



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## AUTHORITY IN CHRIST: THE CHASTENED FREEDOM OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS

AARON H. M. PERRY

---

This article explores the notion of authority and Christian leaders. Through an intertextual study of Acts 2 and engagement with various notions of authority, it develops implications for the nature of Christian leadership. The authority of Christ is shown through intertextual analysis of Acts 2 and Joel 2 and various Psalms which show the authority of Jesus over David. It also has historical intertexture with the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel that define the activity of Acts 2 in bearing a universal gospel. Acts 2 also has cultural intertexture with Feast of Weeks from Jewish history and the outpouring of the Spirit. This intertexture forms the basis of the authority of Jesus, as the ascended Christ, who has authority over David, the story of Israel, and is enabled to give the Spirit. This notion of authority, however, remains relational rather than positional, which is common in management literature. Pictures of authority from leadership and management, sociology, and theology are offered, which allow interpretation of the authority of Jesus. The article ends with consideration of authority for those in the mission of Christ. The authority of Christ provides both freedom and restraint for leaders who follow Christ.

---

What can we see about the divine empowerment of leaders from an intertextual analysis of Acts 2? This article attempts to answer this question by introducing intertextual analysis and performing this analysis on the Acts 2 passage. Next, the notion of authority is examined from leadership and management, sociology, and theology. These approaches to authority are compared and contrasted and then applied to the intertexture interpretation of Acts 2. It is seen that the divine authority of Jesus provides authority for followers in his mission, but also provides boundaries within which his authority may be claimed. The relational nature of this authority is affirmed.

## I. INTERTEXTURE ANALYSIS

Intertexture analysis is a form of socio-rhetorical criticism that treats the text as the production of an author. It analyzes the space between the text and the author—the space where all other texts open to the author of the new text under consideration reside. Because this space may be theoretically limitless, interpreters must establish clear boundaries within which they will work in the investigation of a text.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, there are four helpful considerations to analyze the text and its outside textual influences: (1) oral–scribal intertexture, (2) historical intertexture, (3) social intertexture, and (4) cultural intertexture. These are explored individually.

### *Oral–Scribal Intertexture*

Oral–scribal intertexture considers other texts, both written and oral, that stand in the foreground of the text. These texts are revealed in the foreground as they are used by the author of the newly constructed text in three different ways. First, there is *recitation* of previous texts and reference to their existence elsewhere. Recitation happens in several ways. The author may use a previous narrative or speech text in the new text by using the same or different words of the original text, omit some of the words of the previous text, use different words of the new author's choosing, include both narrative and short quotes, paraphrase the narrative, and, finally, summarize a narrative. Second, there is *recontextualization* of a text. This is essentially the same as recitation, but without mentioning their prior existence. Third, there is *reconfiguration* of a text, which is the restructuring of a previous tradition or narrative to shape the newly created text. Examples may include the reconfiguring of Isaiah 53 with 1 Peter 2:22-25 or Psalm 23 with Mark 6:30-44.

### *Historical Intertexture*

Second, consider historical intertexture. This analysis aims to find where the author takes a historical experience and puts it in the new text in a particular event or period of time. This happens to give the reader an experience of what another experience was like through another experience which is in the new text. An example may be that the gospel writers wanted the Gospels to contain elements of what Jesus was continuing to teach in the early church after his ascension and so parts of their texts are marked by the experience of the early church. Analyzing the presence of these notes is historical intertexture.

### *Cultural Intertexture*

---

<sup>1</sup> For what follows, see Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Third, consider cultural intertexture. This is the range of texts available to the author of surrounding communities in which the intended readers of the text lived. For authors of the New Testament, this would include Greco-Roman culture, as well as Jewish culture.<sup>2</sup> This happens through *reference*, like to a name, or through *echo*, which is a word or phrase that evokes a cultural tradition.<sup>3</sup> This means that the text of the New Testament, in our case the book of Acts, is not strictly Jewish, nor is it strictly Greco-Roman. Rather, cultural intertexture reminds the interpreter that the text is an interrelation of cultures, with reference to various cultures.

