



Divine Empowerment of Leaders in Early Christianity

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The process of intertexture analysis is utilized to segment and interpret meanings and intentions based on Luke's interpretation of Joel 2 as he authored Acts 2. This includes Luke's development of the character Peter and his thoughts and intentions at the Pentecost. The concept of divine empowerment is brought to light. Topics such as law vs. spirit are explored, as well as the resurrection and other important moments in biblical history. Divine empowerment is analyzed to develop an understanding of empowerment in modern leadership theory. The focus, as guided through exegesis, is on empowerment, transformational leadership, organizational commitment, symbolism, and storytelling. These concepts were important in the connectivity of God's message and divine empowerment, and in the beliefs and actions of followers. The concepts carry a similar purpose in the secular business world, relating instead to belief in the values, vision, and message and to creating action toward established goals in a manner that fosters ownership on behalf of the followers.

Certain individuals in the Bible were blessed with divine empowerment. The exploration of the book of Acts is analyzed with a thorough exegesis process; a relationship between Joel 2 and Acts 2 is established in that Luke draws upon and alters aspects of Joel 2 to develop Acts 2 in proper context to the times and based on God's will through divine empowerment. Important and controversial topics such as the resurrection, the law, and the spirit are explored from different perspectives. Divine empowerment is then analyzed in relation to modern leadership theory to include empowerment, transformational leadership, organizational commitment, symbolism, and storytelling. The parallels and differences between the secular and Christian worlds are evaluated and discussed.

Intertexture Analysis

In exploration of divine empowerment, the intertextuality process was implemented to identify text from the metaphors, symbols, and interpretations of different texts that were utilized from a historical perspective to interpret the meaning of Acts 2 (Robbins, 1996). In this case, oral-scribal, cultural, and historical forms of intertextual analysis are utilized (Robbins, 1996). The initial analysis is conducted through intertexture of Joel 2

and Acts 2. As the author of Acts 2, Luke drew many influences from Joel 2 in the Old Testament. Certain components of Acts 2 were quoted or paraphrased from Joel 2.

As an example, there are differences between “then afterward” (Joel 2:28) and “in the last days it will be” (Acts 2:17). In Joel, the text seems to imply there is something more on Earth, whereas in Acts it seems to imply that the end of the world is near. In addition, there are other differences between Acts (2:17-2:21) and (Joel 2:28-2:32).

In comparing Acts 2:17 and Joel 2:28, there are differences in the situation as described by the historical text. “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28). In Acts, a slightly different ordering of words is present: “That I pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). It is evident that Luke is utilizing words from Joel 2 to present his view of the start of the end-times.

The Bible describes that God’s power will break down powerful current barriers: “Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:29). Luke wrote about Peter when describing the Pentecost, noting when Peter asked people to declare their belief in Jesus and to ask for forgiveness of their sins as the end is approaching. “Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:18). In this case, the offering is for all who choose to believe and repent as delivered through Peter’s message, fueled by divine empowerment. The difference in context in the next verses is based on the laws of the Old Testament versus the promise of Jesus. “I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes” (Joel 2:30-32). In Joel 2, God may deliver good or bad based on the laws. This is different in Acts 2: “And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs of the earth below, blood, and fire and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day” (Acts 2:19-20). In this case, the end is “great” for those who believe. The difference in historical perspective is shown again through divine intervention:

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those that the Lord calls. (Joel 2:32)

The difference in Peter’s interpretation through Luke’s writing is again significant. “Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). Simply

put—in this case, if you believe you will live. What used to be reserved for prophets is now available for everyone.

In Joel this is not the end of the world, but it is a breaking of the barriers of status and the opening of God's kingdom, whereas in Acts it is the end of the world but also the beginning of life. In Joel the text references the slaves, but in Acts it says "my slaves." Additionally, the forces are very descriptive in Joel and Acts, showing God's activity. In Acts the description is mellowed; instead of the columns of smoke in Joel, Luke mentions smoky mist. This signals a peaceful end or a new beginning. In Joel it is described as a great and terrible day, whereas in Acts it talks of a great and glorious day. In Joel it talks of the Lord saving but also choosing, but in Acts it states that all who choose will be saved.

