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The Ignored Miracle of the Dark-Skinned Eunuch Ideological Texture Analysis of Acts 8:26-40

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The conversion of the first Gentile, a dark skinned, African eunuch, has historically commanded scant attention from biblical scholars. This analysis uses Robbins tool of ideological texture analysis to uncover insights on this under-emphasized, historical pericope. Analyses of the text reveals that God offers His salvation not only to the masses, but to each and every individual regardless of race, background, and social status. The examination discloses: a) Luke's desire and passion to communicate to both the Jew and Gentile, God's proclamation, that all men and women throughout the world are offered salvation and redemption; b) Philip's use of the authoritative text of the Old Testament to support and explain the implications of the prophetic Scripture for the Gentile; c) the reversal of the popular, incorrect ideology of the time that eunuchs, non-Jews, and those of different ethnicity would find themselves outside God's favor; and d) an assessment of the marginalization of ethnic minorities in Scripture. The exploration concludes by applying the findings to contemporary leadership theory, noting Philip's combination of servant and spiritual leadership traits impact his effectiveness as a leader.

Keywords: minorities, redemption, ideological texture analysis, contemporary leadership theory, servant leadership, leadership effectiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

Biblical scholars and preachers have historically directed little attention to the first Gentile converted to Christianity, a dark skinned, African eunuch (Martin, 1989). Ideological texture analysis of this text discloses the irrelevancy of one's race, background, and social status to God's offer of salvation to every individual. The text of Acts 8:26-40, described by Karris (1978), as a "diamond in the rough," (p.99) is overshadowed by Paul's persecution of the Christians and his radical conversion. This analysis uses Robbins' (1996b) tool of ideological texture analysis to present a deeper

understanding and insights on details underlying this under-emphasized, historical pericope. The text outlines that God offers salvation to not only the masses, but to every individual regardless of race, background, and social status. Assessment of ideological texture studies the initial inconspicuous nature of the event, as well as the subsequent portrayal as almost an inconsequential occurrence. The examination discloses the following: (a) Luke's desire and passion to communicate to both the Jew and Gentile, God's proclamation, that all men and women throughout the world are offered salvation and redemption; (b) Philip's use of the authoritative text of the Old Testament to support and explain the implications of the prophetic Scripture for the Gentile; (c) the reversal of the popular, incorrect ideology of the time that eunuchs, non-Jews, and those of different ethnicity would find themselves outside God's favor; (d) an assessment of the marginalization of ethnic minorities in Scripture.

Applying ideological texture analysis to this scripture allows the reader to gain a greater understanding of the underlying meaning of the text. The study then applies the concepts uncovered to contemporary leadership theory to identify how Paul's servant and spiritual leadership contributed to his effectiveness as a leader.

II. SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF SCRIPTURE

Studying Scripture can be a challenging, daunting, and enlightening task. Robbins (1996b) proposed socio-rhetorical criticism as a systematic methodology that allows the scholar to merge "social – scientific and literary critical approaches" to explore, interpret, and understand early Christianity and the emergent canonical biblical text (p.i). Robbins introduced socio-rhetorical criticism as a way of analyzing Scripture by focusing on the values, convictions, and beliefs that are gleaned from Scripture interactively with the current world in which the inquirer lives (Robbins, 1996a). This approach acknowledges Christianity as an evolving ideological construct that emerged through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but also amidst a specific culture. It challenges the postmodern academic to examine the text from their perspective, as well as from the ancient and modern perspectives (Robbins, 1996a). This multi-dimensional approach is an alternative way of evaluating Scripture that includes both a detailed analysis of the text as well as interactively weaving the culture and world of the authors with the traditions and life as we know it in the twenty-first century. Robbins (1996b) challenges the scholar to reorient their thinking as they interpret and examine the multiple layers and interpretations in each reading. Robbins describes that looking at the "socio" includes accessing the "social class, social systems, personal and community status, people on the margin, and people in the positions of power" (1996a, p.1). Additionally, Robbins notes that the term 'rhetorical' challenges the reader to take note of the individuals and topics described in the text. Robbins argues that the combined socio-rhetorical criticism "integrates the way people use language with the way they live in the world" (1996a, p.1). Robbins (1999) notes that socio-rhetorical interpretation is

guided by the metaphor of a text as a tapestry rather than a site of windows and mirrors, socio-rhetorical interpretation has begun to focus not only on multiple textures of a text but also on multiple discourses that interweave with one

another within those textures. The interweaving of multiple textures and discourses within a text creates an environment in which signification, meanings and meaning effects interact with one another in ways that no one method can display. Only an approach that is highly programmatic, complexly variegated and readily adaptable can begin to engage and exhibit the rich world that texts bring into the life of humans as they live, work, struggle, suffer, die, celebrate and commemorate together (p.1).

This approach integrates different types of analysis to produce a richer, more in-depth understanding of Scripture. According to Bekker (2006a), Robbins' methodology introduces a "paradigm shift in the way one perceives, understands and uses texts" (p. 8), replacing a single lens view of Scripture with multiple layers within the text as the basis for the interpretation.

Fairclough (2003) also supports analyzing and interpreting text using similar social rhetorical analysis tools as outlined by Robbins. While Fairclough refers to this analysis as social, discourse, and text analysis, it embraces some of the same core concepts and benefits of Robbins' approach. Fairclough's bases his methodology on discourse analysis that emphasized a more detailed linguistic analysis of texts previously presented by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) and Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2000, 2001). Fairclough describes his approach as "discourse analysis (a version of 'critical discourse analysis')" (2003, p.2) and explains that it "is based upon the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language" (2003, p.2). Fairclough perceives his approach as a technique for conducting social research, using discourse analysis and focusing on language. Fairclough recognizes that while his method is "one analytical strategy amongst many" (2003, p.2) but argues similarly to Robbins (1996a) that "it often makes sense to use discourse analysis in conjunction with other forms of (rhetorical) analysis" to gaining a truer, more in-depth understanding of the text (2003, p. 2).

