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CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AS PARTICIPATION IN THE UNFOLDING OF GOD'S ESCHATOLOGICAL FUTURE: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF MATTHEW 9:35-38

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This paper contributes to the literature on Christian leadership by providing an analytical study of Matthew 9:35-38 in order to build understanding of participatory leadership. Using an intertextual exegetical strategy, the paper explores the richness of imagery, metaphors, and recapitulation of Old Testament texts (especially Ezekiel 34) within Matthew 9:35-38. The fruit of this exegetical analysis is then applied to developing a better understanding of Christian leadership. Three characteristics of participatory Christian leadership are proposed and explained: (a) response to the will of God; (b) promotion of eschatological joy; and (c) posture of subordination. In summary, it is concluded that Christian leadership, followership, and the leader-follower relationship all exist and are best understood under the rubric of participation in the unfolding of God's eschatological future.

I. INTRODUCTION

The mere number of leadership books bears witness to the fact that the subject is both complex and elusive. Add to this the Christian's obligation to demonstrate knowledge and discretion (Proverbs 5:2) and to test everything and hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and the situation is confused even further. In large part, ambiguity in articulating a robust model of Christian leadership stems from the insufficient work that has been done to explore its exegetical, philosophical, and theological underpinnings.¹

Classic studies on organizational psychology have proposed that participatory leadership models are more effective than hierarchical models in establishing

¹ Corné J. Bekker, "Towards a Theoretical Model of Christian Leadership," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 2 (2009).

agreement across group members and enhancing the work environment for followers.² Yet, participatory leadership models suffer from competing presuppositions among organizational members about values and practices – differences that can undermine the attempt to flatten hierarchical structures.³ How do the resources of the Christian faith clarify understanding of participatory leadership?

The purpose of this paper is to increase understanding of participatory leadership through exegetical analysis of Matthew 9:35-38. This short pericope addresses the failure of Israel's established leadership by identifying Jesus as the messianic shepherd-servant through whom the eschatological blessings of the kingdom are being released. Yet, of interest to this study, Jesus' role as shepherd-servant is closely aligned with the incorporation of his disciples and their participation in the mission. To what extent does Scripture help us to better understand participatory leadership? The present study responds to this question in two steps: (a) Matthew 9:35-38 is studied verse by verse; and (b) exegetical findings from this study are discussed with respect to extant leadership theory, particularly focusing on participatory leadership models.

II. EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 9:35-38

The following exegetical analysis of Matthew 9:35-38 is structured around three themes within the pericope: (a) summation and inclusion (9:35); (b) divine compassion and messianic hope (9:36); and (c) harvest celebration and eschatological fulfillment (9:37-38). The exegetical strategy utilized in this paper focuses particularly careful grammatical analysis and on intertexture recapitulation of themes developed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. As Osborne explains, "Of all the sources for studying the New Testament, none is so pervasive as the Old Testament itself."⁴

Summation and Inclusion (9:35)

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction (Matthew 9:35).

Verse 35 begins the thematic transition between the narrative and discourse sections of Matthew's second main unit (8:1-11:1).⁵ In the preceding narrative (8:1-9:34), Jesus demonstrates authority over sickness, nature, and the spiritual realm; in the subsequent discourse, after calling the twelve disciples (10:1-4), Jesus commissions them for the same ministry of teaching, proclaiming the kingdom, and healing (10:5-11:1). Using an iterative imperfect (περιῆγεν; he went), Verse 35 summarizes Jesus' ongoing activity by

² Malcolm G. Preston and Roy K. Heintz, "Effects of Participatory vs. Supervisory Leadership on Group Judgment," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 44, no. 3 (1949).

³ Adrianna J. Kezar, "Exploring New Avenues for Leading Community Colleges: The Paradox of Participatory Models," *Community College Review* 25, no. 4 (1998).

⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 323.