In further comparing Acts 2:18 with Joel 2:29, yet another written text is referenced by Luke but again with a noticeable addition. Acts demonstrates ownership by saying "my" slaves. The word "prophecy" could mean declarations of what is to come. Yet the difference is one of ownership and hope in Acts versus in Joel. In 1 Corinthians 11:5, there is writing about the social norms—women were not allowed to pray without a veil, and the major differences between men and women are described according to God. But the rest of 1 Corinthians 11 goes on to discuss the fact that God is downplaying or refuting these customs at this point in history, and that everything comes from God. Portents means something glorious is about to happen. Similarly, this is illustrated in Acts 2 by the distance between heaven and earth.

In Joel 2:31-32, the word "Lord" means God; in Acts 2:20-21, Lord means Jesus. Acts 2:21 omits words from Joel 2:32. In Joel, God is choosing who will have eternal life as part of the Old Testament. In Acts, if one had declared belief in and love of Jesus Christ, he or she would receive life. It was not a matter of being chosen; it was a matter of making a choice.

Divine empowerment also took place with David, a person who abided by the Lord. David is described as being at God's feet. Luke wrote that the Lord gave David strength in Acts 2:24-28. In the book of Psalms, Sheol and Pit are used to describe hell; verses 6:5, 38:9, 88:10-12 all reference hell. This theme is important as it drives significant thinking about the process of death.

Also, divine empowerment can create a feeling of courage. Later in Acts, Paul demonstrates his courage based on divine empowerment. "Paul, on this occasion as in subsequent settings, used the freedom to complete his divine commission by confronting persistent misunderstanding and embittered hostility with fearless proclamation" (Bechard, 2003, p. 250). This courage was fueled through divine empowerment.

In Luke's writing in Acts, Peter offered insights into his view of the original meaning of Psalm 16:10. Psalm 16:10 is the basis for arguments by both Peter, in Acts 2:27, and Paul, in Acts 13:35, for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter offers commentary that brings explanation for the use of intertexture analysis from the Old Testament (Trull, 2004).

Peter's sermon contained elements intended to bring all parties together. He linked the divine empowerment of the disciples and praised the power of God for the learned languages and overcoming the untrue accusations of drunkenness early in the morning. Luke was able to relate these occurrences to the writings in Joel and the primary issues. In addition, Luke used the material in Joel to show the divine empowerment of Jesus the Lord, and calls for repentance (Trull, 2004).

Peter talks about death as a painful experience that God freed Jesus from through the resurrection. This was a direct action from God, which Peter emphasizes, after the planned death of Jesus as mentioned in Acts 2:23. The death and resurrection were all part of God's plan in which he empowered many to act out the subsequent events as well as tell the stories of the events; despite the difficulty in the metaphor, the meaning of Acts 2:24 is clear (Trull, 2004). God raised Jesus from the dead. Death's power, seen in both the pain it brings and its firm grasp, was unable to hold Jesus. David, through divine empowerment, prophesied that Jesus could not remain among the dead. It was impossible for Jesus to remain dead because David had prophesied that the Messiah would rise from the dead (Trull). "This connection is seen in the use of the explanatory γαρ in verse 25. This conjunction indicates that the prophecy of David in Psalm 16:8-11 is the reason death could not hold Jesus" (Trull, p. 437). His body would not decay, and he would be freed.

Luke, through the character Peter, is trying to reinforce his statements factually. "Following Peter's quotation of Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:25-28 he explained that David was speaking not of himself, but of the Messiah" (Wedderburn, 1994, p. 29-32). This detail was shown, in part, by Peter's declarations. "Peter made five important declarations that demonstrate the messianic reference in the psalm" (Trull, 2004, p. 440). He spoke of David's tomb as evidence that David was not speaking of his own resurrection. He reinforced David's place as a prophet through divine intervention. David also had the Davidic Covenant, he had a vision about the coming of the Lord, and David spoke of the resurrection (Trull). "Though the Old Testament never specifically calls David a prophet, the descriptions of Saul's and David's anointings may simply be that David was given a prophetic ability" (Trull, p. 443). David's divine empowerment is related to his foresight of the resurrection of Jesus, and his written thoughts in Psalm 16:8-11 offer sufficient evidence of this foresight (Trull). Jesus is differentiated from David in that his body was not only resurrected, but it was not left to decay, whereas David's body did decay (Trull).

