Review* 2 (2007): 334.

[25] Ibid. 334.

[26] Ibid. 335.

[27] Donald Hambrick, "Top Management Groups: A Conceptual Integration and Reconsideration of the 'Team' Label," in *Research in Organizational Behavior*, ed. Barry M. Staw and L. L. Cummings (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1994): 171-214; Susan E. Jackson, "Team Composition in Organizational Settings: Issues in Managing a Diverse Work Force," in *Group Process and Productivity*, ed. Stephen Worchel, Wendy L. Wood, and Jeffry A. Simpson (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1991): 202-221; Vincent L. Barker and George C. Mueller, "CEO Characteristics and R & D Spending," *Management Science* 48, no. 6 (2002): 782-802.

Group Heterogeneity

Group heterogeneity is the degree of individual differences within a managerial group manifested by diversity of personal background and leadership experiences. Hambrick and Mason[28] identify six specific observable characteristics (age, functional track, other career experiences, formal education, socioeconomic status, and financial position) that contribute to either an individual's personal background or leadership experience and consider differences in one or more of these to be sufficient for heterogeneity. [29]

Turbulent Environment

Turbulent environment, for this study, is defined within the ministerial context and includes, but is not limited to, heretical teachers attempting to negatively influence a congregation both from within and without and persecution from within or without.

Profitability

Profitability relates to Paul's primary goal, namely, to bring about the obedience of faith among all Christians[30] and, in particular, the Ephesian church. Obedience of faith is a Christian's process of spiritual maturity that begins at the point of conversion to Christianity and continues to be developed throughout the life of a Christian. Paul's ministry did not cease after conversion.[31] He felt under obligation to teach, encourage, and warn so that his converts might reach maturity in Christ. Therefore, profitability would include, but is not limited to, spiritual development of both the ministerial leadership team and the congregation in the areas of adherence to sound doctrine, love as demonstrated through caring for the needy, witness to the community in which the congregation exists, and healthy organization and administration.

II: Through the Lens of Time

Heterogeneity of Paul and Timothy

This section will discuss the differences between Paul and Timothy with respect to personal background (birthplace, family, education, and conversion experience) and leadership experiences (as summarized in Table 1).

Birthplace. Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia in southern Asia Minor. Situated on the Cydnus River and ten miles from the Mediterranean, it was the

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[28] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons."

[29] Colin G. Kruse, "Ministry," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993): 602-608.

[30] Rom 1:11-17.

[31] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons"; Hambrick, "Top Management Groups."

intersection of ancient trade routes and cultures[32] and was of enough importance to be visited by Julius Caesar in 47 BC and Mark Antony in 41 BC.[33]

Timothy was born in Lystra, a small, mountain town in the region of Galatia (modern-day Turkey). Lystra "was off the main roads, and its seclusion marked it out as a small rustic town, where the people and customs would be quite provincial. [Once important, Lystra at this time was] sinking into the insignificance of a small provincial town."[34] Even though Antiochus, a Greek ruler, encouraged thousands of Jews to emigrate from Babylonia to Asia Minor, in Lystra there were fewer than ten Jewish families – the required number for a synagogue.[35]

Table 1. Summary of the Heterogeneity of Paul and Timothy

	Paul	Timothy
Birthplace	Tarsus	Lystra
Family	Educated, Influential, Jewish	Jewish mother, Greek father, Christian mother and grandmother
Education	Formal, rabbinic	Informal, grandmother and mother
Conversion	Dramatic, as an adult/ persecutor	Undramatic, Christian heritage
Age	Older	Mid-late teens
Leadership Experience	Significant	Learned as he accompanied Paul

Family. Paul was born into a Jewish family serious about its heritage and meticulous in fulfilling the law. Paul was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews."[36] Being circumcised on the eighth day after birth was the "proudest claim any Jew could make, namely, that in strict conformity with the law he was circumcised on precisely the right day (Gen 17:12; Lev. 12:3)."[37] In saying the "stock of Israel," Paul was emphasizing the fact that he belonged to the race of Israel by birth, not conversion.[38] Paul furthered his familial description by saying that he belonged to the "tribe of Benjamin." Even though the tribe of Benjamin was small,[39] it was highly esteemed by the Jewish community for its significant members and example of purity and commitment to David and to God.[40] In the phrase

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[32] Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1961), 202.