The socio-rhetorical approach to textual analysis is systematic and methodical which allows users to easily grasp and employ its use (Robbins, 1996b). Robbins (1996a) developed five different ways in which one could review the text to more fully assess, dissect, and understand Scripture. These methods include the following analyses of: "(a) the inner texture; (b) the intertexture; (c) the social and cultural texture; (d) the ideological texture; (e) the sacred texture of the text" (Robbins, 1996a, p. 3). This examination will analyze the ideological texture to explore Luke's writing in Acts 8:26-40 where Philip ministers to the Enoch and helps open this prominent official's eyes to the great news of the Gospel.

III. IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE ANALYSIS

Robbins (1996b) notes that ideological texture analysis is an excellent tool to explore the interaction between the author, text, and reader and to better understand the intended meaning of the passage.

Ideological Texture Analysis as a Tool

Robbins (1996b) outlines that the ideological texture analysis addresses the area of the text where the implied reader (reader at the time the Scripture was written) and the real reader/audience “receive and empower the message of the text” (1996b, p.37). Robbins explains that “ideology concerns the particular way in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures, and institutions of power” (1996b, p. 36). Robbins concludes that “analysis and interpretation of the ideological texture of texts raises, in the end, the issue of spheres of truth and how we attempt to approach them” (1996b, p.37). Robbins emphasizes that it is believed that truth can be captured in the unraveling and studying of the underlying ideas and concepts through this method of ideological observation.

Patte (1989) proposes a similar tool, structured analysis, which assists the scholar in interpreting the author’s convictions. When coupled with ideological texture, structured analysis improves the overall interpretation of the text. Patte also asserts that understanding the ideological perspective of the author improves the scholar’s ability to accurately assess the author’s true intended message.

DeSilva (2004) summarizes how ideological criticism attempts to unravel how the ideology of the interpreter influences the reader’s interpretation and application of the text. DeSilva notes that, as the investigator seeks to understand how the “cultural location, ethnicity, social location, gender, and other factors constrain an interpreter and contribute to the results of any investigation of the text (viewed negatively, as limiting or constraining interpretation; viewed positively, as opening alternative readings of the text)” (2004, pp. 463-464). In summary, understanding biases, prejudices, and stereotyping of the writer allows the interpreter to gain a truer understanding of the written work. Alternatively, understanding the author’s culture, background, passion, and intent facilitates a deeper understanding of the truth that the author intends to communicate. DeSilva emphasizes that ideological criticism should attempt to explore how the ideology of the writer “shapes the text itself and works through the text on the readers in their situation” (2004, p.464). Underlying this is the assumption that the New Testament is a rhetorical text, and its authors seek to “persuade, influence, affirm or limit or constrain the readers to respond in certain ways and not in other ways” (2004, p.464). Implicitly, the biblical text is best understood as having an intended message of directing, influencing, freeing, and persuading the reader with the message of Christ. A reader who understands the ideology of its authors will gain a more accurate and revealing significance of each portion of the Scripture.

Benefits of Ideological Texture Analysis

Bekker describes ideological texture as a method of “exploring the ideological inner dynamics of the text” (2006a, p. 11). Martin (1989/1993) demonstrates how expanding analysis beyond traditional boundaries and identifying ideological occurrences that expands the intertexture analysis leads the scholar to more deeply understand the social, cultural, and ideological meanings of the text.

DeSilva (2004) recognizes that extreme positions held by authors that are disclosed through ideological rhetoric and understood through ideological texture analysis can, if interpreted correctly, enable the reader to better understand the positions and experiences that are dissimilar to their own. DeSilva provides two

examples, “Postcolonial criticism” (2004, pp. 677-682) and “Feminist criticism” (2004, pp. 757-770), where valid and beneficial contributions are provided within the texture that represent minorities’ views that have been misunderstood. Similar to the benefits of using metaphors, ideological texture pulls a reader into the world of the author, taking the reader to a deeper level of understanding.

Methodology for Ideological Criticism

Unlike the other forms of socio-rhetorical criticism, ideological criticism does not have a structured analysis format or methodology. Instead, the scholar is encouraged to carefully read and assess the Scriptures. DeSilva (2004) recommends addressing six critical questions to determine which lens the biblical author is interpreting the biblical concepts through and how this bias is influencing the author’s writing and directives. DeSilva’s recommended questions to help the scholar better understand the ideological predisposition of the author include the following:

1. What were the interest and aims of the author and the groups represented?
2. How does the writer address their authority and the authority of others?
3. What groups are discussed in the text? Are any groups or parties minimized? Are the writer’s opinions inappropriate or influenced by the biases of the culture?
4. Does the writer attempt to control, direct, or shape the way the reader interprets and responds to the text?
5. What issues, difficulties or concerns are present among those in which the text is directed? How does the author address these concerns?
6. How does the writer explain, limit or outline the choices or options available to those that he/she is addressing? The authors’ affirmation or discouragement of available choices reveals biases of the author. (p. 464)

DeSilva (2004) and Robbins (1996b) both assert that understanding the ideology of the author conveyed in the text enables the scholar to fully understand the true and intended meaning inspired by God and captured by the author. This free form analysis and inquiry enables the interpreter to strip away the cultural and unintentional biases held by the author.