⁵ Donald A. Carson, *Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

preparing the reader for the inclusion of the disciples in the expanded scope of the subsequent mission.⁶

Divine Compassion and Messianic Hope (9:36)

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). Verse 36 makes use of evocative language to graphically capture the attention of the original readers and to point to Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The verb used for compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι) is used twelve times in the Greek New Testament, each time with reference to Jesus or by Jesus in a parable.⁷ In Classical Greek, its noun cognate was used for the inner parts of a sacrifice (i.e., heart, kidneys, lungs).⁸ Although the Septuagint does not provide much assistance in understanding Old Testament use of the word, there are many illustrative uses within the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, found within the Greek Pseudepigrapha.⁹ For example, in the Testament of Zebulun 2:4, as Joseph entreats his brothers to spare his life, Zebulun recounts, "And as he spoke these words, wailing as he did so, I was unable to bear his lamentations, and began to weep, and my liver was poured out, and all the substance of my bowels [Greek, σπλάγχνον] was loosened."¹⁰ In the Pseudepigrapha, the word assumes an emotive sense, referring to an inner disposition of mercy or pity.¹¹ However, according to Kittel, et al., in the Synoptic Gospels, the word is "always used to describe the attitude of Jesus and... the divine nature of his acts."¹² By the time of the writing of the extracanonical Shepherd of Hermas (which also uses the word) at the end of the first century¹³, σπλαγχνίζομαι had become understood exclusively as an attribute of *divine mercy* in God's dealings with humanity. Thus, Matthew's use of the word in 9:36 impresses the well-informed reader with divine/messianic expectations. This is not just compassion; this is *divine* compassion.¹⁴

Matthew describes the crowds as "harassed [from the verb σκύλλω] and helpless [from the verb ῥίπτω]." In its literal sense, σκύλλω means to mangle or tear.¹⁵ Here it is used metaphorically in the past tense to refer to the troubled state of the crowds, as being weary, harassed, and dejected.¹⁶ On the other hand, ῥίπτω is the act of forcefully

⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gerhard Kittel, G. W. Bromiley and G. Friedrich, G. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Robert H. Charles, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 2004).

¹¹ Kittel, *Dictionary*

¹² Ibid., 553.

¹³ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987).

¹⁴ Morris, *Matthew*.

¹⁵ Henry G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1996).

¹⁶ William F. Arndt, F. W. Danker and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

throwing something down.¹⁷ The perfect passive use in Matthew 9:36 portrays the crowds as helpless sheep “lying passive on the ground [because they have] no sense of what to do in their need; they lack the protective and guiding role of a shepherd.”¹⁸ The reader should feel the *troubled* by the condition of the sheep, but also *hopeful* on account of the divine compassion exhibited by Jesus.

Matthew builds on the reader’s escalated senses by comparing the crowds to “sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew is drawing from important Old Testament imagery, which describes Israel as God’s sheep. As Table 1 shows, this metaphor is important for reasserting the dire importance of good shepherds (leaders) for the sheep (Israel). Thus, use of this metaphor in Matthew 9:36 vividly and powerfully portrays the condition of Israel during the ministry of Jesus – lacking not just political leadership, but spiritual care and guidance as well.¹⁹ As individuals and as a collective they were “sheep without a shepherd.”

Table 1: Old Testament Usage of Shepherd and Scattered Sheep Motif

Text	Phrase	Context
Numbers 27:17	That the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd	Moses’ petition for a new leader for Israel
1 Kings 22:17	I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd	Micaiah reveals to Ahab and Jehoshaphat their impending defeat by Syria
2 Chronicles 18:16	I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd	Micaiah reveals to Ahab and Jehoshaphat their impending defeat by Syria
Ezekiel 34:8	My sheep have become a prey... since there was no shepherd	Ezekiel prophesies against Israel’s corrupt leadership
Zechariah 10:2	The people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd	An oracle explains the devastation caused by worshipping false gods
Zechariah 13:7	Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered	The Lord summons the sword against his shepherd resulting in the scattering of the flock

Among the many Old Testament uses of the sheep/shepherd motif, Ezekiel 34 presents a unique backdrop for understanding the inter-textual assumptions at work within Matthew 9:36.²⁰ Ezekiel 34 portrays the tragedy of Israel’s failed leadership (called shepherds) as well as God’s purpose to restore hope under an idealized future shepherd. The chapter can be divided into three sections: (a) prophecy against corrupt

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005), 407.