### *Social Intertexture*

Finally, there is social intertexture. This is the texture of a text that references practices and customs of a given society. This is different from cultural intertexture because it spans specific cultures. Both Roman and Jewish people living in the same society, for example, would understand the reference. Or, to use a modern example, Americans would understand a reference to Monday Night Football, regardless of whether they were of Asian or European descent (or even if they did not watch Monday Night Football). Second, it is different from cultural intertexture because it does not refer to a belief, conviction, or concept but to a practice that is not limited to a specific period of time.

## II. ANALYSIS OF ACTS 2

### *Intertexture Analysis*

The Gospel of Luke's recitation of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:17-21 is, at times, word for word and, at others, slightly modified and rearranged. First, Peter has changed the introductory words from "And afterward" to "In the last days, God says."<sup>4</sup> Peter has first clarified that it is indeed God, and not Joel, who has spoken these words, as well, by adding, "God says."<sup>5</sup> Joel's prophecy is in the context of God's renewed blessing in response to Israel's repentance.<sup>6</sup> For Luke, however, the timing is not after repentance, but "in the last days."

This moment—the last days—is established by Luke in the ascension of Christ. The ascension completes the earthly ministry of Jesus and begins the heavenly ministry of Jesus through the church. The ascension is the culmination of Jesus' life in Luke and

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on echo, see Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> All scripture references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> J. P. Smith, "Acts 2: Spirit Empowered Leadership," *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 1, no.1 (2009): 25-38.

<sup>6</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).

the foundation of the whole book of Acts.<sup>7</sup> This establishes the timing of the church: the final days, the time relating to the past, and awaiting the future of Christ when he will return as the disciples had seen him go (Acts 1:11). The disciples had seen Jesus ascend in strength and power to God's right hand and could expect a return in strength and power. "The last days," when the Spirit is poured out and available for this time, reflects a time when Jesus' enthronement has changed the whole reference of time. Second, the recitation has added a clause to verse 18. Peter begins by quoting Joel 2:29, "Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." Then, however, he adds, "And they will prophesy." Luke's addition of this clause agrees with early Christian practice of both men and women prophesying. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul assumes that women will prophesy to the whole church (1 Cor 11:5), even more remarkable considering the Roman background of disallowing women from such political assemblies.<sup>8</sup> Yet, perhaps most intriguing in this consideration is the presence of Mary in Luke's Gospel. Luke, more than any other gospel writer, has featured Mary in the birth of Christ. Moreover, her presence is not simply token, but her *words* are key in the expression and explication of the redemptive work of God about to follow in the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the hymnic nature of Mary's witness is Luke's method of stressing Mary's "prophetic office."<sup>10</sup> For Luke, then, both Mary and the practice of the early church make natural the addition prophetic work in both men and women as a result of the Spirit's coming.

Third, Luke's title of "the Lord" modifies Joel's title. In Joel, the Lord is the personal name of Israel's God. It was so substituted so that when read aloud, the personal name of God would not be pronounced, but instead the Hebrew word for Lord, "Adonai." For Luke, however, the Lord is clearly referencing Jesus; made clear in Acts 2:36, Jesus is made both Lord and Christ.

Finally, the quotation finishes by omitting a large passage from Joel. The editing of the text has two purposes. First, in Joel, the passage is focusing on the specific location of Jerusalem, or Zion.<sup>11</sup> Joel affirms that the LORD dwells in Zion. However, Luke's theology is not ethnocentric. Rather, Luke lists multiple nations who hear the "wonders of God" (cf. Acts 2:19) in their own languages. Davis argues that this is a reversal of the Tower of Babel.<sup>12</sup> Set against the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel conveys the full scattering of the nations in Genesis 11. In contrast, however, Acts has multiple nations gathered together and hearing the good news of the wonders of God. This is not strictly for the Israelite people or Jerusalem. This is a worldwide mission. Second, the omission of the verses brings distinction between the mission of the church in the name of Jesus and the mission of the Jewish people. Acts

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Ruden, *Paul Among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* (New York: Pantheon Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Timothy S. Perry, *Mary for Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 81.

<sup>11</sup> Jl 2:1, 15, 23, 32; 3:1, 16, 17, 21.