IV. IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF ACTS 8:26-40

Overview - The Book of Acts

The Book of Acts provides a detailed account of the birth and expansion of the Christian Church. Dillion (1990) and DeSilva (2004) note that the author’s identity is not specifically disclosed in the text. Dillion outlines that initially, the writing of Acts and the third gospel were attributed to Luke, a fellow citizen of Antioch and known companion of Paul. Subsequently, some have contested this assertion, but numerous respected scholars have concluded that Luke was the author (DeSilva, 2004; Dillion, 1990; González, 2004; Wenham et al., 2001). Most concur that the author was a companion

of Paul's which helps the reader to understand the culture and filter in which the historical events were presented (Dillion, 1990; Wenham et al., 2001). Some scholars have also questioned the historical accuracy of the book of Acts. Some theorize that Acts was written much later than the events of the first century church and was written for the intended purpose of improving the image of the ministry that was plagued with divisive, conflicting events that resulted from the controversy between the "Peterine Jewish church and the Pauline pro-Gentile church" (Wenham et al., 2001, p. 1066).

Understanding the Author of Acts

DeSilva (2004) and Wenham et al. (2001) support Luke as the author of Acts and outline that Luke was an educated, Jewish physician, and a traveling companion of Paul's. Luke's academic credentials strengthened both the facts and details of his observations, which are believed to be eye-witness and participatory accounts (DeSilva, 2004; Wenham et al., 2001).

Wenham et al. (2001) concluded that Luke was both a historian and theologian and that he presented accurate theological truths about "the Holy Spirit, the role of Jesus, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the acceptability of the Gentile believers apart from the law" (2001, p.1067). Marshall (1988) argues that Luke is a theologian, but Acts is not a systematic theology text. Marshall suggests that the inclusion of theological ideas and interests does not indicate that one should negate the historical details, which are also described, but should conclude that they are accurate and relevant.

It is probably not in error that Luke is chosen to present the story of the first Gentile convert, the Ethiopian Eunuch. While the other Synoptic Evangelists tend to minimize the role of women, Luke is more inclined to highlight women in the ministry of Jesus (DeSilva, 2004). Women appear in Luke's gospel more frequently than in the others. Luke appears to be unencumbered by his higher position in life and portrays the Gentile as a worthy recipient of the good news (DeSilva, 2004).

The Audience of Acts

Dillion (1990) concludes that Acts is a Greek book of the Bible, written by Luke, a Hellenistic, compassionate man. It is a sequel to the gospel of Luke. DeSilva (2004) and Wenham et al. (2001) note that the books of Luke and Acts need to be considered together for a comprehensive understanding of the text. DeSilva (2004) summarizes that the audience has already heard and been instructed on the Christian message.

The Purpose of Acts

DeSilva (2004) observes that Luke provides reasons for his Evangelical message, with Luke stating that he "writes an orderly account" and hopes to enable the "friend of God" to know the truth about what has been instructed (p.309). Luke also seeks to authenticate the Christian story and presents apologetic arguments for the proof of Christianity in preparation for his offering of the Gospel message to all the ends of the earth (DeSilva, 2004; Wenham et al., 2001). Luke's specific purpose includes his pastoral intent to help all Christians, Jews, and Gentiles understand "where they stand

in God's plan" for salvation (DeSilva, 2004, p.354). DeSilva notes a great emphasis of Luke's concern for legitimatizing the Gentile in God's family. This intent should be kept in the forefront, as the passage of the Ethiopian Eunuch, where Philip ministers to an African gentile that is the farthest out on the social Christian ladder, as a result of his ethnicity, absence of Jewish roots, and his castrated state. Luke states that his intent is to provide history, but more importantly theological understanding and guidance to those joining and committing to the Christian journey (DeSilva, 2004).

DeSilva (2004) observed that Luke's audience was searching for answers to questions such as:

- How do we know that, having joined this small religious group, we are standing in the center of God's will?
- How can we be assured that we are part of God's people, and that we are doing the right things to please God?
- How do the Gospel message and the mighty acts of God outline a plan for the reader to support and take part in God's plan for redemption?

As we continue through Acts, and as Acts 8:26-40 supports, Luke's intent is also to confirm to the Gentile Christian reader the "certainty (in sense of reliability) of the promises of God" (DeSilva, 2004, p.310). DeSilva contends that Luke's message in Acts to the Jews and Gentiles is a difficult one, as he attempts to communicate how the promises of God made to the house of David can be received by both the Jew and the Gentile. It is no mistake, DeSilva contends, that the author was an educated man who was most equipped for this difficult literary and leadership challenge.

Cultural Considerations

The Book of Acts begins in Jerusalem with a Jewish, Hellenistic following of Christian converts, but then the Christian mission expands, as Christ promised, to the ends of the earth. The author's position in this society is important to consider. Luke's gospel and his writing in Acts reveal that the author is keenly aware of "patronage and reciprocity of relationships and expectations" (DeSilva, 2004, p.334). As a result, Luke is observed as caring for those outside of his own circle. His recognition of his own privilege, both in heaven and on earth, continually underscores God's favor and the fact that God responds to those who seek him and ask for the outpouring of his Spirit (DeSilva, 2004). While culturally Luke was educated and from privilege, his writing reflects his appreciation of that advantage and includes recognition that if he was not in Christ, he would not have the benefits that have been bestowed upon him (DeSilva). Luke outlines that God's patronage is directed not only to the elite, but equally to the poor, the weak, and those outside the Jewish tradition (DeSilva, 2004). One can only conclude from examining Luke's behavior that he was filled with God's Spirit and that his words were inspired by the almighty. Specifically, we observe him setting aside his education and prestige. This allows him to consider himself, in Christ, as an equal to

others rather than a spiritual, social superior. Such an action requires a Christ-centered, Spirit filled servant.

