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GALATIANS 5 - A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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This paper provides a biblical perspective of unity and diversity in organizational leadership as it relates to Galatians 5. It examines how Paul tried to mediate the fractional impact to the Christian community based on social identity norms. Also discussed is Paul's view of the Christian community, being a single cohesive group made up of people of different cultures. Paul felt that social norms were not problematic unless they were viewed as divisive tools to introduce gaps or separations in one's love for one another. This critical analysis is structured using the principles and guidelines for an ideological reading using a socio-rhetorical interpretation of Chapter 5 from Paul's letter to the Galatians. It further defines, formulates, and communicates Christian leadership theory as they relate to unity and diversity. The analysis applies Robbins' theory of socio-rhetorical interpretation. The strategies of an ideological interpretation were used to provide an exegetical interpretation of Galatians 5.

I. INTRODUCTION

Paul's letter to the Galatians provides a history of the early Christian church and ministry from the perspective of Paul. Galatians 5 will be the focus of this research paper, offering a leadership view of how Paul was building and defining the Christian community through unity and diversity. This paper presents an ideological texture interpretation of Chapter 5 from the letter of Paul to the Galatians. Robbins (1996) stated,

The ideological texture of texts features the arena between the implied reader and the narrator and characters. The particular way in which the narrator and characters evoke the message and the particular way in

which the implied reader and real reader/audience receive it concerns ideology (p. 36-37).

The analysis of the ideological texture of a biblical text provides insight into the complex theories or ideas in the written word of scripture. Robbins (1996) stated, "The investigation especially seeks to identify the intersection of ideas, ideas and social action and to detect the collective needs and interests the pattern represents" (p. 193). This paper provides that foundation and offers insight into Chapter 5 from Paul's letter to the Galatians through the use of socio-rhetorical interpretation as defined by Robbins.

Socio-rhetorical interpretation of biblical documents is an effective tool for gaining understanding of the intended message. In 1984, Robbins introduced this unique concept in the area of exegetical interpretation (Robbins, 1996). This critical analysis is structured using the principles and guidelines for an ideological reading using a socio-rhetorical interpretation of Chapter 5 from Paul's letter to the Galatians. It further defines, formulates, and communicates Christian leadership theory as they relate to unity and diversity.

II. THE APOSTLE PAUL

Paul played an instrumental role in the development of the early Christian church. Through his guidance and wisdom, the early church weathered adversity and controversy to emerge as a beacon of God's word. Green (2008) asserted, "Of the 27 writings that make-up the New Testament, nearly half are attributed to Paul" (p. 4). Green's comments reinforce the pivotal role that Paul played in the formation of the Christian church. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he provided the early Christian community with the vision that each person must seek to live by the power of the Spirit. Living by the power of the Spirit means that earthly or unspiritual things must be put aside if they interfere with one's spirituality, that is his/her connection with God. Ukwuegbu (2008) stated,

Although the Galatians live by the power of the Spirit, the moral life will entail intense effort on their part. They must crucify the flesh; that is, they must put to death that part of the self that works against the Spirit. (p. 551).

Ukwuegbu suggested that living by the Spirit is not an easy or inconsequential endeavor, but still it must become part of who you are, your being or essence.

It is important to note that Paul was not only Jewish, but he was also a Roman citizen. Paul's Hebrew name was Saul of Tarsus. Due to these facts, his conversion to Christianity was somewhat unique given the historical time period. Paul states in the Book of Acts Chapter 22:3, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers." (p. 1598). Paul's conversion was even more unlikely given that he was a persecutor of Christians, that is, until he had a vision during his mission to Damascus. In this vision, Paul interacted with Jesus whereby Jesus asked him why he persisted in persecuting him. Jesus then commissioned Paul to spread His word to the Gentiles. This vision was so moving that Paul converted to Christianity in obedience to Jesus' words.