<sup>12</sup> J. Davis, "Acts 2 and the Old Testament: The Pentecost Event in Light of Sinai, Babel, and the Table of Nations," *Crisswell Theological Review* 7, no.1 (2009): 29-48.

is an attempt to ground the Christian faith as the legitimate expression of the Jewish faith. The omission of words from Joel, which in turn express the fullness of the mission of the church, show its legitimation and continuation of the Jewish faith.<sup>13</sup>

Second, there is the recitation of Psalm 110:1 in Acts 2:34-35. This is not the first recitation of this passage in the Lukan corpus and the recontextualization of Psalm 16 helps to underscore the first recitation, which is Jesus' reading of Psalm 110 in Luke 20:41-43. Here, Jesus recites Psalm 110 to show his authority over David. Luke does not consider Messianic claims and the title "Son of David" to be mutually contradictory, however, because Son of David is prevalent through the third Gospel, in the birth narratives<sup>14</sup> and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Just as Jesus has read David to be speaking of Jesus, so does Peter understand David to be speaking of Jesus. Luke, however, seems content to allow for ambiguity in the original read and intent of the verse as he affirms Jesus as Son of David. David, indeed, could have been speaking of himself historically, while God has intended his situation as typology for Jesus. The reversal of David's tomb and Jesus' empty tomb reveals the reversal of David and Jesus. David's tomb can be checked (v. 29); Jesus is king because he was raised and ascended.<sup>16</sup>

There are two instances of historical intertexture in the Acts 2 passage, as well. This happens when an author takes an historical event and creates the new text from this original text. First, there is historical intertexture with the Table of Nations from Genesis 10. The Table of Nations is the record of the descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japheth. The Masoretic text has 70 names, while the Septuagint has 72 names. The purpose of the record is to fill out the content of God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham.<sup>17</sup> The Table of Nations is the lineage that spread out over the earth to different nations (Gn 10:32) that is connected with Jews from every nation under heaven gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5). Because Genesis 10 forms a canonical backdrop to Genesis 12, the connection with Acts is confirmed with Peter's recitation of the blessing to Abraham (Gn 22:18) in Acts 3:25.

The historical intertexture of the Table of Nations is important to point out because it also forms a backdrop to Genesis 11:1-8, the Tower of Babel. In this passage, the people of the earth gather to make a name for themselves by building a great tower (Gn 11:4). The people of the earth, at that time, had one language (Gn 11:1). In order to preserve them, God confused their speech and scattered them over the face of the earth (Gn 11:9). This fulfilled the command of God from Genesis 1:28 to fill the earth. By contrast, Acts speaks of multiple languages but understanding (Acts 2:4, 11) and rather than the great deeds of people (Gn 11:7), Acts declares the wonders of God (Acts 2:11). Babel's intention was to settle in and not fill the earth and to make a great name for people. Acts, however, has announced that Jesus' disciples will witness to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Babel had confused speech; Acts has diverse, but

<sup>13</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Lk 1:27, 1:32-35, 2:4.

<sup>15</sup> Lk 3:31, 18:38-39; Green, *Luke*, 88-89.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> See Davis, "Acts 2 and the Old Testament."

understood, speech. The placement of Acts after the ascension of Christ reveals his universal, no language barred, authority.

Luke finishes the results of Peter's speech by describing the life of the believers. Acts 2:44 records that the believers held everything in common. It is possible that the Greco-Roman culture would understand this text as an echo of Seneca's epistles. Specifically, in Epistle 90, Seneca writes that the community was marked by possession of each person of the common resources. The echo would serve to give another aspect of authority to the practice of shared possession, though not necessarily common ownership.<sup>18</sup>

### *Summarizing the Intertextural Analysis*

The preceding intertextural analysis allows us to form initial thoughts on the divine empowerment of leaders. First, the divine empowerment is centered on the authority of Jesus. Jesus surpasses David and is proclaimed king; the Ascension has reworked time and allowed the gift of the Spirit. The authority of Jesus is the ground for the whole event of Pentecost. Second, the result is a universal gospel. The good news of Jesus is not confined to a specific culture, but spread through multiple languages. This clarifies the nature of the authority of Jesus. He does not have a small realm, but a universal authority. Third, empowerment facilitates the mission of Jesus. The nature of the community of sharing everything in common is such that it could only happen by the Spirit's power. The life of the early church, where no one was in need, embodied the ideal of the Law's intended community life.<sup>19</sup> This community life immediately follows the outpouring of the Spirit for those who believe (Acts 2:38). This is the accomplishment of Jeremiah 32 and Ezekiel 11 where God promises to bring internal change to people which they are incapable of accomplishing on their own. This is connected with the ascension and authority of Jesus. The ascension puts the Spirit at Jesus' disposal. Jesus, in his authority, has "unlimited capacity to receive and transmit the Spirit."<sup>20</sup> Because the ascension is the absence of Christ<sup>21</sup> and his ascension is the universal authority of Jesus, his followers are entrusted with temporary care of what is rightfully God's in Jesus' absence.<sup>22</sup> Further, the ability of Jesus' followers to keep these commands reflects Jesus as the greatest law-giving authority.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Spirit does the ministry of Christ, convicting of sin and sharing what is Christ's (Jn 15:5-15).