An Overview of Acts 8:26-40

The book of Acts connects the Gospel writings on the life, work, and message of Christ to the conical letters written for the purpose of addressing and forming the life, ministry, and development of the Christian Church (Wenham et al., 2001). The beginning of Acts (chapters 1-12) outlines Peter's ministry and the latter portion (chapters 13-28) discusses Paul's ministry (Dillion, 1990). Themes discussed in Acts prior to Acts 8:26-40 include: (a) the gift of the Holy Spirit; (b) Christ' ascension and the outlining of the remaining work to be done on earth; (c) the replacement of Judas and reestablishment of twelve disciples; (d) the indwelling of the disciples and the Church leaders with the Holy Spirit; (e) subsequent evangelical events that transpired; (f) exposure of hypocrisy in the early church; (g) Steven's ministry, persecution and death; (h) the first missionary thrust of the Christian church (Philips evangelical mission to Samaria) (Wenham et al., 2001).

The text in Acts that this paper assesses is interestingly placed between the Scripture that discusses Saul's persecution of the church with his attempts to destroy it and Saul's (Paul's) own conversion to Christianity. Paul's transforming encounter with God and his anointing with the Holy Spirit enabled him to become an influential and evangelical messenger of the gospel.

In the Scripture that directly proceeded the text being studied, Acts 8:26-40, Steven, a loved and blessed leader in the early church was persecuted, ridiculed, and martyred as Saul (Paul) observed and approved (Acts 7:54 – Acts 8:1). Saul continued to pursue and persecute Stephen's co-ministers and the faithful Christians in the surrounding area (Acts 8:3). As a result, the persecuted Christians were scattered to many different geographical locations (Dillion, 1990; González, 2004; Wenham et al., 2001). Stephen's death, however, was not in vain. While the mistreated Christians were fearful, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, leading to the first missionary tours that evolved as a result of the Christians dispersing from their previously secure homeland (Wenham et al., 2001). The Christians were scattered and preached the word wherever they went (Wenham et al., 2001). Miraculously, the direct result of Steven's death had the following four outstanding ministry outcomes: (a) Philip's evangelical tour; (b) Paul's (Saul's) dramatic conversion and indwelling with the Holy Spirit; (c) Peter's missionary tour; (d) the founding of the church in Antioch (Wenham et al., 2001).

Acts 8:26-40 shares the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who converts to Christianity after Philip explains the prophetic Scriptural passage in Isaiah to him. The passage begins with Philip completing his large scale, mass conversion in Samaria and being directed by an angel, or possibly the Holy Spirit, to the south where he encounters a lone man, studying the book of the prophets (Dillion, 1990; Wenham et al, 2001). The redirection, whether by an angel or the Holy Spirit, was clearly directed by God, as he sought to fulfill Jesus' promise of salvation for all (Wenham et al, 2001).

Philip perceives the Ethiopian eunuch as a dark skinned exotic man, a high official, but powerless in masculinity because of his castrated state (Wenham et al., 2001). The Ethiopian was returning from Jerusalem, the center at that time of the

Christian movement. Luke observes that even though the eunuch was an important official and Philip was clearly not a social equal, Philip was received with humility and grace (Wenham et al., 2001). It is also striking that while in stature the eunuch had power and prestige, eternally, he was absent salvation. In a sense, God orchestrates these men as equals or having a balance of power. While Philip holds less power and prestige in the government, socially and spiritually his potential status exceeds the eunuch's. It is also striking in Acts 8:30-31 that when Philip asks the eunuch if he understands the passage of Isaiah he is reading, the eunuch responds "How can I...unless someone explains it to me?" and requests that Philip sit with him. The grace and humility with which both men accept each other is a work of the Holy Spirit, and likely a probable cause for the effectiveness of the evangelical message outlined by Philip and embraced by the eunuch.

In Acts 8:31-40, the Holy Spirit's power remains apparent as the eunuch's heart was being prepared to receive the radical and life changing message of salvation and grace. When the eunuch encounters Philip, he is already reading Old Testament Scripture and is returning from a time of praise and worship in Jerusalem (Wenham et al., 2001). The work of the Spirit continues, as the Scripture has raised the eunuch's curiosity to the point where he seeks to understand the truth, even one shared by a foreigner with different ethnicity and of lower political stature. Also noteworthy is that the eunuch was reading Isaiah 53, which included prophetic promises of Jesus and salvation (Wenham et al., 2001). The story continues with Philip clearly and succinctly using the verses from Isaiah to share with the eunuch the salvation message of Jesus. The conclusion is an account of God's care and mercy and Philip's testimony of how all are extended the offer of salvation. When the eunuch hears of the opportunity to be baptized (likely from Philip's explanation of the gospel message) he asks if he too can be baptized (Wenham et al., 2001). Wenham et al. (2001) and Dillion (1990) both recognize that the manner in which the eunuch timidly makes this request suggests that in the past he may have been refused baptism and admission into the church. Wenham et al. (2001) suggest that the eunuch's status of being outside this racial, religious community, as well as a possible inability to fulfill the law and be circumcised, provided the religious family rationale for keeping him the farthest out. The Spirit's power remains apparent as Philip is abruptly removed after the eunuch's conversion, an action that Wenham et al. posit is to ensure that the eunuch's conversion is not contested. The testimony of God's strength and power and not Philip's is reiterated, as the eunuch continues to rejoice in Philip's absence.