Strom (2006) argued that Paul was an unlikely figure that would shape the future of Christian thought and society. Strom suggested, “He is arguably the leader who forever changed our expectations of leadership” (p. 2). His leadership was quite extraordinary given how loosely held together the Christian church was at that time. It was through Paul’s leadership, and fellowship, that he led a culturally diverse Christian community toward unification and acceptance.

III. PAUL’S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Biblical scholars and historians agree that the Apostle Paul was the author of the letter to the Galatians (DeSilva, 2004). As such, it is his perspective and words that provide insight into early Christianity as it grew and expanded around the world. Hughes and Laney (2001) stated, “The Pauline authorship of Galatians is confirmed by internal and external evidence. The author is named in 1:1 and 5:2. The early church fathers, from Clement of Rome on, affirm the Pauline authorship and authenticity of Galatians” (p. 577). Paul’s unique perspective as a leader in the Christian church cannot be overstated as the early church looked to Paul for wisdom and guidance. Through his guidance, the gentiles were accepted into the Christian community though they did not share the same cultural norms or traditions of the earlier church.

Paul wrote his letter to Galatia, to provide guidance and direction to the early Christian church. Paul felt the Galatians were being misled by false teachers who valued traditions and rituals above faith (Packer et. al., 1995). Paul also felt that those false teachers were also attacking his authority. Packer et. al. stated, “While there, he heard from the Galatian churches that they were being troubled by persons who were teaching doctrines of a Jewish sort, insisting on circumcision for salvation. These persons were also attacking the authority of Paul” (p. 598). It was these types of teachings that drew Paul into the conversation with the Galatians. Paul wanted to make certain that the Galatians were not using the ritual and practice of circumcision to be used as tools to seek salvation. Paul felt that these teachings ran contrary to the Christian faith, and divisive to the community who may hold different or diverse traditions and rituals.

These false teachers and Jewish Gnostics were seemingly trying to place a wedge between Paul and the early Christian church. It is for this reason that Paul had to make clear that his authority was not from man but from God. Hughes and Laney (2001) stated, “Paul began this letter with an unusual description of himself. He described how he was commissioned as an apostle – not through men, but through Jesus and God. This immediately addressed one of the problems at hand” (p. 580). The false teachers had the Galatians wondering whether Paul was divinely authorized or merely sending a mortal message. Paul places this concern to rest in the opening lines of his letter. Paul believed that Christians should not have to adhere to Jewish customs for the sake of table fellowship or for the sake of salvation but for the fruit of the Spirit. Paul’s style of leadership and directness was unique and actually quite revolutionary in religious communities at the time. These communities held their traditions, rights and rituals sacred and those who were disobedient to those traditions, rights and rituals were excluded from acceptance into their religious communities. It was through Paul’s

authority and guidance that these communities were accepting of the gentiles into the Christian church.

A social structure of a group has the potential to impact its communication process. Keebler (2010), suggested, "Organizational leaders need to seek alternative methods to convey their messages in order to be effective communicators with their diverse employee base" (54). Depending on the social structure of a group the communication within the group may be negatively impacted. Groups are not inherently homogeneous, rather heterogeneous, meaning they have individuals with very different values, ideas, and backgrounds. As such, there are inherent differences that add to the complexities of developing effective communication within organizations. In Galatia the false teachers and Jewish Gnostics had fundamental differences from that of Paul, given that they were broadcasting a message to the early church that was not in the Spirit. Paul, as a Christian leader, sought to welcome these differences among the members of the church and to communicate a shared vision that every individual would embrace. Paul was trying to accomplish this through his communication and interaction with the Galatian community. He believed that once the Galatians learned how to effectively cross-communicate, outside of their small tight knit community to a wider more diverse community, they would provide for greater spiritual growth.

The inclusive philosophy that Paul was providing to the Galatians was ordained by the authority given to him from Jesus. Inclusive leadership boosts trust in a group and their psychological well-being, resulting in increased organizational citizenship behaviors (Huang et. al, 2021). In a sense, increased organizational citizenship behavior was the result that Paul was trying to achieve.