¹⁹ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 179.

²⁰ Ibid.; Donald A. Hagner. *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993).

shepherds (34:1-10); (b) the Lord God as the quintessential shepherd (34:11-24); and (c) God's promise of a covenant of peace (34:25-31).

First, Ezekiel prophesies against corrupt shepherds (34:1-10). From the days of Jeroboam, apostasy of leadership was Israel's ruin.²¹ According to Ezekiel, Israel's leadership failure was characterized by self-aggrandizement and luxuriant living at the expense of others with no hint of compassion or concern for the needy (34:2b-4). The effect of the leadership failure among the people of Israel is described as the scattering of sheep across the face of the earth "with none to search or seek for them" (34:6). However, notably, this first section ends with a promise that God will intervene on behalf of his sheep and hold the shepherds to account:

Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. (Ezekiel 34:10)

At this point, the inter-textual links with Matthew 9:36 begin to come into focus, as Matthew describes Jesus as recognizing the same condition among the people of Israel in *his* time and demonstrating divine compassion for the plight of the crowds.

In the second section (Ezekiel 34:11-24), the repetitive use of the first person singular pronoun dramatically underscores God's intention to actively and personally intervene on behalf of his people (see Table 2). This second section reaches a crescendo with its own intertextual reference to the Davidic covenant (34:22-24; cf. 2 Samuel 7:16). God promises to establish proper leadership for his people by installing an eschatological shepherd, whom God calls "my servant David." This coming shepherd-servant is described in terms that are intentionally opposite from the failings of Israel's leaders. Following the anticipation established by Ezekiel's prophecy, Matthew, then, presents Jesus in Matthew 9:36 as the Davidic Messiah, the one who expresses divine compassion in response to the same leadership failure described in Ezekiel 34.

²¹ Lamar E. Cooper, *Ezekiel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994).

Table 2: God's Response to His Scattered Sheep in Ezekiel 34

Verse	God's response	Verse	God's Response
34:11	I will search for my sheep	34:16	I will strengthen the weak
34:12	I will seek out my sheep	34:16	I will destroy [the fat and the strong]
34:12	I will rescue them	34:16	I will feed them in justice
34:13	I will bring them out	34:17	I judge between sheep and sheep
34:13	I will feed them on the mountains	34:20	I myself will judge
34:14	I will feed them with good pasture	34:22	I will rescue my flock
34:15	I myself will be the shepherd	34:22	I will judge between sheep
34:15	I myself will make them lie down	34:23	I will set up...one shepherd
34:16	I will seek the lost	34:24	I... will be their God
34:16	I will bring back the strayed	34:24	I am the Lord
34:16	I will bind up the injured	34:24	I have spoken

In the third section (Ezekiel 34:25-31), the Lord promises to make a covenant of peace with his people that will be established during the messianic reign of God's shepherd-servant. He says, "I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods" (34:25). The continued repetition of the first-person singular pronoun emphasizes that this is the exclusive work of God, flowing out of the previous section's climactic anticipation of the coming shepherd-servant. Under the shepherd-servant's leadership, God's people will dwell in a place blessed by the Lord with no need for fear or shame.

The contrast in Ezekiel 34 between Israel's failed leadership and the shepherd-servant's eschatological intervention establishes a backdrop of despair and hope against which Jesus' compassion for the crowds should be understood in Matthew 9:36. Jesus preached the Gospel of the kingdom, pointing to the eschatological fulfillment of the kingdom promises. As the one who felt divine compassion for the crowds, Jesus enacted God's concern for the people of Israel. More, as the prophesied descendant of David, Jesus is the promised shepherd-servant.