<sup>18</sup> See John Walton, "Primitive Communism in Acts? Does Acts Present the Community of Goods (2:44-45; 4:32-35) as Mistaken?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2008): 99-111.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas Farrow, *Ascension Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 145.

<sup>21</sup> Farrow, *Ascension Theology*; Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*.

<sup>22</sup> Walton, *Primitive Communism in Acts?*

<sup>23</sup> Davis, *Acts 2 and the Old Testament*.

### III. ANGLES OF AUTHORITY

#### *Authority in Leadership and Management*

Considerations of authority in leadership studies have focused around structure and power.<sup>24</sup> Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson include authority in the consideration of power, specifically legitimate power. Legitimate power provides the ability for a person to influence because of position. This kind of formal power is what they call *authority*. In sum, authority is invested by the position, accepted by subordinates, and deployed in vertical hierarchical arrangements. Thus, authority is provided by another in authority. It involves the language of rights. Ivancevich et al. affirm that authority is the “right to make decisions without approval by a higher manager and to exact obedience from designated other people.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, authority is developed by the hierarchical structure; it is from above and deployed on subordinates below. The benefits of such structure is that this delegation of authority builds skills, facilitates advancement and its possibility, develops a competitive climate, and meets the desires of people to be involved in higher order work, such as problem solving.

Yukl has similar considerations and states, “Authority involves the rights, prerogatives, obligations, and duties associated with particular positions in an organization or social system. A leader’s authority usually includes the right to make particular types of decisions for the organization.”<sup>26</sup> Authority is considered based on its scope. The breadth of authority indicates the amount of authority.

Rost casts the discussion of authority as part of a larger conversation contrasting leadership and management.<sup>27</sup> For Rost, leadership is about interaction between persons, whereas management is about positions and is the proper field in which to consider authority. Rost writes, “Management is an authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinate their activities to produce and sell particular goods and/or services.”<sup>28</sup>

Heifetz casts the discussion of authority in terms of accomplishment.<sup>29</sup> For Heifetz, leadership is defined primarily as an activity. Leadership is more than influence because it can achieve more than just what the leader desires. Instead, leadership has a “higher probability of producing socially useful traits when defined in terms of legitimate authority, with legitimacy based on a set of procedures by which power is

<sup>24</sup> See John M. Ivancevich, Robert Konopaske, and M. T. Matteson, *Organizational Behavior and Management*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008); Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Ivancevich et al., *Organizational Behavior*, 451.

<sup>26</sup> Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 142.

<sup>27</sup> J. C. Rost, “Leadership and Management,” in *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Era*, ed. G. R. Hickman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 97-114.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>29</sup> R. A. Heifetz, “Values in Leadership” in *Leading Organizations* (see note 24), 342-356.

conferred from the many to the few.”<sup>30</sup> Notice that while Heifetz has captured authority as an activity and broadened the scope of the benefit of leadership—“socially useful traits”—the discussion is still captured in legitimate authority and procedures. In other words, authority is still part of a system. Heifetz does recognize that this discussion of authority is limited as many have achieved “socially useful traits” precisely by challenging such systems and procedures, including Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Ghandi.

Leadership and management studies have focused on the notion of authority as part of the managerial structure and systems of power in organizations. Authority is given by those above and exercised on those below. Yet this discussion is not complete as it does not capture the nature of authority that challenges such systems and structures.