Peter also spoke, as recorded in Acts 1:15-22, about Judas and the betrayal. Concerned for the credibility of the ministry, there was a need for distance lest the divine empowerment of the disciples come into question. Psalm 16 has been interpreted in different ways as being connected to this issue:

Modern scholars have offered a variety of explanations for Peter's interpretation of Psalm 16. Where ancient writers interpreted the psalm through New Testament statements, modern scholars begin with the original context in the Book of Psalms and then consider the interpretive relationship between the original context and the New Testament usage. (Trull, 2004, p. 198)

These differences are an important component of the exegesis process. As mentioned previously, through the exegesis process analysis of Psalm 16, areas are questioned such as verse 9 where "in security" is replaced by "in hope," and the concept of Sheol and everyone that died is going there compared to the concept that the believers would go straight to heaven (Trull, 2004).

This position seeks to trace the development of a Psalm's meaning through canonical stages. "The canonical approach raises these questions: Can resurrection be proven in the Old Testament context of Psalm 16? Could David have spoken of the Messiah originally?" (Trull, 2004, p. 205-206). One of the main concepts is whether Psalm 16 truly proves the resurrection.

In using typology, Psalm 16 is interpreted somewhat differently. "Jesus' resurrection made possible and actual the hope of communion with God after death. Peter could then apply the Psalm directly to Jesus because His resurrection revealed for the first time what believers could expect after death" (Trull, 2004, p. 207). This brought a different perspective. "There are some that argue that Luke himself did not wish to contrast the giving of the Law and the giving of the Spirit" (Wedderburn, 1994, p. 29). This was a difficult and controversial topic to address.

There is a gap in time that is important relative to Luke. "It is well known, too, that Luke's delay of the outpouring of the Spirit until 50 days after the resurrection contrasts with John 20:22, where Jesus breathes the Spirit upon his disciples on the day of his resurrection" (Pickett, 2005, p. 435). This contrast between the Law and the Spirit was a common and difficult one during this time, and still is today.

Galilee becomes important as it relates to Jesus. "Galilee is confirmed as the place where the risen Jesus will meet his followers to continue actualizing the kingdom of God" (Pickett, 2005, p. 435). This was clear in the Bible: "The numerous echoes and allusions to Scripture indicate that Mark's depiction of Jesus' ministry in Galilee must be understood in the light of Israel's history and hopes" (Pickett, 2005, p. 437). This picture of the

resurrection continues to shape the hopes and thoughts of many during this time. "It is against this background of power/presence/Spirit in the Old Testament, and of Luke's great joy in the miraculous as a sure sign of the Gospel" (Dorman, 1985, p. 149). This message was filled with power and hope: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Dorman, p. 149). Through the message of God, the messengers touched with divine empowerment communicated in various ways.

Many were concerned or confused with Luke's writings in certain ways. "As an example, Acts 9:15-16 is also better understood in the light of Luke's literary and theological concerns than in terms of Paul's life experience" (Hedrick, 1981, p. 420).

It is not accidental that the commissioning statement in Acts 9:15-16 differs markedly from the commissioning statements in the parallel accounts (Acts 22:14-15; 26:16-18). Of all three statements Acts 9:15-16 best captures the spirit and style of Luke's worldwide missionary theme for the book in Acts 1:8 (compare similar statements at 9:31; 13:46-47; 26:19-20). Acts 9:15-16 is the only commissioning statement that specifically mentions both Gentile and Jewish missions and the commission has a structure and style similar to Acts 1:8. (Hedrick, 1981, p. 420)

This intertexture enables a better understanding of Luke's perspective.

Divine empowerment is an important concept. God is all knowing and his shared wisdom is empowerment. He speaks in a way that is understood by humans, and he takes action and creates symbols demonstrating that His love is everywhere (Dorman, 1985). "If it is the immediacy of God that is the distinctive factor in empowerment, then that perceived immediacy should contribute significantly to the spiritual growth and integration of one Christian in his or her talk with the Lord" (Dorman, p. 159). The immediacy in the presence of God has been discussed in a manner of charismatic renewal, which helps for inward exploration and leads to empowerment that may encourage expansion of the renewal (Dorman, 1985).