Harvest Celebration and Eschatological Fulfillment (9:37-38)

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

As in Verse 36, these verses make use of explicit imagery that captures both the imagination and collective memory of the Jewish people. At this point in the pericope, Jesus calls his disciples to participate in the ministry of shepherding the crowds by

urging them to engage earnestly the subordinating act of prayer.²² Subsequently, the sending of the apostles in Matthew 10 functions as an immediate and paradigmatic solution to the needs of the crowds in Chapter 9. The open-ended recapitulation of this commission in Matthew 28:18-20 shows that the work is not immediately completed by Jesus' disciples. In the present text, Verses 37-38 adjoin the messianic response to the harassed and helpless crowds with the sending of the apostles in the subsequent chapter; the link that connects the two is the participatory act of prayer by which the leader-followers of Jesus respond to the needs of the world.²³

The image of "harvest" was a rich cultural metaphor. Within the imagination of first century Israel, the image captured the emotions with the expectation of joyful fulfillment of what had been anticipated by faith. Jesus' use of the harvest metaphor in 9:37-38 calls to mind both agricultural nuances and eschatological hope.

First, harvest was of tremendous significance within the life of ancient Israel because agricultural activities were the pivotal factor in determining the cycles within Jewish culture. The year began with fasting while waiting for the rains; the year ended with feasting in celebration of the harvest.²⁴ For example, in the Feast of Firstfruits, grain was offered to the Lord in thanksgiving for his provision (Leviticus 23:9-14).²⁵ This celebration marked the beginning of the seven weeks of grain-harvesting season. After seven weeks, Israel celebrated the Feast of Weeks, marking the end of the harvest.²⁶ During the Feast of Weeks, loaves were offered to the Lord (Leviticus 23:15-22) and the Israelites were encouraged to offer freewill gifts in response to God's blessing (Deuteronomy 16:9-12). As a required festival, Jews traveled to Jerusalem from great distances to participate in the event (Acts 2:5-11). The Jewish calendar was built in part on the importance of harvest as a season of joy, expectation, hope, and trust in God's sovereign care (cf. Isaiah 9:3; Psalm 4:7; Psalm 126:6).

Second, in addition to agricultural nuances, the metaphor of harvest also recalled Israel's eschatological hope for the coming Kingdom of God.²⁷ Although other passages in Matthew utilize the image of harvest as a metaphor for judgment (e.g., 3:12, 13:30), the context of this verse is different.²⁸ In the Old Testament, multiple prophetic texts depict harvest as a time of eschatological promise and unimaginable blessing (see Table 3).

²² Morris, *Matthew*; William Hendrickson, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973).

²³ Michael P. Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

²⁴ Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966).

²⁵ Ibid.; Philip W. Elwell and Walter A. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001).

²⁶ Pfeiffer, *Biblical World*; Elwell and Comfort, *Dictionary*.

²⁷ Nolland, *Matthew*; M. L. Bailey, "The Parable of the Sower and the Soils," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1988).

²⁸ Morris, *Matthew*; Blaine Charette, "A Harvest for the People? An Interpretation of Matthew 9.37f," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990).

Table 3: Metaphorical Uses of Harvest Referring to Future Blessings

Text	Phrase	Context
9:3	Isaiah You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at harvest.	Harvest describes future joy of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.
6:11	Hosea For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed, when I restore the fortunes of my people.	Because of the steadfast love of the Lord, Judah is promised a harvest of restored fortunes.
3:18	Joel And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water.	In the day that God judges the nations, he will also restore the bounty of Judah.
9:13-15	Amos The days are coming... when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed.	At the time of the rebuilding of the house of David, there will be a restoration of the fortunes of Israel.

Use of the harvest metaphor in Matthew 9:37-38 acknowledges that with the arrival of the shepherd-servant (who responds with divine compassion to the needs of the sheep), the age of unimaginable blessing has dawned in the advent of the Messiah. Consistent with prophetic expectations (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5-6, 61:1-3), the blessings of the coming Kingdom of God have been released in Jesus' ministry and are subsequently perpetuated through the ministry of the apostles. Jesus instructs them, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8a) – activities that are precisely the same as what Jesus did among the crowds. Charette helpfully summarizes:

Jesus in 9.37f., then, is stating that the blessing in store for the people is great, and he therefore calls upon the disciples to petition God, who has prepared this harvest, to send out labourers into the harvest who will bring the benefits of that harvest, i.e. the blessings of the messianic age, to those in need of them.²⁹

The role of the workers is to extend the blessings of the dawning of the messianic age.³⁰ The harvest is not *people*, but the harvest is *for* the people. The unimaginable blessings of the Kingdom of God have arrived in the shepherd-servant; Jesus commissions his disciples to participate in extending the blessings of the Kingdom inaugurated by Jesus.

