THE ETHICS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP:
EXPOSING LIMITATIONS AND REFINING CORE VARIABLES

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Research of authentic leadership theory has expanded rapidly since its inception over a decade ago. Well known for its emphasis on seeking greater trust and commitment from followers, authentic leadership theory represents a renewed focus on ethics in leadership. The present study seeks to examine the ethics of authentic leadership theory by testing it against an ethically challenging scenario. The Jeremiah 1 pericope presents such an opportunity. This study will apply Robbins' (1996) social and cultural texture analysis to the Jeremiah 1 pericope in order to extract ethical leadership principles to compare and contrast with authentic leadership theory. The Jeremiah 1 principles largely support the core components and antecedent variables of authentic leadership theory. However, limitations to authentic leadership theory's ability to simultaneously meet ethical and effectiveness aspects of leadership are exposed. Jeremiah 1 provides new directions for research, as well as refines the theory's variables of (1) optimism and (2) balanced processing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Authentic leadership theory research has proliferated in the last decade as a viable effort to sustain greater trust and commitment within organizations. Of particular interest to this study is its noble commitment to ethics in leadership. In order to more closely assess the merits of authentic leadership theory's contribution to organizational ethics, this study will utilize ethical principles derived from the Jeremiah 1 pericope. To derive ethical principles from Jeremiah 1, this study will employ Robbins' (1996) method

of social and cultural texture analysis. Doing so will help to reveal the social and cultural location of discourse of Jeremiah 1 and orient the interpreter in the sociocultural context necessary for extracting principles that are relevant to the sociocultural process of contemporary organizational ethics. The principles that arise from the Jeremiah 1 analysis will then be applied to an analysis of authentic leadership theory's key components and process. The intersection of Jeremiah 1, authentic leadership theory, and leadership ethics provides valuable insights for future scholar and practitioner efforts alike.

II. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE ANALYSIS

To engage in any kind of interpretation of the Jeremiah 1 pericope, the text should ideally be placed conceptually within its original context. This section will first provide a brief discussion of background information in order to orient the text prior to applying Robbins' (1996) social and cultural texture analysis. The Old Testament has received relatively little socio-rhetorical interpretation compared to the New Testament (Howard, 1994; Robbins, 1996). As with the other Old Testament prophets, the books of prophecy contain literary forms unlike the narratives, historical accounts, poems, and letters that lend more readily to analysis. The fact that modern literature contains relatively little that compares to the literary forms of the prophets makes interpretation more challenging and ethnocentrism and anachronism more difficult to avoid (Duvall & Hays, 2012).

Background

While the events of Jeremiah 1:2 appear to have occurred in 627 B.C., the text accounting for Jeremiah's career was not written until approximately 605 B.C., likely in sections written by Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch (Hill & Walton, 2009). Jeremiah's account and career of prophesy spanned somewhere between thirty to forty years. This analysis assumes the active part of Jeremiah's career began sometime after 622 B.C., when the Book of the Law had been found, and at least five years after YHWH's initial dialogue with Jeremiah (Lundbom, 1991). Jeremiah's initial prophetic activity might have even been nearer to Josiah's death (609 B.C.) and the subsequent rule of Jehoiakim, during which pervasive idolatry and apostasy had returned to Judah. Although other viable interpretations exist (see discussion between Gordon, Holladay, and Hyatt in Thompson, 1980, pp. 50-56), none of them significantly alter the interpretive approaches of this particular analysis.

This was a period of geopolitical and religious instability. Israel's northern and eastern tribes had been deported in 734 B.C., and its capital was captured in 722 B.C. Judah itself became a vassal state of Assyria as the Assyrian domination continued. As such, Judaean kings began signing treaties requiring Judaeans to accept the religious norms of Assyria, which ushered in the perverse practices of worshipping foreign gods, practicing black magic and necromancy, and sacrificing humans, among other things (Kidner, 2014). The decentralized subsistence farming that had characterized Judah for centuries weakened, as governments centralized production and often took over half of families' product (Davis, 2009), potentially for redistribution (McNutt, 1999). Despite

temporary YHWH-inspired leadership by Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-7) and later Josiah (2 Chr. 34:3-7) in reforming the nation, the culture of disregard for YHWH's covenant was fairly embedded in Judah. Although Assyrian power began to wane about a decade prior to the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C. (Malamat, 2001), Egypt and Babylon were growing in power and became a neighboring threat as well. It is within this context that Jeremiah was born. Born to a priestly family in the priestly town of Anathoth, Jeremiah was likely familiar with religious writings, particularly the Torah (Lalleman & Lalleman, 2013), during a time in which the nation had largely forgotten the writings and teachings of covenant law.