[33] John McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003).

[34] Pfeiffer, *Baker Bible Atlas*, 351.

[35] William J. Petersen, *The Discipling of Timothy* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1980).

[36] Phil 3:5.

[37] Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 13.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ps 68:27.

[40] Gen 30:22-23; 35:9-19; Judg 1:21, 5:14; I Sam 9:1-2; I Kgs 12:21; Esth 2:5; Hos 5:8.

"Hebrew of Hebrews," Paul asserted that his Hebrew family had retained distinctive Jewish characteristic qualities in language and custom thus differing from Hellenistic Jews.[41] Though Paul was from Tarsus and knew Greek as well as Aramaic and Hebrew,[42] he had not become Hellenized.[43]

Timothy came from a heterogeneous home both religiously and nationally. In Acts 16:1 Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, are identified as Jewish and described as having "unfailing faith" in the Lord Jesus Christ, while Timothy's father is identified as being Greek. Where Timothy's father stood religiously is unknown. He certainly did not prevent his wife from instructing their son in the Scriptures[44] nor did he interfere with his son's being named Timothy, which literally means "honoring God" or "dear to God." Peterson[45] suggests that the name itself was Greek and, thus, may explain why the name was acceptable not only to his mother but to his father as well. The father, however, had drawn the line and not allowed Timothy to be circumcised,[46] indicating that he was not a proselyte. Because the native Lystrans resented the religious exclusivism of the Jews and the cultural intrusion of the Hellenes, Timothy may have felt the tension of being in the minority whether he identified with the Jewishness of his mother or the Hellenism of his father.

Education. Paul was formally educated and trained as a Jewish rabbi. He was schooled in a reputable synagogue in the university of Tarsus before traveling to Jerusalem as a teenager to sit at the feet of Gamaliel,[47] the foremost Jewish educator of the day[48] and a "leading [and] celebrated"[49] scribe.

Paul commended the quality of the instruction that Timothy had received[50] even though, compared to Paul's formal education, Timothy's education was considered informal because he was trained by his family. Paul said to Timothy, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."[51]

Conversion to Christianity. Paul's dramatic conversion is documented in Acts 9 and further commented on in Acts 22:1-11; 26:12-18; Galatians 1:12-16; Philippians 3:4-10; and I Timothy 1:12-16. As Paul was on his way to Damascus to restrain the

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[41] Acts 6:1.

[42] Acts 21:40; 22:2.

[43] Archiblad T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. IV (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1930).

[44] II Tim 3:14-15.

[45] Petersen, *The Discipling of Timothy*, 11.

[46] Acts 16:1-3.

[47] Acts 5:34-39; 22:3.

[48] Peterson, *The Discipling of Timothy*.

[49] Graham H. Twelftree, "Scribes," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background,* ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2000), 1086-1089.

[50] II Tim 1:5; 3:14-15.

[51] II Tim 3:14-15.

Christian influence and its propagation, he had a supernatural encounter with the resurrected Christ leading to his confession of Jesus Christ as Lord.