The agricultural and eschatological significance of the harvest metaphor point to joy and celebration in the unfolding of God's plan. This interpretation fits closely with the expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises during the leadership of the shepherd-servant as prophesied in Ezekiel 34 and fulfilled in Matthew 9:36. The harvest of unimaginable blessing has dawned in the advent of the Messiah. The disciples are drawn into the ministry of that blessing by participating in Jesus' teaching, proclamation, and healing.

²⁹ Charette, *Harvest*, 32-33.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

III. DISCIPLESHIP AS PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP

The role of the disciples in the expanding ministry of Jesus is participatory. Just as Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom and healed the sick and afflicted (9:35), so the disciples were instructed to preach and to heal (10:7-8). The investment of authority (10:1) shows that the disciples were made leaders in expanding work of Jesus' ministry. Yet, this ministry was not delegated to them in the sense of endowing them with intrinsic control or autonomy. On the contrary, Jesus reestablishes throughout the sending narrative in Matthew 10 that he will be with the disciples and that people's response to them and their message is also a response to Jesus and ultimately a response to God the Father (10:32-33).

The invitation to participate in the present unfolding of God's eschatological future is accentuated by Jesus' focus on laborers in Matthew 9:37-38. Whereas within Old Testament references to the eschatological harvest the focus is on God, in this passage (and its corresponding parallel in Luke 10:2), the focus is uniquely on the laborers.³¹ The assumption is not just that laborers will be involved in the work of the harvest, but also that they will take a leading role, reflected both by the admonition to pray and their subsequent sending. In short, the unfolding fulfillment of the eschatological promises (the long-awaited harvest) inaugurated in the advent of the Messiah (the shepherd-servant of the covenant in Ezekiel 34) incorporates the active participation of Jesus' disciples – not simply as authoritarian delegation of responsibilities, but active and ongoing involvement *with* God in the fulfillment of the Messiah's mission.

IV. CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AS PARTICIPATION IN THE UNFOLDING OF GOD'S ESCHATOLOGICAL FUTURE

In what way does Matthew 9:35-38 help to build a more robust theory of Christian leadership? It is the contention of the present paper that this text elucidates a picture of leader-follower participation by establishing a superordinate reality and then beckoning followers to yield themselves to the service of that reality through participation in its power and authority. As a point of connection with existing organizational theory, the concept of participatory leadership provides a helpful starting point.

Participatory leadership is typically conceptualized within organizational psychology as the expectation of equality and participation between leader and subordinates as opposed to highly directive approaches.³² For example, Cohrs, Abele, and Dette developed a scale to measure participatory leadership using three items, which help clarify how the construct is conceptualized: (a) "my supervisors are willing to take up the ideas of employees;" (b) "at my workplace, supervisors appreciate the employees' performance on the job;" and (c) "the management supports good

³¹ Nolland, *Matthew*.

³² Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, "The Transformational Model of Leadership," in *Leading Organizations*, ed. G. R. Hickman (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010).

employees.”³³ Harman suggests that Maslow’s theory of self-actualization explains the historical shift toward participatory leadership, as self-actualized people find hierarchical management oppressive.³⁴

Harman suggests that participatory leadership must extend beyond the findings of science and focus on a participation that is not simply leader-subordinate – participation not just with a leader but, together with the leader, participation with something that is deeper than the conscious self.³⁵ Harman proposes a form of participatory leadership theory that addresses the importance of each individual accessing the “supraconscious, creative/intuitive mind whose capabilities are apparently unlimited.”³⁶ Harman notes that this approach to participation with something beyond the conscious is implicit within world religions and wisdom.³⁷