Paul provided clear guidance to the Galatians that met with the vision Jesus provided to him. Leaders, in the spirit of Paul, can positively influence individual perceptions of a group or organization by exhibiting ethical behavior, trustworthiness, respectfulness, fairness, and competency. Once an individual understands and accepts the vision and goals provided by a trusted leader, they will start to develop a positive perception of the group and strive for that vision. Paul was developing the Galatian community by providing the direction and vision they so desperately needed to gain the fruit of the Spirit.

IV. GALATIANS 5

In Galatians 5, Paul speaks of the yoke of slavery. Paul was speaking of the ritual of circumcision and its association to the Jewish community and its culture. Mageto (2006) stated, "Paul makes a passionate appeal to the Christians in Galatia to embrace an ethic of shared responsibility so as not to abuse their newfound freedom and fall prey to the traps their opponents were setting before them" (p. 88). Paul believed that the Christian community had an identity of its own, one that consists of unity, inclusion and shared responsibility. Ukwuegbu (2008) stated,

When read together with the metaphor of the law as a yoke of slavery (5:1), Paul's reinterpretation of the law in service of the question of identity becomes all the more clear. Understanding a foreign law as an agent of slavery, as opposed to the freedom of living under one's own law, was not uncommon in the Hellenistic culture of Paul's time" (p. 555).

Paul was trying to include both gentile and non-gentile into a Christian community that does not live by the flesh but one that lives by the Spirit. He was concerned that some in the Jewish-Christian community were using circumcision as a vice in which to exclude people from the Christian community. Paul believed that Jesus paid for our sins in the flesh and that circumcision would not hold any more value toward one's salvation. DeSilva (2004) stated, "Those who seek 'to be justified (dikaiousthe) by law' (Gal 5:4), to be 'brought in line with God's standards' by performing circumcision and observing other 'works of the Torah,' have grossly undervalued God's gift of the Spirit" (p. 517). Paul's meaning could not be any clearer, live by the Spirit not the flesh. The direction to unite by Living by the Spirit opened the church to a more diverse community with a common purpose.

The Bible is riddled with metaphorical phrases and stories. Jesus taught by the use of parables as a way to provide an understanding of his message. Blood (2004) stated "Metaphors can be profoundly true, even though they are not literally true" (p. 2). Paul's use of the "yoke of slavery" metaphor provided the Galatians with clear direction to use their new freedom and not be bound by the trappings of his detractors.

Galatians 5 provides a unique look into the leadership of Paul. Paul led the early church during a very chaotic time. As the leader of the early church, he provided guidance and direction to a loosely bounded group of early Christians who were culturally different with diverse social structures. Paul was aware of these differences and sought to strengthen the church through diversity and unity. Strom (2006) noted, "Every social structure has conventions which foolishly and often unjustly discriminate" (p. 9). In Galatians 5, Paul tried to mediate the fractional impact to the Christian community based on social identity norms. Paul viewed the Christian community as a single cohesive group made up of people of different cultures. Paul further believed that differing social norms were not a problem unless they were viewed as divisive tools to provide a gap in one's love for one another. Pulling the ideological thread of this texture, we can see how this idea is woven into the broader concept of unity and diversity.

Ukwuegbu (2008) stated, "Paul in Galatians, is concerned with maintaining the distinctive identity of his congregations ('of neither Jew nor Gentile')...Paul did not want a distinction made between so called ingroups and the so called outgroups" (541). He was in a sense, providing a shared vision that he wanted the Christian community to embrace. Paul believed that the social identity of the Christian church should be based upon the Spirit and not the flesh. Ukwuegbu (2008) argued,

Here, as in most of its usages in the Galatian correspondence, the meaning of 'flesh' is that of a negative force that is defective, disqualifying, or destructive, especially when compared to the life of the Spirit with which the Galatian Christians began (Gal 3:3). To live or to seek to live in the realm of the flesh is to live apart from the dynamic power of the Spirit of God (p. 543).