### *Authority in Theology and Religion*

DeSilva outlines three forms of authority from sociology of religion.<sup>31</sup> First, there is traditional authority. Traditional authority is authority that exists because of longevity and history. Institutions—physical or political—may have traditional authority. Second, there is functional authority. Functional authority is authority that comes about because of a person’s ability to get the job done. By achieving vision again and again, there is authority conferred from others. From an explicitly Christian perspective, Hybels calls this “getting-it-done” leadership.<sup>32</sup> Without consistent accomplishment, there is no authority. From popular business perspective, Lencioni describes this accomplishment as attention to results.<sup>33</sup> Without such attention, the team is dysfunctional. Third, there is charismatic authority, which comes from special abilities or talents that, when compared to others, surpass so greatly that they are considered to be God-given. The promise is that those in the company of this leader will experience the presence of God. DeSilva highlights the apostles as bearing such authority in the early church.

O’Donovan takes a theological look at authority.<sup>34</sup> For O’Donovan, authority is part of the created order. It is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Authority correlates to freedom. That is, where there is a free act, it is so ordered by an appropriate authority. A free act is an authorized act. O’Donovan lists four natural authorities: beauty, age, community, and truth. This means that an action that follows, for example, age, is understood on its own. A child following the direction of a parent does not need further warrant, because there is a given relationship of authority where the parent surpasses the child in age.

Finally, O’Donovan discusses authority in light of Jesus. The authority of Jesus is conferred by God the Father in the resurrection of Jesus and the exaltation of Jesus.

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>31</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 357-359.

<sup>32</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> For what follows, see Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline of Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).



For O'Donovan this does not negate the ascension, but the ascension is considered a distinct, though inseparable, event from the resurrection.

#### IV. AUTHORITY IN MISSION: LEADERSHIP CHRISTIANS CAN EXPECT

##### *Working the Angles of Authority*

There are several potential connections between these approaches to authority. First, there is a potential connection between O'Donovan and DeSilva. What O'Donovan defines as age may be connected with the authority of tradition. In both, there is perceived wisdom and value of longevity. Second, both Heifetz and DeSilva have notions of authority with accomplishment. Third, both Heifetz and O'Donovan have notions of community with authority. For O'Donovan, community is a ground of authority, whereas for Heifetz, community grants authority. Fourth, Yukl and Ivancevich et al. and O'Donovan understand authority to be related to right or freedom. For Yukl, and Ivancevich et al., authority is granted from above in order to *authorize* action—commanding, directing, deciding, etc. For O'Donovan, authority is divinely embedded in the order of creation to ground free action. Certain actions are authorized already in creation. This consideration of authority from various angles is meant to confirm the propriety of now examining Acts 2 in light of these conceptions of authority.

##### *Divine Empowerment of Leaders*

The intertextual analysis of Acts 2 placed Jesus within the Jewish tradition as part of the Feast of Weeks, but also at the front of a new tradition. Leaders in the Christian movement are authorized with traditional authority because of Jesus. The nature of this authorization encourages new developments in the Christian movement, as well, so long as they remain in the tradition of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Paul affirms this notion. He encourages people to build on the foundation of Christ and then lists. Gold, silver, and precious stones would all survive burning. However, wood, hay, and straw do not survive fire. Paul's image is that of a house, part of which would be left standing, while other sections would be completely burned up.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, leaders are authorized in Christ to build on the foundation of Christ—to continue in the authority of his tradition, and the work of leaders will be revealed for its eternal worth. Christian leaders, then, are encouraged to verse themselves in the tradition to which they claim so as to exhibit properly the authority which has been bestowed through Christ.

##### *Authority and Accomplishment*

The authority of Christ in the intertextual analysis revealed that Jesus' spirit empowers for the universal mission of Christ. The authority of Christ bestowed on Christian leaders, then, is chastened not to be seen in every accomplished leader, but

<sup>35</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003).

in leaders whose accomplishments are defined by the mission of Christ. Both Heifetz and DeSilva recognize that authority is conveyed through accomplishment. Christians, however, should not claim authority on the sole basis of accomplishment, but on the accomplishment of Christ.

### *Authority and Community*

O'Donovan and Heifetz can shape the nature of the divine empowerment of leaders from Acts 2. O'Donovan sees community as a natural ground of authority, which means that acting in communally beneficial ways is authorized by the nature of creation. Heifetz, on the other hand, sees community as the granter of authority. Acts 2, in addition, presents Jesus as the granter of authority for mission which includes acting *for* the community of Jesus. The divine empowerment of leaders, then, is surrounded by community. However, Heifetz's notion of authority is chastened in Christ. In Christ, the community is not the granter of authority, but the recognizer of authority. A community that grants authority is not the community of Christ. An example may be an elected official. The mayor receives authority from the community via election, but this is not the authority of Christ. Christians, then, should be cautious in drawing too close a connection between authority granted by a community that is not the church and authority granted by Christ. While O'Donovan provides ways of thinking about this natural ground of authority to be given by community, O'Donovan's approach to the authority of Christ undergirds the intertextual analysis of Acts 2: Christ is the one who has received authority from God the Father and Christ is the one who provides authority for his mission which includes serving his community.