Similar to Harman, this paper suggests that a Christian model of participatory leadership must extend beyond leader-follower metrics to consider the importance of both leader and follower participating in something beyond both – *divine* purposes. Saint Augustine purported that there can be no creaturely *being* apart from God, as *being* itself does not exist independent from God; God is maximal *being*, and human existence is participatory and derived.³⁸ Likewise, as is illustrated between Jesus’ response to the masses and his commissioning of his disciples in Matthew 9:35-38, Christian leadership is ultimately derived from an ultimate meaning that is fixed within eternal purposes and principles. Both Christian leadership and followership are inextricably bound and defined within the trajectory of the divine purposes. The focal nexus point of leadership, followership, and the leader-follower relationship is not necessarily between leader and follower; it is much higher – in God. The following section describes three fundamental characteristics of Christian participatory leadership (summarized in Table 4).

³³ J. Christopher Cohrs, Andrea B. Abele and Dorothea E. Dette, “Integrating Situational and Dispositional Determinants of Job Satisfaction: Findings from Three Samples of Professionals,” *The Journal of Psychology* 140, no. 4 (2006): 393.

³⁴ Willis W. Harman, “Two contrasting concepts of participatory leadership,” *Theory into Practice* 20, no. 4 (1981).

³⁵ Harman, *Participatory Leadership*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Paul J. Griffiths, *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004).

Table 4: Three Characteristics of Participatory Christian Leadership

Leader Attribute	Explanation	Theoretical Comparison	Textual Support
Response to the will of God	Priorities and convictions based on wholehearted commitment to God's will.	Authentic leadership emphasizes an <i>internalized moral perspective</i> ; for participatory Christian leaders, the moral compass has been pre-established.	Ezekiel 34 – leadership failure was based on failure to fulfill their God-mandated role.
Promotion of eschatological joy	Affirmation and declaration of God's plan in, through, and beyond history.	Servant leadership emphasizes <i>emotional healing</i> ; spiritual leadership promotes the centrality of hope; participatory Christian leadership goes one step further by proclaiming that these things are possible in the dawning of eschatological joy.	Matthew 9:37-38 – Jesus declares that the harvest is plentiful; in light of Old Testament imagery, harvest speaks of the eschatological pouring out of incomparable blessing.
Posture of subordination to God	Subordination to God's ultimate and final authority.	Servant leadership emphasizes the leader in the position of servant; participatory Christian leadership emphasizes leader and follower in subordinate role to God.	Matthew 9:35-10:1 – Jesus prepares his followers to respond to the call in 9:37-38 by allowing them to participate in his authority in 10:1.

Attribute 1 – Response to the Will of God

First, participatory Christian leadership responds to the will of God. This may seem like a simple or self-evident principle, but, in contrast with other leadership theories, it is a bold mandate. For example, and for point of comparison, authentic leadership theory emphasizes the importance of a leader's internalized moral perspective by which the leader regulates behavior based on one's own standards and

values.³⁹ These are leaders who lead based on values and convictions.⁴⁰ Yet, the leadership model being proposed in this paper does not simply endorse sincerity and conviction. Leader, follower, and the leader-follower relationship must all be calibrated around priorities and convictions that are determined by the reality of God and the priority of his will.

In Ezekiel 34, the shepherds of Israel were criticized for not fulfilling their mandate to feed and clothe the sheep. Israel's leaders were guilty of abdicating their God-given responsibilities and attending to other concerns. The leadership failure of Israel involved leaders at all levels, including kings. Their primary fault was a lack of commitment to wholehearted participation in the will of God.

The prophecy in Ezekiel 34 incorporates the restoration of the role of shepherd in the re-establishment of the throne of David. At that time, the will of God will be fulfilled, establishing justice, security, and blessing. Similarly, Jesus' summons to his disciples to pray for laborers was a call for followers who would respond to the needs of the crowd with the same focus of responding to and fulfilling the will of God.

Attribute 2 – Promotion of Eschatological Joy

Second, participatory Christian leadership promotes eschatological joy. Wright contends that general confusion within churches regarding Christian hope is responsible for "serious mistakes in our thinking, our praying, our liturgies, our practice, and perhaps particularly in our mission to the world."⁴¹ Yet, in light of Old Testament prophecies of the coming messianic kingdom and New Testament teaching about the already-but-not-yet nature of its fulfillment, a clearly articulated picture of God's plan in, through, and beyond history is Christian leadership's most potent message.