In contrast, Timothy was not known to be a persecutor of The Way, and the specifics of his conversion are not dramatically recorded in Scripture. Paul refers to Timothy as "my own son in the faith,"[52] leading some to conjecture that Timothy was converted upon Paul's first visit to Lystra.[53] What is known is that Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and mother, Eunice, were of the faith prior to his conversion,[54] and by the time of Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy had gained a reputation among the believing community in Lystra and nearby Iconium.[55]

Leadership experiences. At the time Paul took on Timothy as a co-worker[56] he had significant leadership experience, and Timothy had none. Paul's leadership skills were developed prior to his conversion to Christianity. As adherents to the party of Pharisees,[57] the most strict and legalistic sect of Jewish leadership,[58] his parents exposed Paul to the tutelage of the Pharisees' leadership and moral example.[59] Paul became a Pharisee[60] and interacted with and partnered with Jewish religious leaders in order to persecute Christians.[61] His level of leadership is evidenced by his authority over not just the persecution of Christians but over decreeing their deaths.[62] Paul also exercised authority on behalf of the religious leadership of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem[63] as seen in his issuance and the solicitation of "letters of extradition."[64] Paul would also have had some influence on local religious leaders. Even though many local synagogue rulers outside Palestine respected the right of the Sanhedrin over fugitive Judeans (in this case, Christians), others did not[65] and would, therefore, require the Sanhedrin's representative (in this case, Paul) to be able to tactfully persuade local leadership to cooperate with him in his mission to weed out the Jewish Christians. Thus, Paul's leadership skills were cultivated and sharpened before his conversion.

Following his conversion, Paul was a leader in spreading the gospel and establishing local churches. He also participated as a leader of the early church at the

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[52] I Tim. 1:2.

[53] Ralph Earle, "First & Second Timothy," in Frank E. Gaebelein (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 341.

[54] II Tim 1:5.

[55] Acts 16:2.

[56] Acts 16:1-5.

[57] Acts 23:6.

[58] Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbourough, *Encountering the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 56.

[59] F. F. Bruce, "Paul the Apostle," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 696-720.

[60] Phil 3:5.

[61] Acts 9:1-3; 22:3-5; 26:9-11; Gal 1:13; I Tim 1:13.

[62] Acts 7:58; 8:1; 22:20.

[63] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

[64] Acts 9:2.

[65] Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary of the New Testament*.

Jerusalem Council held to clarify the Christian leadership's position on the issue of Gentile observance of the law.

Paul exhibited leadership in a more challenging situation – confronting a fellow leader. He rebuked Peter concerning hypocrisy and legalism.[66] This was done publicly[67] and poignantly[68] but resulted in peaceful resolution as evidenced by Peter's written reference to Paul and his teachings – "our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as in also in all his epistles, speaking in them these things."[69]

Unlike Paul, who brought numerous ministerial leadership experiences to their leadership team, Timothy brought none. His ministerial leadership experiences occurred after meeting and traveling with the apostle Paul. Paul and Timothy bring differences to their leadership team in each of the categories of the litmus test for heterogeneity suggested by Hambrick and Mason.[70] Their team more than meets the standard for heterogeneity. The next consideration is the turbulence of their environment.

Turbulent Environment

Even though Paul and Timothy ministered during the Pax Romana, persecution from without and the fight for sound doctrine within made the specific context of their ministry turbulent. The turbulence of their context is evident even prior to the formation of their leadership team.

During his first missionary journey, Paul was evicted from Antioch. He experienced persecution by the very ones with whom he had partnered prior to his conversion.[71] These persecutors followed Paul to Iconium, drew him out of the city,[72] and encouraged his stoning at Lystra.[73] Paul later reminds Timothy of these sufferings "such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra."[74]

During Paul's second missionary journey, he traveled to the places visited during his first missionary journey. This included Lystra where Paul warned Christians that more persecution lay ahead[75] and chose Timothy to be his co-worker.[76] Paul had many leadership experiences prior to inviting Timothy to join him, most in a turbulent environment. Paul makes vivid the turbulent nature of his leadership experiences in II Corinthians 11:27-33:

> In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the

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[66] Gal 2:11-21.
[67] Gal 2:14.
[68] Gal 2:11.
[69] II Pet 3:15-16.
[70] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons."
[71] Acts 9:23-25; II Cor 11:32-33; II Tim 3:11.
[72] Acts 13:9.
[73] Acts 14:1-20; II Tim 3:11.
[74] II Tim 3:11-12.
[75] Acts 14:21-23.
[76] Acts 16.

> wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what which comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; But I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

II Corinthians 7:5 provides a summary description of the turbulence: "For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within."

III: Profitability

This section will consider profitability as described in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, his farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus as recorded in Acts 20, and his exhortation to Timothy. This will be followed by evidence that the profitability exhibited by the church at Ephesus continued for several centuries.

Profitability in Adherence to Sound Doctrine

There is clear evidence in Paul's ministry to the church at Ephesus and his letters to Timothy that the leadership team of Paul and Timothy exhorted the Ephesian congregation to adhere to sound doctrine. This is first seen in Paul's letter to the Ephesians where he exhorts the congregation to grow in "knowledge of the Son of God" so they "should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."[77] Knowledge here is *epignosis*, a "full knowledge, precise, and *correct* knowledge"[78] [italics added]. This same concern for learning and adhering to sound doctrine is reinforced in Paul's departing words to the Ephesian elders:

> For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard![79]

Fee,[80] commenting on I Timothy 1:3, suggests that refuting false doctrine and enforcing sound doctrine is the very occasion for writing I Timothy. Paul refers to and

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[77] Ephes 4:11-15.

[78] Kenneth S. Wuest, "The Exegesis of Ephesians," in *Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 1-146.

[79] Acts 20: 27-31a.

[80] Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988).

enforces the importance of adhering to the sound doctrine nine times in I Timothy and reinforces the importance of adhering to sound doctrine four more times in II Timothy – all of this is in addition to the vivid denunciation of false teachers throughout both letters. Paul concluded his second letter by entreating Timothy and the Ephesian congregation to "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it."[81]

Paul coupled these exhortations with realistic warnings of persecution if the Ephesians continued to adhere to sound doctrine. "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."[82] Paul reminds them of persecutions that have befallen him as a result of adhering to and propagating sound doctrine, "You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured,"[83] and reminds them that the Lord rescued him from his persecutions in order to fortify their commitment. Paul established the necessary commitment level and mindset incumbent upon the church at Ephesus if it were to continue in the injunctions he set forth in his letter to the church and in his two letters to Timothy.

There is clear evidence that the Ephesian congregation continued to maintain and adhere to sound doctrine even amid seasons of staunch opposition. Christians suffered significant persecution because Rome viewed Christianity as seceding from the state's religion.[84] The administration of Rome believed that those who refused at least lip service to the traditional gods and to the emperor's image were concealing some political conspiracy against the state. The conflict of religions in the early Roman Empire resulted in frequent persecution when the claims of Caesar clashed with the Christian conscience. Because Christians neither worshiped the Roman gods nor sacrificed for the emperors, they were accused of sacrilege and treason. In addition, since they had no "images" of God, Christians were considered "atheists." This meant there was no need for new legislation to serve as a basis for prosecution of Christians.[85] Coleman-Norton,[86] quoting B. W. Henderson,[87] concluded that there was no new policy required for persecuting Christians as long as Christianity could be regarded as an unlicensed religion (*religio illicita*). Fragments from pagan/non-Christian sources vividly describe the hostility and opposition that Christians had to face during the late and post-apostolic era.

Compiled and translated by Grant,[88] these fragments assisted the researchers in understanding the hostility against Christians (including the church at Ephesus) during

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[81] II Tim 3:14.

[82] II Tim 3:12.

[83] II Tim 3:11-12.

[84] P. R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church* (London: S.P.C.K., 1966).

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] B. W. Henderson, *Palestine, Its Historical Geography, with Topographical Index and Map* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927).