Ideological Texture Analysis of Acts 8:26-40

Robbins (1996b) explains that to facilitate ideological texture, socio-rhetorical criticism analyzes the text by examining the writing according to the following "four subsets: (a) ideology in traditional interpretation; (b) ideology in the text; (c) ideology in the intellectual discourse; and (d) ideology in individuals and groups" (p. 221). DeSilva's (2004) questions addressing ideological texture, outlined previously, prompt a similar assessment. DeSilva's questions include the following six subtopics: (a) the author's personal agenda, interest and goals; (b) the readers' background, interest and goals; (c) the way in which the author addresses authority in the text; (d) how the author

addresses the reader; (e) how the author attempts to influence the reader; (f) the way in which the author presents alternative responses to the issues presented (2004, p. 464). This ideological texture analysis addresses both Robbins' (1996b) and DeSilva's (2004) subtopics and questions in the examination.

Ideology in the Text

Elliott adopted a definition of ideology as "an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions, and values, not necessarily true or false, which reflects the needs and interests of a group or class, at a particular time in history" (1990, p.268). Robbins elaborates that exploring the ideology of the text means to reveal the "comprehensive patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs about humans, society, and the universe that are intended to function in the social order" (1996b, p. 193). The intended goal is to understand how patterns that emerged explain the ideals and ideology of social actions that were occurring in the culture described in the text.

DeSilva's (2004) challenge to understand the goals and interest of the author and the individuals that he or she represented assists in uncovering the underlying ideology in the Acts 8 text that describes the conversion of the first Gentile believer. The author, Luke, had a clear passion to communicate to both the Jew and Gentile God's proclamation, that all men and women throughout the world are offered salvation and that redemption and the promise land was not merely reserved for the Jew (DeSilva, 2004; Wenham et al., 2001). Prior to this point, the widespread belief still existed, even among Christian converts, that salvation was reserved for the Jewish believer.

In addition to Luke's desire to articulate the dissemination of the gospel to people of all ethnicities and religious backgrounds, the author had additional objectives apparent in this pericope that are found in other texts by Luke as well. Other themes and goals highlighted by Luke include: (a) the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's role in "preaching and evangelism;" (b) the significance of the witness of Christians and their expression of the details of Christ's life, death and resurrection; (c) the common Lucan theme of great joy after conversion, echoed as the eunuch goes "home rejoicing" (Martin, 1989/1993, p.107). Luke's passion for the new believer, his desire to spread the message of hope that Jesus offered, and his embracing of the Holy Spirit were prevalent ideological themes in this and other Scripture written by Luke.

Ideology in Traditional Interpretation

Robbins notes that "Ideology resides not only in biblical texts, but also resides in interpretative traditions that have granted position of authority" (1996b, p. 200). Martin (1989/1993) outlines how Luke describes Philip's articulation of Isaiah 53. Luke describes the eunuch as "reading from the prophets," the Old Testament Scripture and the accepted and revered Word of God at the time. The eunuch was trying to understand the basic interpretation of the passage when Philip was able to apologetically take the words from the accepted, ancient tradition and help the eunuch interpret that text. Philip's ability to understand how the words from the prophets impacted the culture, the Jew, the Gentile, and the eunuch opened his eyes and heart to the good news of the gospel (Martin, 1989/1993). Luke highlights how Philip used the

authoritative text of the Old Testament to support and explain the implications of this Scripture for the Gentile.

Ideology in Individuals and Groups

Robbins (1996b) argues that understanding the ideology of individuals and groups is critical to understanding the passage outlining the conversion of the Ethiopian. Martin (1989/1993) argues that the fulfillment of prophecy that is outlined in this passage provides a window to understanding the ideology of individuals and groups to which the passage is addressed. The individuals and groups include the eunuch, the Jews, the Gentile, those of different ethnicity, and essentially those outside the borders of the traditional Jewish convert from Jerusalem (Martin, 1989/1993; Robbins 1996b; Wenham et al., 2001). Radical ideological switches occur in the few verses as the first Gentile is converted and God's kingdom is seen as being extended to the ends of the earth (Martin, 1989/1993; Robbins 1996b; Wenham et al., 2001).

The Ethiopian initially is reading Isaiah 53 and asks Philip to explain its meaning. Philip uses this opportunity to explain the gospel message and the eunuch becomes the first known gentile to convert to Christianity (Martin, 1989/1993; Wenham et al., 2001). What is noteworthy, according to Martin, is the transformation of the accepted ideology of the time regarding those who would be included in God's salvation plan. Initially, the critical ideology of the eunuch's identity personally and as a group (as a eunuch, as an Ethiopian, and as a Gentile) is addressed, as the curse of a eunuch from Deuteronomy is removed (Martin, 1989/1993). The Scripture states the belief that eunuchs would be forbidden from entering "the assembly of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 23:1). Three chapters after the Isaiah 53 passage, the outcome for the faithful eunuch is prophesized. The Isaiah 56:3-8 passage states:

Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree." For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered (Isaiah 56:3-8).

This passage, where the conversion of this eunuch, a Gentile, and an Ethiopian, reverses the popular incorrect ideology of the time that eunuchs, non-Jews, and those of different ethnicity would find themselves outside God's favor and his promised land (Martin, 1989/1993; Robbins 1996b; Wenham et al., 2001). Understanding the ideology underlying individuals, groups, and power structures and their interaction and interplay

provides additional insights into the understanding of the text (DeSilva, 2004; Robbins, 1996b).