Barbuto and Wheeler's conceptualization of servant leadership includes the dimension of *healing*.⁴² They explain, "When people have hopes, dreams, or relationships that fail or end in disappointment, emotional resolution or healing can resolve broken spirits and emotional pain."⁴³ Likewise, Fry suggests that offering hope is a central component of spiritual leadership:

There are two essential components to every race: the vision and expectation of reward or victory and the joy of the journey of preparing for and running the race itself. Both of the components are necessary and essential elements of any vision that can generate hope and faith.⁴⁴

However, the eschatological hope established and affirmed in Scripture is not a vague or nebulous concept. On the contrary, with a bold authority, Christian leaders, followers, and their leader-follower relationships should affirm and declare what it

³⁹ Linda L. Neider and Chester A. Schriesheim, "The Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI): Development and Empirical Tests," *The Leadership Quarterly* 22, no. 6 (2011).

⁴⁰ Boas Shamir and Galit Eilam, "'What's Your Story?' A Life-Stories Approach to Authentic Leadership Development," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005).

⁴¹ Nicholas T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008), 6.

⁴² John E. Barbuto and Daniel W. Wheeler, "Scale Development and Construct Clarification of Servant Leadership," *Group and Organization Management* 31, no. 3 (2006).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁴⁴ Louis W. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 14, no. 6 (2003): 713.

believes to be true about the beauty of God's plans and the fulfillment of God's promises. Just as harvest represented a season of joy and fulfillment in ancient Judaism, Christian leaders labor for the eternal joy of others with their eyes fixed on the horizon and the dawning of God's kingdom. In this way, Christian leadership responds to the call of both servant leadership and spiritual leadership to provide healing and hope.

Attribute 3 – Posture of Subordination to God

Third, participatory Christian leadership assumes an authoritative posture of subordination. At first thought, these words may sound reminiscent of Greenleaf's description of the servant leader: "The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."⁴⁵ However, the posture of subordination within participatory Christian leadership is not necessarily with respect to those led; the point is that the Christian leader is subordinate to God's ultimate and final authority. "The Lord of the harvest" is God (Matthew 9:38).

Human leadership is participatory and derived – there is no leadership apart from God's authority. Thus, Paul wrote concerning Caesar, "For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1b). Likewise, in Matthew 10, in partial response to the need for laborers in the harvest (9:37-38), Jesus gave *authority* to his disciples as he sent them out to preach and heal. Thus, with authority derived from God and participation in an agenda established by God, Christian leadership is distinguished by a fundamental posture of subordination to God.

V. CONCLUSION

The pursuit of a robust model of Christian leadership must advance on the heels of sound biblical exegesis. The current paper builds toward this end by studying Matthew 9:35-38 and observing the means by which Jesus fulfills the messianic role of shepherd-servant, as anticipated within Ezekiel 34. Jesus' subsequent exhortation to his disciples to join him in the mission of the harvest demonstrates a model of participatory leadership that finds its ultimate identity in God's decree and purpose. This is a form of Christian leadership in which leader and follower participate in a reality that is higher than both. This model is not bound by contemporary leadership theories; it contributes to them. Without endorsing *any* particular approach, it qualifies *every* approach.

Whetstone comments: "Any leadership approach is flawed if it seeks the wrong teleological aims."⁴⁶ Participatory Christian leadership recognizes God's will/vision as authoritative and the leaders' and followers' roles to be submissive to the transformational will/vision of God. Accordingly, while organizations aspire to productivity and profit, these are only penultimate goals. The ultimate responsibility of

⁴⁵ Robert K. Greenleaf, "Servant Leadership," in *Leading Organizations*, ed. G. R. Hickman (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 90.

⁴⁶ J. Thomas Whetstone, "Personalism and Moral Leadership: The Servant Leader with a Transforming Vision," *Business Ethics: A European Review* 11, no. 4 (2002): 389.

leadership is to participate with the Lord of the harvest in leading people to recognize the dawning of eschatological joy in Jesus the Messiah.

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