Specific Social Topics

The structure of rhetoric in Jeremiah 1 can be broken into four sections: (1) the superscription (Jer. 1:1-3), (2) the call (Jer. 1:4-10), (3) the two visions (Jer. 1:11-16), and (4) the divine charge and promise (Jer. 1:17-19). Aside from the superscription, which provides Jeremiah's name, family, social status, and place of origin at the outset of the pericope, the remaining text is a dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah. Despite the reform attempts, YHWH had apparently seen Judah's idolatry and general societal corruption, and his rhetoric resembles a revolutionist approach (Robbins, 1996) to Judah's standing in the world and history. Judah's immorality, apostasy, and syncretism had drawn YHWH's anger and disgust (Jer. 1:16). Within the pericope, Jeremiah did not record any semblance of YHWH offering a way out for Judah. Regarding Judah, YHWH's rhetoric is focused on destruction, political overthrow, military defeat, humiliation, and judgment (Jer. 1:10, 14-16). Within this pericope, no hope of redemption or calls to repent or to focus inwardly on national holiness exist in this dialogue for Judah's near future involving Jeremiah's calling and commission. At the time of his calling and commission, Jeremiah faced an angry YHWH with the explicit intent for delivering a message of violent invasion and humiliating national revolution.

Jeremiah's part in this revolution was to be YHWH's assistant. YHWH required Jeremiah to go wherever YHWH chose to send him, and Jeremiah was required to say whatever YHWH chose for him to say (Jer. 1:7). YHWH never explicitly discussed Jeremiah's strategy as a prophet other than complete reliance upon him; YHWH put the divine insight that Judah needed to hear directly in Jeremiah's mouth (Jer. 1:9). Therefore, the rhetoric in Jeremiah 1 implies that the revolutionary activity was going to be executed by YHWH with YHWH utilizing Jeremiah as his assistant. This is not to downplay Jeremiah's role. On the contrary, YHWH appeared to allude to Jeremiah as being weaponized (Jer. 1:18) to be used against Judah with the power to both destroy and plant new social order (Jer. 1:10). This has led some to dub Jeremiah a type of "warrior-prophet" (Roshwalb, 2010). However, the key to understanding Jeremiah's place in the pericope is as YHWH's choice (Duke, 2005) of messenger to deliver stinging, provocative, and insulting, yet true messages to a nation about to be devastated. The text does not reveal Jeremiah as having earned this position or career through achievements in character, social status, training, or anything else. YHWH is recorded as telling Jeremiah that he had already consecrated Jeremiah and appointed him for this task and position before he formed and developed him in his mother's womb (Jer. 1:5). The Hebrew word for "knew" in this context - יָדַע - (*yādaʿ*) implies deeply

personal, intimate, individual knowledge, possibly even with a redemptive quality to it (Youngblood, 1990). Thus, nothing regarding the Jeremiah of the pericope under analysis indicates his effort or power qualified him for the task; his solemn duty as YHWH's messenger of doom was foreordained.

Common Social and Cultural Topics

As mentioned above, Jeremiah was born into a priestly community. Additionally, Anathoth was only three miles northeast from Jerusalem (Lalleman & Lalleman, 2013). Being from a priestly community that close to Jerusalem, it is expected that Jeremiah would have been somewhat informed of and affected by the political and religious issues plaguing Judah. He would have likely been very exposed to purity codes, and probably witnessed at some point in his upbringing types of syncretism (Bailey, 2016; Kidner, 2014). Similarly, he would have been well aware of Israel and Judah's history of treating prophets poorly who brought messages against the ruling classes (Youngblood, 1990). It is possible this was but one reason Jeremiah challenged YHWH upon the initial calling (Jer. 1:6; Roshwalb, 2010). Another, more obvious reason was that Jeremiah was a נַעַר (*na'ar*). The meaning of this word is usually translated "child" (KJV) or "youth" (NASB). Yet, it may range anywhere from infancy to adulthood (Strong, 2001). It seems apparent in this context that the term conveyed some type of lower social status, along with a degree of inexperience that Jeremiah would eventually grow out of with time and maybe training (Lundbom, 1991). Strawn (2005) suggested it may have also been a rhetorical device designed to appeal to one's insignificance in order to gain YHWH's compassion.

In any case, this is the only time in the pericope that Jeremiah's ego is on display (Lewin, 1985). YHWH's response was to reject Jeremiah's reasoning and contrast Jeremiah's inexperience with the humbling notion that Jeremiah's ability would be greatly enhanced because he would be speaking words that YHWH directly placed in his mouth to the nations (Jer. 7-10). The call, the challenge, and the response in this dialogue served to dislodge Jeremiah from his initial social space and thrust him into a new, more dangerous, uncomfortable, and national one. Accounting for this occurrence in the text would have served to help gain Jeremiah credibility when read aloud to his various audiences (Walser, 2012). With the presumption that some of the (many) false prophets would have chosen to enter the profession for unethical reasons, it was important in ancient Judaean culture to present one's credentials upon preparing to deliver an oracle to the people (Lundbom, 1991). This was especially important because the message Jeremiah was going to be delivering was severely judgmental, threatening, and antagonistic.