Castelli (1991) states when looking at power structures within text, it is critical to the process of ideological interpretation. Castelli notes that when examining these power structures, often the importance of how the text operates can supersede what it actually means. Castelli bases this theory on Foucault's analysis of relations of power. The principles derived by Castelli assist in developing a better understanding of the power relations in a text.

The story of the Ethiopian eunuch depicts Castelli's (1991) first principle, referred to as the system of differentiations, which allows dominant people to act upon the actions of people in a subordinate position. In this passage, the eunuch was politically more powerful and noteworthy than Philip, yet the eunuch humbly accepted Philip's advice, guidance, and leadership (Wenham et al., 2001). In addition to the eunuch's political power and prestige, he also possessed religious status, as it was believed that he was part of an elite group of pious Jews, referred to as the Jewish proselytes (Green, 2003).

The eunuch continued to ignore his own religious and social stature as he honestly admitted his lack of understanding of the book of the prophets and begged Philip for an interpretation. Most noteworthy though was when Philip completely turned the ranks upside down by explaining the gospel. Luke suggests that the eunuch recognized the same humility in Philip and Jesus Christ, as Philip kindly explains the offer of salvation in Acts 8:35, "Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." Numerous biblical scholars posit that the Holy Spirit was influential in the preaching and evangelism as Philip explained the message of Christ (Martin, 1989/1993; Wenham et al., 2001). The eunuch does not seem offended when Philip explains the eunuch's status and rank in God's order, even though Philip would have to acknowledge the eunuch's need for salvation (Wenham et al., 2001). The Scripture says that when the eunuch hears this message, he accepts the offer of salvation with great joy.

Luke's inclusion of this story, where the politically and religiously powerful are presented as on the same par with those without status from God's perspective, is noteworthy. Castelli's (1991) system of differentiation is observed as Luke conveys that power, prestige, and status from God's perspective is not equivalent to the power structures of the secular world.

DeSilva (2004) suggests that ideology in individuals and groups can also be understood by reviewing the issues, difficulties, or concerns that are present among those in which the text is directed. Studying how the author addresses these concerns provide additional insights as well.

In the case of the eunuch, a Samaritan, a significant issue emerges when Philip shares the gospel message and the eunuch asks to be baptized. The baptism of a Samaritan breaks social and ritual barriers present in the Jewish, Christian church at the time (Matthews, 2001).

Luke's details regarding the eunuch's conversion and baptism provide an opportunity for the researcher to better understand Luke's ideological perspective and the message he was conveying. Luke describes the discussion of baptism, the request by the eunuch to be baptized, and the great joy the eunuch experienced after being

baptized. Luke also observes that Philip was immediately removed from the encounter after the baptism. The fact that Luke, a Jewish, Christian included these events and described them in a positive nature suggests that, though some of his contemporaries would have strongly opposed this event for cultural and religious reasons, Luke supported it wholeheartedly. Luke's ideology and message were clear. God intended salvation for the Jew and the Gentile, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the fair skinned Roman and the dark skinned Ethiopian (DeSilva, 2004; Green, 2003; Martin, 1989/1993). Lastly, Luke's inclusion of Philip's immediate removal reveal Luke's understanding and desire to convey that many may have refuted and challenged the validity of the baptism of the Ethiopian Gentile, had Philip not have been quickly swept away (Wenham et al., 2001).

Ideology in Intellectual Discourse

Robbins (1996b) notes that the ideology presented during intellectual discourse in a text can also allow the reader to better understand its intended meaning. DeSilva's (2004) recommends examining how the author explains choices or presents alternatives and how they affirm or discourage the available options. Doing this reveals ideologies or biases of the author, often presented as intellectual discourse.

In the Acts text, the lack of discourse or discussion of the ethnicity of the Gentile suggests an ideological perspective that most would not want to admit was present in Luke, a disciple of Christ (Martin, 1993). The underlying ideology of the secularization of the discourse is also noteworthy (Felder, 1982; Martin, 1989/1993). Martin observes Felder's findings that "the socio-political realities of the secular framework of Christian authors in the New Testament lead to the marginalization of the darker skinned races" (1989/1993, p. 120).

In conclusion, the ideological texture analysis takes the scholar into the text and through the process of examining the ideological perspectives from within, allowing the reader to derive a significantly more in-depth understanding of the true meaning of the passage.

Leadership Lessons from Acts 8:26-40

The ideological texture analysis of Acts 8:26-40 permits the reader to gain greater insight into the underlying meaning of the text as this analysis unpeels the layers of texture from within. In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of the text, this investigation also intends to apply the lessons learned from studying this pericope to better understand and apply contemporary leadership theory.

The measurement of an effective leader can be gauged by a leader's ability to successfully lead others and achieve a positive outcome for individuals and their organization as a whole. In Acts 8:26-40, Philip effectively leads the Ethiopian eunuch to eternal life and demonstrates noteworthy leadership traits. Philip was able to engage, influence, and persuade a man of another culture, higher political status, and another race to respond to a message that contradicted what other leaders and contemporaries had proclaimed and offered previously.

Philip's combination of sacrificial and servant leadership allowed him to influence and lead another who may have been difficult to persuade had Philip not processed exemplary leadership traits.

Servant Leadership

Philip demonstrated servant leadership when addressing the Ethiopian. Greenleaf (1977) describes servant leadership as a paradigm where the leader serves their follower and seeks to develop them to their full potential. Full potential is defined as "task effectiveness, community stewardship, self-motivation, and future leadership capabilities" (Liden et al., 2008, p. 162). Bekker (2006b) states that the Christological approach of Christian leadership centers on serving as Christ served, as it includes self-sacrifice, servant posturing, humility, and obedience.