[88] Robert M. Grant, *Second-century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2003).

the first and second centuries. Pliny the Younger was governor of Bithynia and Pontus on the Black Sea around 110 AD. Grant noted that Pliny was sent to this distant province to provide "law and order." Unsure what to do about the sect known as Christians, Pliny wrote Emperor Trajan (110 AD):

> It is my custom, Majesty, to refer to you everything about which I have doubts…I have never attended examinations of Christians, and therefore I do not know what and how far it is customary to investigate or to punish…. Meanwhile, I have followed this procedure in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians. I ask them if they were Christians. If they confessed, I asked a second and third time, threatening with punishment. I ordered those who persevered to be led away. For I did not doubt that whatever it might be that they confessed, certainly their stubbornness and unshakeable obstinacy ought to be punished.[89]

Emperor Trajan's reply indicates his approval of Pliny's procedure for punishing Christians.

> You have followed the right procedure . . . in examining the cases of those who had been reported to you as Christians. . . . If they are reported and convicted they must be punished, but if someone denies he is a Christian and proves it by offering prayers to our gods, he is to obtain pardon by his repentance, even though he was previously suspect.[90]

Cornelius Tacitus, proconsul of Asia in 112-113 AD, discusses Christians when dealing with the fire at Rome under Nero. Though written at the beginning of the second century, Grant[91] noted that it speaks to the resolute commitment of Christians to continue in their faith amid great persecution.

> To obliterate the rumor [that he had started the fire] Nero substituted as guilty, and punished with the most refined tortures, a group hated for its crimes and called "Christians" by the mob. After Christus, the founder of the name, had been punished by death through the procurator Pontius Pilate, the hateful superstition was suppressed for a moment but burst forth again not only in Judaea, where this evil originated, but [abroad].[92]

In 122-123 AD, Minucius Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia received a letter from Emperor Hadrian regarding current mob actions against Christians.[93] Even though Emperor Hadrian states that restraint should be exhibited when accusing Christians, the letter demonstrates that Christians continued to be persecuted:

> To Minucius Fundanus. I have received a letter written to me from your predecessor, the most illustrious Serennius Granianus. It seems to me that the matter should not remain without investigation, so that men may not be troubled or provide subject matter for the malice of informers. If then the provincials can make a strong case for this petition against the Christians, so that they can answer for it before court, they will turn to this alone.[94]

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[89] Ibid., 4-5.
[90] Ibid., 5-6.
[91] Ibid., 5-6.
[92] Ibid., 6.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 7.

Colman-Norton,[95] in his collection of fragments of legal Roman documents from circa 113-535 AD, comments, "popular clamour or natural disaster whereby people could persuade themselves that divine wrath was displayed, often was another incentive to institute persecution."[96] Further, Colman–Norton quotes Tertullian, "If the Tiber has risen to the walls [of Rome], if the Nile has not risen to the fields, if the sky has stood still [viz. a drought], if the earth has moved [viz. an earthquake], if there has been famine, if there has been pestilence, at once is raised the cry: 'The Christians to the lion!'" Two centuries later on the same continent, St. Augustine preserved a proverb, "Rain falls; Christians are the cause."[97] Early Christians, including those in Ephesus, experienced staunch opposition and tremendous pressure to denounce sound doctrine, yet they remained committed.

During the late-apostolic era, the church at Ephesus is commended by the apostle John in Revelation 2:2 for its commitment to maintaining sound doctrine, "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false." Even though this commitment was challenged by political pressures from the Roman government, opposition from religious groups, and cultural changes commonly resulting in persecution,[98] the church at Ephesus remained resolute in its commitment to sound doctrine during the late-apostolic era.

This commitment continues into and during the post-apostolic era. Ignatius[99] of Antioch (c. 110-117 AD) in his letter to the Ephesians repeatedly commended the church for its resolute commitment to the tenets of Christianity:

1. You are imitators of God.[100]
2. Indeed Onesimus himself gives great praise to your good order in God, for you all live according to truth, and no heresy dwells among you; nay, you do not even listen to any unless he speak concerning Jesus Christ in truth.[101]
3. Indeed you have not been deceived, but belong wholly to God.[102]
4. You indeed live according to God.[103]
5. I have learnt, however, that some from elsewhere have stayed with you, who have evil doctrine; but you did not suffer them to sow it among you, and stopped your ears, so that you might not receive what they sow.[104]

The letter of Aurelius[105] on trials of Christians (ca. 161) speaks to the commitment of Christians amid persecution:

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[95] Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church.*

[96] Ibid., 3.