Rich social and cultural textures are present in the text of the two visions (Jer. 1:11-16). The "rod of an almond tree" (Jer. 1:11, NASB) symbolizes YHWH's watchfulness over ensuring his desired ends are completed (Jer. 1:12; Johnston, 2010). The Hebrew words for almond שָׁקֵד (*šāqēd*) and watching שָׁקַד (*šāqad*) provide an intriguing wordplay that has yet to be fully understood in English. *Šāqad* is translated to be awake, watch, stand guard, hasten, woke, and watching. Almond trees were very common throughout the countryside, and, as they were the first of the year to blossom, they served as the indication of changing time and seasons (Thompson, 1980). In

addition to this texture, Woods (1942) highlighted a cultural sense of שָׁקֵד (*šāqēd*) to convey a more solemn, fearful tone, as in the context of a warning to the "sons of rebellion" recorded in Numbers 17 and Ezekiel 7. The sense of the word שָׁקַד (*šāqad*) conveyed a foreboding of evil, much like the "leopard watching the cities" waiting to "destroy her" text of Jeremiah 5:6 (Woods, 1942). This meaning was essentially confirmed when Jeremiah later spoke of YHWH watching over the people "for harm and not for good" (Jer. 44:27). This interpretation of cultural undertones also fits within the mood of the subsequent seven and final verses of the pericope. Whether the boiling pot from the north represented Babylon or some other enemy, it was a well-known cultural symbol of dark forces and threats to Israeli and Judaean society (Thompson, 1980). As mentioned in the background above, the majority of invasions came from the north.

The text of Jeremiah 1:15 would have been particularly insulting to Judaeans. YHWH specifically mentioned that foreigners would set up thrones at Jerusalem's gates. Many Judaeans were proud of their heritage; even after Jerusalem fell in 597 B.C., many Judaeans refused to accept Babylonian rule and even viewed Babylonian rule as a temporary "setback" (Thompson, 1980). So, Jeremiah's account of YHWH's words in 1:15 would equate to Jeremiah telling Judaeans YHWH had completely, humiliatingly, and resentfully forsaken them (Bailey, 2016; Fox, 2011). Despite the danger that would certainly be posed to Jeremiah in delivering such a message, YHWH ordered him to "not be dismayed," or else YHWH would personally "dismay" Jeremiah in front of the people (Jer. 1:17). Presenting this text to the people might have further served to appeal to Jeremiah's credibility (Lundbom, 1991; Walser, 2012). This presented, or should have presented, an insight into the inner struggle a prophet carrying such a message would have, while arguing that YHWH would indeed punish the prophet for any kind of failure due to a fear of humans (Johnston, 2010; Thompson, 1980). YHWH's encouragement to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:18-19) contained culturally-understood symbols of aggression. Instead of viewing the "fortified city," "pillar of iron," and "walls of bronze" rhetoric to mean Jeremiah would be defended, the terms here combine with the word "against" to signify a more aggressive tone (Bailey, 2016; Fox, 2011). Fortified cities were such mighty, imposing structures in contrast to their surrounding land and sky that they struck fear into outsiders (Num. 13:28). They were also geostrategically situated and served as much for imperial expansion as they did for defense (Bailey, 2016). As such, the rhetoric of Jeremiah 1:18-19 conveys Jeremiah's hardening, as YHWH's anger focused on militantly weaponizing Jeremiah in a figurative sense against the entire land of Judah.

Final Cultural Categories

Jeremiah initially appears in the text in a subcultural location as a person from a priestly family and community. Jeremiah was consecrated by YHWH before he was even born (Jer. 1:5), and he was exposed to YHWH's direct word from the outset, which further cemented him in a subcultural context. YHWH knew long before any of these events happened that he had chosen Jeremiah to differ from the dominant culture in order to be an effective leader. The text shifts in its rhetoric in verse 10 when YHWH indicated that Jeremiah would be "building and planting" after the "destroying and overthrowing." Maier (2014) suggested that YHWH used Jeremiah as Jerusalem's

"stand-in" while judgment was to be administered. However, that is the only positive construction within the larger destructive context of Jeremiah 1:10-19 (Bailey, 2016; Fox, 2011; Lundbom, 1991). The primary thrust of verses 10-19 is characterized by contracultural rhetoric. YHWH was reacting to widespread elements of the dominant cultural practices without yet offering an alternative response such as repentance or developing a different system of understanding for the Judaeans to avoid the impending severe punishment (Fox, 2011). Even if Judah was not expected to repent, YHWH's rhetoric implied that Jeremiah's actions would be ratified in heaven (Dahlberg, 1975). YHWH offered Jeremiah what he never would offer Judah in this pericope: protection.