Paul in his guidance to the Galatians did not reject the moral standards of the law, only the ritual of the law. He believed that the moral standards of the law could provide a life in the Spirit, thereby providing fellowship and acceptance of their law. Paul further suggested that they open their hearts to the word of God that he was providing to them and resist the false teachings of the Jewish Gnostics. Paul's message was, in a sense, the breaking of fallow ground to some in the early Christian community. Finney

(2021) suggested that the fallowed ground is not soil, but rather one's heart and mind as they relate to receiving God's word. Finney explained, "If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts: examine and note the state of your minds" (p. 1). Galatians 5 identified an important aspect of the Christian community and the culture Paul envisioned. Social and cultural understanding plays a considerable role in learning effectiveness (Keebler & Huffman, 2020). Through social and cultural acceptance, the Christian community would learn and grow. This new culture would be separate from some of the conventions and rituals that did not provide for a life in the Spirit. Strom (2006) stated, "This realignment of social behavior was critical. Paul was building something entirely new" (p. 4). In essence, Paul was uniting the Christian community into one church.

V. SOCIAL IDENTITY

How we treat and act toward one another is a basic component of community, and whether we welcome each other's diversity is a personal choice. From a Christian leadership perspective, we should seek to embrace our community and value our diversity. Kim (2006) stated, "Diversity involves adopting flexible and inclusive management styles, acknowledging that people experience the working world in different ways, and creating a climate in which all employees feel safe, valued and recognized" (p. 72). Inclusive leadership varies from other leadership styles in that it helps to promote a positive impact on follower's attitudes and behaviors under diverse conditions as well as influencing organizational citizenship behavior (Wang et.al, 2020).

Paul demonstrated his wisdom by welcoming a diverse population and building a stronger and larger Christian community. Though he did not have a problem with circumcision in itself, he did have a problem with it if it was used as a tool to seek salvation. If the community wanted circumcision to be used as part of their cultural identity Paul did not object. As such, Paul embraced cultural identity and practices unless they were used as a way to seek salvation. Paul believed that a follower's deeds "the fruit of the Spirit" would keep them in good standing with the Lord.

Paul respected the diversity of the Christian community, and he viewed the church as a community of faith. Mageto (2006) stated, "The church, as a community of faith, is where all members are valued, and their individual contributions are respected" (p. 92). Each member should be treated as a valued component in order for that group or community to be successful. Paul's letter to the Galatians seems to have been initiated due to concerns of disunity among the church members. As such, Paul provided guidance and direction to the Galatians. Kim (2006) stated, "Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. It involves recognizing the value of differences, combating discrimination, and promoting inclusiveness" (p. 87). This comment can describe Paul and his view of the community of faith. Paul brings to account a sense of community while maintaining one's faith or values. Paul's actions demonstrated that he was truly modeling Christian leadership to the church.

Christian leaders should hold a similar position when dealing with cultural issues within their community. Kim (2006) suggested that individuals within organizations must feel that they can maintain their cultural identity while positively contributing toward a

shared vision or goal. Just as Mageto (2006) suggested, the church should work toward a common community identity while still valuing an individual's cultural identity. It should be the position of a group or community and its leaders to have the same philosophy.