[97] Ibid., 3.

[98] Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986).

[99] Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers,* vol.1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912).

[100] Ibid., (1.1).

[101] Ibid., (6.2).

[102] Ibid., (8.1).

[103] Ibid., (8.1).

[104] Ibid., (9.1).

[105] Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church.*

> . . . To them [Christians], when accused, it would be preferable to be reputed to die on behalf of their own god rather than to live; consequently they even win, surrendering their own lives rather than complying with what you demand them to do . . . whenever these occur, you are disheartened and you compare our condition with theirs [Christians]. They indeed become more boldly outspoken.[106]

Epictetus (50-120 AD) was an ex-slave who became a Stoic teacher and, after being banished from Rome under Domitian at the end of the first century, conducted a school at Nicopolis in Asia. There, his pupil, the Roman administrator Arrian, recorded Epictetus' lectures and conversations. Even though Epictitus refers to the Christians only once, calling them "Galileans," he provides a positive testimony of the Christians' commitment to sound doctrine amid persecution during this time.[107]

> If madness can produce this attitude [of detachment] toward these things [death, loss of family and property], and also habit, as with the Galileans, can no one learn from reason and demonstration that God has made everything in the universe, and the whole universe itself, to be unhampered and self-sufficient, and the parts of it for the use of the whole?[108]

The Ephesian church remained resolute in its commitment to sound doctrine from the time of the writing of Ephesians and I and II Timothy into the early post-apostolic era.

Profitability in Adherence to Love for One Another/Care for the Needy

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian church, commends the congregation for its love[109] and exhorts the congregation to "know this love that surpasses knowledge,"[110] bear "with one another in love,"[111] and "live a life of love."[112] John R. W. Stott[113] identifies love as a primary characteristic of the new society created through Jesus Christ as part of God's eternal purpose. In this new society, of which the church at Ephesus was a part, the fruit of this love "stands out in bright relief against the somber background of the old world"[114] and is evidenced by unity and peace instead of division, alienation, hatred, and strife. It manifests itself in caring more for the needs of others than for oneself.

I and II Timothy provide evidence that Paul and Timothy, during their leadership of the Ephesian church, exhorted the congregation to love one another. Seven times in I Timothy alone Paul explicitly refers to and enforces the importance of adhering to his instruction to love one another. Paul encouraged the church to demonstrate this love

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[106] Ibid., 2.

[107] Grant, *Second-century Christianity*.

[108] Ibid., 3-4.

[109] Ephes 1:15.

[110] Ephes 3:19.

[111] Ephes 4:2.

[112] Ephes 5:2.

[113] John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979)

[114] Ibid., 9.

through caring for the needy and gave careful, detailed instructions for caring for widows as an example of such love.[115]

The effectiveness of Paul and Timothy's teaching is exhibited during the post-apostolic era in Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the Ephesians in which he commends the church at Ephesus for its example of love. He wrote, "And Crocus also, who is worthy of God and of you, whom I received as an example of your love, has relieved me in every way."[116] Ignatius also wrote, "Therefore by your concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is being sung."[117] Rall suggests that the moral life of the church as a whole during this time seemed to have made steady advance such that even Roman critics of Christianity, like Pliny, admitted to the moral excellence of the life of its followers.[118] "The charity of the church was especially rich and beautiful. And yet there was wisdom in its exercise. The traveling brother was cared for two or three days. If he did not pass on then, he was to work; but the church was to help him find employment."[119] Lucian of Samosata, a critic of Christianity, spoke of the care and attention of the Christian community toward one individual, Peregrinus, during his imprisonment.