God calls us to action through empowerment. His message provides courage to take risks and make choices. The choices may be risky in the context of the earthly world and potential persecution and hardship, but there is zero risk in the context of the Spirit and eternal life (Propst, 1993). "As Karl Barth has reminded us, obedience to God is not theory or interpretation but action. Just as knowledge of God is not factual or philosophical but personal insight" (Propst, p. 237). The power is in the personal relationship with God.

Empowerment

Divine empowerment connects God's grace, will, message, and purpose through messengers in different ways. Many of these ways have been observed and documented. Through this divine empowerment, believers are provided with guidance, support, and motivation. Non-believers are given a roadmap, evidence, and rationale for believing. This concept of divine empowerment mobilizes and motivates current followers and attempts to attract new followers in a relational and spiritual manner. When applying the concepts of divine empowerment and empowerment to the business world, there is a certain amount of overlap and connection and there are certain differences.

There are many leaders in the secular world who are Godly and whose faith grounds them in values, enabling them to be effective leaders. They are, in essence, divinely empowered, and they also empower their followers using secular methods. There are also leaders who may empower their team based on sound leadership principles, but may not draw their motivation or foundation from divine empowerment. The aim of this paper is to understand empowerment and the benefits relative to leadership. The understanding is taken from the study of divine empowerment, along with other relevant information from literature on empowerment.

There are different types of empowerment. A few examples are relationship empowerment, encouragement empowerment, and psychological empowerment. Relationship empowerment is the giving of power and control to employees in an organization through connecting and interacting with them, with the leader building capability in the follower and then giving them partial or full control (Yao & Cui, 2010). Encouragement empowerment is psychological in nature as it is based on the follower developing positive feelings of power and control through encouragement from the leader; psychological empowerment is different for different people in different situations (Yao & Cui). "Scholars have studied the attributive variables of psychological empowerment from different angles. From past relative empirical research, the factors influencing individual psychological empowerment include three aspects" (Yao & Cui, p. 22). The three factors include the individual, the work, and the team (Yao & Cui, 2010). These three factors provide the context for multifaceted interaction of these items.

Cakar and Erturk (2010) studied how innovative capability is developed based on culture and empowerment. As it relates to divine empowerment, this work on empowerment may have relevance. During the times of Acts 2 and Joel 2, there were different cultures involved. In this context, culture was based on country and religion. Certain people viewed the Old Testament or the law culturally in a certain manner. Others also included the New Testament in their perspective. People who received divine empowerment from the Lord also found themselves having to innovate relative to communication, symbolism, and influencing relative the message of God.

The same holds true today in that leaders must innovate and may choose empowerment as a method to help communicate, influence, and symbolize. Low power distance has been shown to lead to a higher rate of innovation, whereas high power distance tends to lead to lower levels of innovation and management practices that empower employees, such as communication, development, coaching, and giving employees decision making authority lead to innovation (Cakar & Erturk, 2010). “Empowerment is positively related to innovation capability” (Cakar & Erturk, p. 332). Innovation brings about change. “In addition, uncertainty avoidance is positively related to empowerment. Employees who perceive the uncertainty avoidance higher will report higher levels of empowerment” (Cakar & Erturk, 2010, p. 331). David and the disciples were given divine empowerment. They had access to direct information others did not have from God. They were given the authority to make decisions about how they presented certain information. Their innovative techniques in presentation and writing were designed to increase uncertainty avoidance, which then led to empowered followers.

Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

The primary goal of divine empowerment was similar to organizational commitment, only in a more meaningful, spiritual, deep, knowing, and never-ending way. God was using divine empowerment to create follower commitment of the human population or organization. There are many similarities between this concept and modern organizational commitment.

“Empowerment is the process which enables others to gain power, authority, and influence over others, institutions, or society” (Reza, Gholamreza, Hasan, & Nasrin, 2010, p. 65). The process of empowerment comes from relational and psychological foundations (Reza et al.). “The literature on empowerment from a relational perspective focuses on the dynamics of transferring power from the leader/manager to the subordinate/employee” (Reza et al., p. 66). The leader must make a decision to start this transfer. “The psychological perspective views empowerment as a subjective phenomenon. Empowerment in this view is a motivational construct where power and control are seen as motivational states internal to individuals” (Reza et al., p. 66). The importance of these to constructs is two-fold: it involves both transference and motivation. This means it is given and desired, which tends to build commitment.