VI. FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5 identifies an important process, one in which reflection needs to have a critical link to one's spiritual wellbeing. Ukwuegbu (2008) stated, "Throughout the letter, Paul calls on the Galatians to bear the image of Christ and so to reflect the new ethos of the Christian community, in contrast to the identity of either Jewish or pagan society" (p. 551). Paul was in the role of both leader and mentor to the Galatians and the Christian community. Mentoring is one creative way of promoting personal development that leads to the process of self-actualization and growth (Talley, 2008). Mentoring provides a transformational experience for many followers, in this case seemingly the Galatians however Paul was reaching out to a much broader audience. The transfer of knowledge and the guidance given to the follower provide the dynamic in the relationship. The leader/mentor provides their knowledge and experience to guide the follower/mentee to develop and grow. Paul provided an opportunity for the Galatians to grow a Life by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-26, Life by the Spirit, provides a discourse on the sinful nature as well as the spiritual nature of humanity. These scriptural verses emphasize the understanding that faith and obedience go hand in hand with one another. Ukwuegbu (2008) stated, "The Christian community is the social embodiment of the self-giving and loving Christ, the fruit of the Spirit can be construed as 'dynamic extensions of Christ's own character and lifestyle, the means whereby Christ is embodied and performed'" (p. 550). It was Paul's charge to bring the entire Christian community, not just subdivisions of it, to the fruit of the Spirit.

The "fruit of the Spirit" provides a behavioral model that each of us should reflect upon and follow. This model can be used effectively from a spiritual as well as an organizational perspective. Carey (1988) stated,

And it is power to be good, to grow into the fruit of the Spirit's life in us (5:22-26). This is a goodness altogether apart from the Law (5:18, 23)...A person can choose either to dig the barren soil of human effort apart from God, or take root in the fertile ground of the life in the Spirit and reap its richness (6:8) (p. 245).

Paul wanted the Galatians to open their hearts to accept a life by the Spirit. The false teachers and Jewish Gnostics were hardening the hearts of the Galatian community by rebuking Paul and his message. Finney (2021) mirrored Carey's thoughts. From Paul's perspective, if the Galatians were to listen to the false teachers and Jewish Gnostics they would become barren and fallowed ground. Finney stated, "Fallowed ground is ground which has once been tilled, but which now lies waste, and needs to be broken up and mellowed, before it is ready to receive grain" (pg. 1). Paul's message was authorized by God and provided the breaking of the fallowed ground for the community in Galatia.

The Book of Acts also provides an understanding of how God provided divine empowerment and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the development of the early

Christian church. Walton (2008) stated, "Several factors together suggest that Acts is about God: the verb subjects of the book, key verbs which imply divine action, the focus of attention in the speeches, the development of the Gentile mission..." (p. 292). This pattern provides some key interpretive messages. God provided divine empowerment through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, all people are able to receive the Holy Spirit regardless of their social status, race, or gender. Both the Book of Acts and Paul's letter to the Galatians breakdown some of the traditional boundaries established within the early Christian community.

Galatians 5 underscores the need for Christian leaders to provide vision and direction for one's spiritual growth. Christian leaders rely on faith to provide insight to complex cultural issues. Just as God provided divine empowerment through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Christian leaders must develop a trusting relationship with their followers by building them, empowering them, and promoting shared responsibility. Mageto (2006) stated, "Paul's use of the motif of the faithfulness of Christ in 2:20 opens the way to his discussion of a Christian ethic of shared responsibility in chapters 5 and 6" (p. 87). Having a leadership style, like the Apostle Paul, that supports cohesiveness is extremely important to Christian leadership.

Divisive behavior can destroy the trust in a leader/follower relationship. The false teachers tried to discredit Paul and his message within the Christian community. Keebler (2018) stated, "Just as God provided divine empowerment through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, leaders must develop a trusting relationship with their followers by increasing communication, showing respect, being fair and predictable, and demonstrating competence (p. 95). Once the people in a group understand and accept the organizational goals and trust the leadership, they will start to develop a positive perception of the organization thereby fostering a positive organizational climate. Paul was trying to establish a similar relationship by providing the Christian community with his message and its authority.

Many organizations are turning toward empowerment philosophies due to the benefits gained in productivity and employee morale (Murray & Holmes, 2021). To try and build autonomous teams, organizations should allow the internal dynamics of an organization to be determined by the team members and not by the leaders alone. This will increase the level of personal pride and should provide a proactive and enjoyable work environment. Diversity must also be considered when developing teams. Keebler (2015) suggested, "Individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and ideas may provide for greater organizational success if a safe environment to share their ideas exists" (94). Organizations should embrace diversity, understand the cultural differences of the organization, and build upon its strengths just as Paul provided in his mission in Galatia.