Liden et al. (2008) outline nine dimensions of servant leadership that were developed from their interpretation of servant leadership and the taxonomies of servant leadership developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Page and Wong (2000), and Spears and Lawrence (2002). Table 1 summarizes these servant leadership dimensions and the ways in which Philip exemplified each of these characteristics as he interacts and shares the message of eternal life with the eunuch.

Table 1:

Philip's Servant Leadership in Acts 8:26-40

Servant Leadership Dimensions	Philip's Servant Leadership
Liden et al. (2008, p. 162)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional healing—the act of showing sensitivity to others' personal concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In their conversation, the eunuch (a Gentile) asks Philip, "What is to prevent me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:37) Wenham et al. (2001) suggests that it is likely that the eunuch may have been refused baptism in the past based on his 'mutilated' condition, as well as the belief by many that only Jews could ultimately be accepted into the Kingdom of God. Henry (1961) describes the eunuch as an Ethiopian. Ethiopian's, according to Henry were "looked upon as the meanest of nations, blackamoors, as if nature had stigmatized them" (p.1667). From these accounts, it is likely that the eunuch's question carried, emotional hurt, and the expectation that baptism would not be something that would be offered (Wenham et al., 2001; Henry, 1961). Philip looks beyond any preconceived attitudes about this dark, skinned foreigner, that others had placed outside of the Kingdom of Heaven. Henry suggests that Philip allowed the grace of God to overtake him and compassionately care for the eunuch, sharing

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- Creating value for the community—a conscious, genuine concern for helping the community.
 - Conceptual skills—possessing the knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand so as to be in a position to effectively support and assist others, especially immediate followers.
 - Empowering—encouraging and facilitating others, especially immediate followers, in identifying and solving problems, as well as determining when and how to complete work tasks and Helping subordinates grow and succeed—demonstrating genuine concern for others' career growth and development by providing support and mentoring.
- with him the Good News of Jesus and inviting him into the Eternal Kingdom of God.
 - Wenham et al. (2001) describes how Philip had just come from an invigorating ministry event that had led to a mass conversion of citizens in Samaria. It would have been easy for Philip to be less concerned for a single man he meets along the road, after partaking in such a significant event. In Philip's treatment of both ministry events (large and grand and small and individual) show that Philip has a genuine concern for helping each individual, in each community that he encountered. Philip's servant heart, is a trait that Dillon (1990) attributes to Philip being filled with and led by the Holy Spirit.
 - Wenham et al. (2001) noted that when the eunuch asked Philip about the Scripture he was reading (Isaiah 53) that Philip "had little trouble using *that very passage of Scripture* as a springboard to tell the whole *good news about Jesus*" (p.1079). Wenham et al. noted that in both the large crowd, mass conversion and the individual, single conversion of the eunuch, Philip was articulate and knowledgeable, largely, as Wenham suggests because Philip was able to communicate a direct message from God, as he is guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - Wenham et al. (2001), Dillon (1990), and Matthews (2001) all describe the relationship between Philip and the eunuch as transformative, as Philip was politically not superior to the eunuch, yet emerged as a spiritual leader to the eunuch. Philip was able to encourage and empower the eunuch and help him to grow and to succeed. Through Philip's caring demeanor and clear explanations, he was able to explain the Good News to the eunuch and invite him and provide a way for him to receive eternal life. As soon as the eunuch emerged from the water, after being baptized by Philip, Philip was removed by the Holy Spirit. Without Philip present, the eunuch continued to rejoice as he was now joined with Christ. Philip had left the eunuch with a deeper understanding of the Scriptures, a personal connection to Jesus and eternal life. The eunuch went forward and brought this great
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- news to his own countryman, as Philip had brought these gifts to him (Henry, 1961).
- Putting subordinates first—using actions and words to make it clear to others (especially immediate followers) that satisfying their needs is a priority (Leaders who practice this principle will often break from their own work to assist subordinates with problems they are facing with their assigned duties.)
 - Behaving ethically—interacting openly, fairly, and honestly with others. In Relationships, make a genuine effort to know, understand, and support others you encounter.
 - Servant hood—a way of being marked by one's self-categorization and desire to be characterized by others as someone who serves others first, even when self-sacrifice is required.
 - Wenham et al.(2001) notes that Philip was obedient when led by an Angel (or the Holy Spirit) (Acts 8:26) to depart from his planned route and take a desert route. This path was clearly more difficult and one that Philip would have preferred to avoid (Wenham et al.,2001) He then encounters a man that Wenham et al. argues was quite foreign to him, being from one of the remote parts of the world, as well as an important political official. Philip was finishing an important ministry milestone as his prior city involved a mass conversion of a sizeable crowd. It would have been understandable for Philip to ignore the eunuch or disregard the importance of their potential encounter. Philip instead embraces the opportunity to lead the eunuch and makes it a priority to help the man understand the Good News of Jesus Christ and Eternal Life for those who believe in Him. It would have been easy for Philip to justify moving on from a single man in search of another gathering of the masses, but Philip listened to the Holy Spirit's guidance and led his unlikely follower to eternal glory (Acts 8:26-37.)
 - Wenham et al.(2001) explains that the Ethiopian eunuch clearly felt like foreigner as a gentile and one of the farthest out from those that Philip was ministering to. Had Philip's heart not been right and had he failed to receive him as both an equal and one worthy of baptism, this important conversion of the first Gentile, a eunuch with an open heart, may not have occurred.
 - Dillion (1990) outlines that Philip's servanthood is clearly depicted in this story. Instead of resisting the guidance of the Holy Spirit when told to take an unlikely route through the desert, and then enthusiastically ministering to the dark, skinned foreigner that could have been easily ignored or avoided, Philip's servant and Christ centered heart is clear.
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Philip clearly demonstrates servant leadership characteristics as he approaches the eunuch humbly, with respect, with care, attempting to welcome, embrace and emotionally heal. Philip sacrificed his time and energy, and obediently and proficiently, proclaimed the Good News of salvation to the man, who was clearly a foreigner, outside of the Jewish inner circle