“Organizational commitment refers to an employee’s attachment to an organization as a whole” (Reza et al., 2010, p. 71). Three types of organizational commitment are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is based on an emotional attachment; continuance commitment is based on the cost of not continuing the relationship with the organization; and normative commitment is based on ethical principles (Reza et al.). Commitment to God can be based on all three types of commitments. In Reza et al.’s study, affective and normative

commitment had the strongest positive correlation with empowerment versus continuance commitment. Affective and normative commitment are more positive and based more on a rationale for wanting to have commitment, whereas continuance commitment is more focused on the cost of not doing something. Therefore, commitment was found to be stronger when empowered through positive motivation driven by relationships and ethics (Reza et al.).

Janssen's (2004) study demonstrated that there could be moderating variables with the relationship between the independent variable of empowerment and the dependent variable of organizational commitment. In this specific study, conflict with superiors was the moderating variable; in this case, as conflict increased, employee commitment levels decreased (Janssen). As organizations empower their employees, it is important to understand other factors that may moderate or mediate the independent and dependent variables. This may be critical to the execution of empowerment and the desired resultant commitment levels.

Empowerment and Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has been linked to many positive organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, perceived extra effort, and organizational citizenship. Psychological empowerment has been shown to enhance the positive effects of transformational leadership (Fuller, Morrison, Jones, Bridger, & Brown, 1999). "Psychological empowerment has been defined as the increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in cognitions that reflect an individual's active orientation to his or her work role" (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443). This moderating effect can raise the levels of organizational outcomes.

There are several approaches to empowerment research. One is the leadership approach, wherein certain aspects of leadership drive empowering behaviors of followers. Transformational leadership specifically plays an important role relative to the empowerment construct, and components of transformational leadership such as intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation all are related to psychological empowerment (Menon, 2001). These components stimulate creativity and build a sense of higher purpose for followers (Menon). This results in a more empowered professional.

Symbolic Leadership and Storytelling

Symbolism creates a visualization process where people make connections based on actions involving symbols. Symbols can be reconstructions, reinterpretations, or connections to a memory, object, or idea (Grunig, 1993). "Symbolic leaders enjoy a sense of agency that eludes most other employees in the typical organization" (Grunig, p.

103). The Aboriginals have demonstrated effective leadership through symbolism and empowerment in a spiritual manner.

“The Aboriginals view leadership as a spiritual endeavor that is holistic and egalitarian in nature. Aboriginal leaders use a more indirect style of communication that frequently invokes traditional imagery, story-telling and animal-based metaphors” (Julien, Wright, & Zinni, 2010, p. 114). They also practice connecting as a society, and the leaders find spiritual strength along with a value-based way to live and worship as they focus on sharing information and decision making, which in turn leads to empowerment – although it can lead to groupthink as well (Julien et al.).

Aboriginal leaders have long practiced the art of story-telling. Stories and symbols are an important part of connecting with followers (Julien et al., 2010). These leaders often even use animals in their stories as symbols. “The following is an example of a story: If you watch the buffalo, one will go over the cliff and they will all follow. Geese are different. Everyone takes a turn leading the formation” (Julien et al., p. 120). Symbolism and storytelling create a linkage to the true meaning in a manner that creates visualization.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) have referenced symbols in their writing to clarify and reinforce messages. One way they discuss this is through animating the vision where symbols are used to bring to life the aspirations of the leader in a manner that resonates with followers, strengthens their perception of the leader, and creates a connection to the vision in an aligned manner. Similarly, they use a concept called “imagine the possibilities,” where symbolism again is a vital part of helping followers to visualize important themes and messages (Kouzes & Posner).

Conclusion

Divine empowerment connected men such as David with God. Acts 2, authored by Luke, explains the concepts of the Spirit, eternal life, and the resurrection. Luke, through divine empowerment, utilized writings from Joel 2 as part of his writings and changed certain aspects of the text in order to capture the times and to properly reflect the will of God, the transition from the Law to the Holy Spirit, and the concept that to believe is to live. These controversial times were difficult, and divine empowerment prepared important leaders such as Luke and David. Just as empowerment today strengthens and prepares leaders to enable their followers to accomplish goals based on vision and values, these leaders often demonstrated individualized consideration and inspirational motivation as a part of their empowerment process. They used transformational leadership, organizational commitment, symbolic leadership, and storytelling to accomplish these objectives.

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