Through the actions, Jesus gained a great fellowship. Christian leaders must try to develop their abilities and demonstrate them to their followers. Certo stated (2000), "To enhance your career success, you must learn to be proactive rather than reactive. That is, you must take specific actions to demonstrate your abilities and accomplishments" (p. 14). Group or organizational behavior can be shaped or directed if an organization's climate is positive. Organizational climate affects the behavior of the workforce, and those leaders play an important, if not critical, role in the development of the value systems of groups or organizations which in turn impacts its climate (Burton

and Obel, 2004). Trust, conflict, and morale are just a few areas where Christian leaders need to develop their skill sets in order to build high performance organizations or teams. Gaining trust, limiting conflict, and boosting morale are key to a positive climate.

Mok and Yeung (2002) suggested that leaders must understand the social processes that affect their staff in order to foster an organizational climate that supports employee empowerment. DeSilva (2004) stated, "Christians faced pressure on two fronts. First, the sources record that the Jesus movement stood in tension with the parent body, the Jewish subculture, from the outset" (p. 105). Paul was trying to relieve the pressure on the Christian community by providing direction and breaking down the barriers to the Christian community that other false teachers were trying to put in place.

VII. CONCLUSION

The basic principles and guidelines of a socio-rhetorical interpretation were provided in this research paper. The use of socio-rhetorical interpretation of a biblical document provides an effective means for gaining a greater understanding of scripture. Through the use of Robbins' socio-rhetorical interpretation, this paper provided an exegetical interpretation of Galatians Chapter 5. Pulling the ideological thread from different perspectives in this texture, we can see how Paul's leadership in Galatians 5 is woven into the broader concept of unity and diversity.

Paul's letter to the Galatians provides a history of the early Christian church and ministry from the perspective of Paul. Galatians 5 provides a view of how Paul was building and defining the Christian community. Paul provides assurance that the word of God was intended for all people from all lands, Gentile and non-Gentile. Paul broke down some of the traditional boundaries that false teachers were trying to establish within the Christian community. Paul's message elevated the status of gentiles in the eyes of the Christian community where each has an equal place in God's plan of pouring out the Holy Spirit.

This ideological texture builds upon itself to provide a comprehensive interpretation that one may use to gain a deeper understanding of Paul's letter to the Galatians, Chapter 5. God fulfills the promise of spreading his word throughout the world for all people. Galatians 5 provides an identity and foundation for the Christian community as well as for Christian ministry.

In Galatians 5, Paul tried to mediate the fractional impact to the Christian community based on social identity norms. Paul viewed the Christian community as a single cohesive group made up of people of different cultures. The social norms were not a problem unless they were viewed as divisive tools to provide a gap in one's love for one another. Hughes and Laney (2001) stated, "Paul's critics claimed that the Law of Moses could save people from hell. But to imply that the law brought salvation denied the power of what God had done through Christ's death and resurrection" (p. 579). This statement as well as the ideological interpretation of Galatians 5 provides supports the conclusion that circumcision does not provide salvation. Paul described in his letter to the Galatians his authority and how salvation can be found, and it is through the life of the Spirit.

Paul did not have a problem with circumcision in itself, he did have a problem with it if it was used as a tool to seek salvation. If the community wanted circumcision to be used as part of their cultural identity Paul did not object. As such, Paul embraced cultural identity and practices unless they were used as a way to seek salvation. Paul believed that a follower's deeds "the fruit of the Spirit" would keep them in good standing with the lord. Galatians 5:22-26 provide the way that we as Christians should live. How we treat and act toward one another is a basic component of community, and whether we welcome each other's diversity is a personal choice. Leadership and Christian leadership specifically should seek to embrace the community and value its diversity.

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