(Dillon, 1990; Matthews, 2001; Wenham et al., 2001). The eunuch was a man of differing ethnicity, dark skinned, a knowledgeable Gentile and converted proselyte, and a man with a sexuality that others may not understand and embrace (Dillon, 1990; Matthews, 2001; Wenham et al., 2001). Any of these factors may have been enough for Philip to dismiss this man. Instead, Philip chose to serve, as Christ served, and he patiently embraced the eunuch and shared with him life changing lessons. Philip exemplified Christ-centered, servant leadership and effectively won over this powerful, learned, Gentile eunuch.

Christian Spirituality and Leadership

It is posited that Philip's spirituality strengthened his ability to be an impacting leader. Delbecq (1999) outlines positive characteristic in contemporary Christian leaders that we also observe in Philip. Delbecq contends that "Christian spirituality impacts contemporary business leadership" (1999, p. 345) positively. Delbecq reports that a study of numerous Silicon Valley, Christian, CEO's indicates the Christian spiritual tradition of these executives deeply informed and shaped their leadership and led to positive outcomes. Delbecq (1999) begins by stating that:

Let me forthrightly state that my interest in spirituality in the context of business leadership did not flow from my own inner inspiration. Rather it came from experiencing the intense spirituality of senior executives in Silicon Valley, and their selflessness of service flowing from the richness of their individual inner journeys (p. 345).

In other words, Delbecq did not seek to study the spirituality of these individuals because of his own faith, but through looking at their spirituality found that he was inspired to seek spirituality more deeply.

Delbecq (1999) notes the three common themes among these business leaders of organizations experiencing rapid change environments in the 1980s included: a) the leaders saw their work as a calling and this provided a vitality and purpose to their pursuits; b) their work and spirituality were intermingled and not seen as two separate and distinct pieces of their life; c) their spirituality provided great strength in staying the course during challenging and difficult times. Delbecq observes such a clear distinction between Christian and non-Christian leaders that Delbecq himself was led to a greater pursuit of spirituality. As noted by Dillon (1990) and Wenham et al. (2001), Philip exhibited a strong, compelling and contagious spirituality and the eunuch is drawn to Philip's message and listened and embraced and accepted Philip's teaching about eternal life, despite the fact that politically, and in social stature Philip would not normally be considered one that could lead a man in the eunuch's position.

The Divine Empowerment of Philip

Numerous scholars have posited that Philip's interaction with the Ethiopian eunuch was supported and influenced by God's Holy Spirit (Dillon, 1990; Martin, 1989/1993; Wenham et al., 2001). Leadership theory commits significant efforts toward uncovering the mystery of which leader traits, qualities, or situations result in increased leadership effectiveness. While certain combination of qualities increases a leader's

effectiveness in general, history and Scripture provide evidence that the Divine empowerment of leaders in the early Christian church led to unprecedented outcomes and results that have not been replicated (González, 2004; Harnack, 2015). Studying the Scripture and Acts reveals that a divinely empowered leader is far more effective with God's Spirit than without it (González, 2004; Harnack, 2015). While the concept of Divine empowerment is still a mystery, researchers argue that Philip embraced Jesus Christ and was empowered by the Holy Spirit, resulting in an augmentation of his personal leadership strengths (Dillion, 1990; Martin, 1989/1993; Wenham et al., 2001).

Leaders Must Also Be Good Followers

Kelley (1996) outlines to be a good leader, one must also be a good follower. Philip was a strong and effective leader because he also knew how to follow. The reader's first glimpse of Philip's followership is observed in Acts 8:26 as Philip listens to the angel and redirects his route, putting himself in the direct path of the Ethiopian eunuch.

In studying this text and the ideological texture, Luke's ability to follow is also observed. The effectiveness of his leadership is largely a result of his ability to follow and to serve (Wenham et al., 2001). Philip acknowledges his place in God's kingdom and understand that Christ's death and resurrection has occurred for him personally and without it he would be spiritually bankrupt. One can only conclude from examining Philip's ministry that he is filled with God's Spirit and that his words were inspired by the Almighty. In Philip's case, his followership is further observed by his grace and humility while explaining the gospel message to the eunuch with no apparent desire for status, prestige, or recognition.

V. CONCLUSION

The short and under-recognized passage in Scripture of the Ethiopian eunuch's humble conversion as a foreign, dark skinned gentile initially seems like a simple pericope without deeper meaning. Ideological texture analysis presents this passage as an onion with layer after layer of rich, underlying messages. Utilizing this analysis tool allows the reader to understand the full significance of the text. In this case, this text reveals a complete reversal of ideology of some, during a time with a prevailing thought that Christianity was reserved for the Jewish convert from Jerusalem. Ideological texture analysis assists in interpreting this text and reiterating that salvation is offered to all, to the ends of the earth. Ideological texture analysis also allows one to more readily recognize the leadership theories prevalent throughout the text and extend these acquired lessons to contemporary leadership application. The exploration concludes by noting how Philip's combination of servant and spiritual leadership traits significantly contributed to his effectiveness as a leader.

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