> Later Peregrinus was arrested for this and cast into prison. . . . When he was imprisoned, the Christians, viewing the event as a disaster, did everything they could to rescue him. Then, as this was impossible, they gave him every other form of attention, not casually but with zeal. . . . elaborate meals were brought in.… Indeed, people even came from the cities of Asia, sent by the Christians at their common expense, to help and defend and encourage the man.[120]

The church at Ephesus continued to follow Paul and Timothy's instruction with regard to loving one another by caring for those in need.

Profitability in Adherence to Healthy Organization and Administration

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul paints a picture of the spiritual organization of the church, which is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone."[121] The cornerstone is "part of and essential to the foundation; it helps to hold the building steady, and it also sets it and keeps it in line."[122] The Jewish and Gentile believers in Ephesus could appreciate this metaphor. The Jews could think of the temple in Jerusalem where "one ancient monolith excavated from the southern wall . . . measured 38 feet 9 inches in length"[123] and both Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus had before them "the magnificent, marble temple of Artemis ('great is Diana of the Ephesians'), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world."[124] Paul then moved

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[115] I Tim 5:3-16.

[116] Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, (2.1).

[117] Ibid., (4.1).

[118] Harris F. Rall, *New Testament History* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1914).

[119] Ibid., 294.

[120] Grant, *Second-century Christianity*, 9.

[121] Ephes 2:20.

[122] Stott, *God's New Society*, 107-108.

[123] Ibid., 108.

[124] Ibid., 109.

from describing the foundation and its cornerstone to describing the individual stones. Differing from Peter's picture of "living stones" being built into a spiritual house,[125] Paul adds additional stones ("you also") to purposefully include Gentile believers who would have been forbidden to enter the temple in Jerusalem.[126]

During their tenure as leaders, Paul and Timothy moved to more practical instruction for the Ephesian congregation about healthy organization and administration. This is exemplified in I and II Timothy where Paul most notably provides a list of qualifications for leadership positions in the church.

> Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert. . . . He must also have a good reputation with outsiders. . . . Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. . . . A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. . . . Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household.[127]

Paul clearly establishes the necessary commitment level and mindset incumbent upon the church at Ephesus if it is to continue to maintain healthy organization and administration.

During the early post-apostolic era, Ignatius acknowledged and commended the Christian establishment in Ephesus when he wrote, "to the church, worthy of all felicitation [congratulation], which is at Ephesus in Asia."[128] During this era, non-Christians also acknowledged a vast, strong, and influential organization of Christians. Commenting on Trajan's response to Pliny in ca. 113 AD, Coleman-Norton[129] says,

> While considering Christianity only as a "depraved and extravagant superstition" and while complaining at its prevalence in his province, yet the governor could not grasp the "underlying connexion between the two phenomena in Bithynia that caused Pliny the greatest concern – the decay of civic institutions and the spread of Christianity" in that "a vitality which was no longer finding a satisfactory outlet in secular civic life was flowing into the self-government of the local Christian communities in the municipal cells comprising the Roman body politic."[130]

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[125] I Pet 2:4-5.

[126] Stott, *God's New Society*, 108-109.

[127] I Tim 3: 2-15.

[128] Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, (1.1).

[129] Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church*.

[130] Ibid., 1-2.

There is evidence that administrative health of the Ephesian church continued until the time of the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.[131]

IV: Final Thoughts

The church at Ephesus did indeed follow the injunctions related to adhering to sound doctrine, loving one another as expressed in caring for the needy, and maintaining healthy organization and administration after Paul's last writing and his subsequent death; and they continued to follow these injunctions into the late-apostolic and post-apostolic eras even amid staunch opposition. The church thus remained faithful to Paul's teaching in Ephesians and I and II Timothy.