The nature of Christ's authority also opens the relational nature of authority. The survey of authority in management studies often neglects the relational aspect of authority. Yukl, Ivancevich et al., Rost, and, at times, Heifetz cast authority as the result of structure, often casting authority against leadership. The authority of Christ, however, while seen as structural and conferred from above, does not cease being relational. Thus, Christian leaders in the authority of Christ should seek to foster proper relationships with those whom they lead. Indeed, the very nature of communication confirms the nature of the authority of Christ. Peter's message is authorized by the ascended Christ and cuts to the heart of the hearers. The authority bestowed in this proclamation of the mission of Christ is clearly relational.<sup>36</sup> To be Christian is to be relational in the sense that Jesus' own relationality is the Incarnation of God. The call for Christians to follow Christ, a relational commitment, is not dismissed in leading, but must maintain the relational commitment of Christ as the continued mission of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Julianne R. Cenac, "Leader Emergence and the Phenomenological Work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives on Leadership* 3, no. 1 (2011): 123-135.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Raschke, *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2008), 117-118. Raschke's popular exploration of Christian mission does not explore leadership per se, but, it could be argued, assumes leadership in the sense that Christian leadership is not, by any means, an oxymoron, but, if anything, redundant. To be a Christian means to lead and to lead means being a Christian. The relational affirmation of Christ's leadership, however, in his ascension is what shapes and chastens leadership, which this article is attempting to show.

### *Authority and Freedom*

Finally, our intertextual analysis of Acts 2 and examination of authority in management provides insight into the divine empowerment of leaders. Jesus, as the high and exalted one, is the first recipient of authority and the one who grants authority and empowers. Yukl and Ivancevich et al. affirm that authority gives right and freedom. Yukl affirms that authority is from above. The context of the exaltation of Christ to right hand of God has placed Jesus above all kingdoms and at the head of all creation. Thus, the authority of Christ creates the freedom of leaders and the right to act. Christian leadership is not grasped, claimed, or taken. It is always and only bestowed from Christ, and in this authorization is the ground of Christian liberty. Christians have freedom to lead because Christ is Lord of all.

### *Dual Nature of the Divine Empowerment of Leaders*

In light of the exaltation of Christ and the nature of authority, the divine empowerment of leadership is both grounded and chastened. Christian leaders are authorized by the tradition which they claim, but are also bound to that tradition. Christian leaders are recognized by accomplishment and can expect accomplishment, but only accomplishment in the mission of Christ. Christian leaders are recognized by the community of Christ. Finally, Christian leaders are free by the authority of Christ to act in the mission of Christ. The authority of Christ, then, bears dual implications as the divine empowerment of leaders is considered. Authorization from Christ carries freedom, but also boundaries for Christian leadership.

## V. CONCLUSION

The authority of Jesus, as developed from the intertextual analysis of Acts 2, establishes the authority of a leader in his mission. This same authority creates the boundaries within which these leaders operate and the authority which they claim. Versions of authority from leadership and management, sociology, and theology have shaped the consideration of Jesus' authority and have been chastened from the picture of Jesus' authority. It is essential to challenge any consideration of Christian leadership that would operate outside the authority of Christ and, thus, the mission of Christ. Further, the relational nature of the authority of Christ presents a challenge to literature in management and literature that would structure authority without a consideration of relationship.

---

### **About the Author**

Aaron Perry is a Ph.D. student in organizational leadership at Regent University's School of Business & Leadership. He is an ordained pastor in the Wesleyan Church and serves at Centennial Road Church in Brockville, Ontario. He is co-author (with Rev. Tim

Perry) of *He Ascended into Heaven* and editor of *Developing Ears to Hear: Listening in Pastoral Ministry, the Spiritual Life, and Theology*.  
Email: [aaron@centennialroad.com](mailto:aaron@centennialroad.com)