The question that launched this study was whether Paul and Timothy as a heterogeneous leadership team were profitable (according to the instruction given in Paul's letters – Ephesians and I and II Timothy) in the turbulent environment of their day. This question came from reflecting on Proposition 21 of Hambrick and Mason's Upper Echelons Theory.[132] ("In turbulent environments, team heterogeneity will be positively associated with profitability."[133])

After developing the three key concepts (heterogeneity, turbulent environment, and profitability), this study provided support for each. Paul and Timothy were a heterogeneous leadership team functioning in a turbulent environment. A sketch of Paul and Timothy's differing personal backgrounds (birthplace, family, education, conversion experience, and age) and differing leadership experiences demonstrates the heterogeneity of their leadership. The heresies with which Paul and Timothy contended and the persecution of Christians demonstrate the turbulence of the environment. A study of the history of the Ephesian church in the years following Paul and Timothy's ministry verifies the profitability of their ministry. They successfully trained faithful men who continued and reproduced their work in subsequent generations of leaders.

In order to support the proposition that team heterogeneity is necessary for profitability in a turbulent environment, this study examined two areas: the injunctions set forth in Paul's writings in Ephesians and I and II Timothy and the conduct of the Ephesian church in Asia Minor from the time of the writing of the epistles (late-apostolic era) to the early second century (early post-apostolic era, circa 70-120 AD). This strain of research was necessary because true "profitability" could not be derived simply by documents (in this case Acts 20, Ephesians, and I and II Timothy) that reflect one leader corroborating with another leader as to what should be done. What was needed in order to conclude that the leadership team was profitable was evidence that the followers continued to follow the injunctions set forth by Paul and Timothy's leadership. This study not only describes the injunctions Paul entreated the church at Ephesus to follow but also provides evidence that the church at Ephesus continued to follow these injunctions even in the midst of challenges within and staunch opposition without.

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[131] George T. Kurian, ed., *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 271.
[132] Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons."
[133] Ibid., 203.

Limitations

This study limited its research to three injunctions (to adhere only to sound doctrine, to love one another as expressed through caring for the needy, and to maintain healthy organization and administration) because of the unique challenge in researching the Ephesian church in the late-apostolic to the post-apostolic era (circa 70-120 AD), namely, that there is not much written about the Ephesian church during this time. This study made conclusions only in these three areas since they were relatively clear and represented in the literature. Both biblical and extrabiblical sources contributed enough to provide a sketch of the life and spiritual development of the church at Ephesus in order to make some limited, yet adequate, conclusions.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it encourages the church to consider current secular research in the areas of leadership and management to complement the tools used in church administration and hiring. It provides guiding principles for churches wishing to make well-informed future leadership hiring decisions. It brings the unique dynamics within the context of ministry to the attention of leadership; it brings to the attention of both secular and Christian leadership theorists that even though the ministry context has unique dynamics, leadership theory still applies. This study also provides a foundation for the researcher who may wish to form a ministerial UET.

In addition, this study followed through with the stated desire Hambrick and Mason[134] articulated – to "stimulate empirical inquiry into upper echelons."[135] More recently, in a 2003 e-mail communication, theorist Hambrick personally expressed specific interest in a study comparing UET to a ministerial context. Admittedly, a ministry context was not initially in mind during the formation of the original UET. Nevertheless, to attempt to translate its tenets into other contexts, including ministry contexts, could provide points of continuity/discontinuity that may serve as building blocks to future theories yet unknown.

Suggestions for Future Research

As demonstrated throughout this study, evidence supports the validity of proposition 21 of the Upper Echelons Theory in the ministry context of Paul and Timothy. Additional study into the other propositions of UET may provide possible continuities/discontinuities between this theory and the ministry context. This may assist the leadership theorist and/or theologian by providing empirical boundary lines between congruent and incongruent elements of leadership theories in a ministry context. This knowledge would be of benefit in managing a ministerial/religious organization and of practical value in knowing which theories should be adopted in practice. Continuing to evaluate leadership principles and theories within a biblical context will provide

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[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 198.

additional support for or provoke thoughtful revision of current ministerial leadership principles.

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