Thus, YHWH's rhetoric remained contracultural insofar as it asserted more negative pronouncements than positive (Robbins, 1996). The only area in which YHWH's rhetoric hints at alternative modes of conduct available for the dominant culture lies in what is implicit in his reasons for judgment: their wickedness, forsaking YHWH, offering sacrifices to other gods, and worshiping the works of their own hands (Jer. 1:16). Theoretically, the opposite of each of these behaviors would seem to be a step in the direction of virtue. However, no indication is given in the pericope that such actions would save the dominant culture of that place and time.

Summary of Principles

The overall picture foreshadowed in Jeremiah 1, particularly in the contracultural tones, was fairly grim. While this pericope has its place in the history of the church, and YHWH's people would never actually be completely forsaken (Ezra; Neh; Jer. 31:33-34; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16, 2:10), a few principles surface upon examination of the pericope's social and cultural texture. While YHWH is merciful, forgiving, and loving (Is. 43:25; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4-5), his wrath appears here as a nearly unquenchable fire, particularly when fueled by people's prideful wickedness and idolatry (Jer. 1:10-19). Likewise, although Jeremiah was consecrated by YHWH and commissioned to carry out YHWH's will, YHWH made it clear that he would have no patience for any failure on Jeremiah's part that stemmed from a fear of humans (Jer. 1:17; Thompson, 1980). YHWH intimately knew both Jeremiah and the sociocultural situation long before either existed and had chosen Jeremiah for this task and vocation. YHWH commissioned Jeremiah for his vocation before it was apparently socially acceptable for a person with Jeremiah's inexperience (Lundbom, 1991; Jer. 1:6) and seemed to have intentionally placed Jeremiah in a socially and geographically strategic location.

Although Jeremiah's vocation was going to subject him to decades of pain, suffering, and social rejection, these facts did not prevent YHWH from commanding Jeremiah to take on the role. Although the sociocultural environment may change, and Jesus later changed humans' opportunity for relationship with him (Heb. 9-10), God never changes his character and expectations (Heb. 13:8), and the Jeremiah 1 principles still offer insight for ethical leadership (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God still knows every individual person today as intimately as he knew Jeremiah (Lk. 12:7). He still commands and expects that those he calls to a vocation or life path to preserve and to speak his word, transmitting his values to the world with whatever abilities people have (Heb. 10:23-24; 1 Pet. 4:11) and to be unafraid of what mere human enemies can do (Lk. 12:4-5; 1 Pet. 4:12-14). While leading with Christian ethics today may inherently be

divisive at times, this is not a reason to avoid it (Lk. 12:49-53; Thompson, 2008). Likewise, even the likelihood that an audience may be "unreachable" does not excuse a Christian leader from his or her role (Dahlberg, 1975; Lalleman & Lalleman, 2013; Schart, 2004). While Jeremiah may have been a prophet who directly received spoken communication from YHWH, the gift of the Holy Spirit available to Christians today, as well as the wide availability of printed scripture, empowers Christians with the ability to discern God's will in a new way (Jn. 16:13; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 2:10). God has foreordained the lives, vocations, and missions of believers who love him and seek to work for his purposes (Rom. 8:28-30). And although he is slow to anger (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Nah. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:9), he still reserves terrible and fearful wrath and judgment for the unrepentant and adversaries of his purpose (Rom. 2:5; Heb. 10:26-31; Rev. 19:14-15).

III. AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY

The past few decades have been characterized by ethical failings from the highest levels of organizational leadership and across all industry sectors. Along with this development, the rapid growth and dissemination of technology that interconnects people and propagates news and other information fueled public cries for greater transparency. Authentic leadership theory was largely born from this environment as a conceptual approach to answering the desire for greater trust in and ethical commitment from leaders (Fry & Whittington, 2005). Attempting to move on from the scholarly focus on charisma, Solomon (2014) argued that trust is far more important for fostering the emotional connection between followers and their leaders that constitutes ethical leadership. Such leadership theory was intended to reorient leaders with greater attention to inner morality and outward ethical conduct (Hannah, Lester, & Vogelgesang, 2005). As its name implies, authentic leadership focuses on leaders and leadership that are genuine, original, and real (May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003). According to George (2003), the human desire to maintain trusting relationships causes followers to be willing to offer leaders greater commitment when leaders foster such relationships.

To develop authentic leadership, Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) suggested that four core elements are needed: (1) self-awareness, (2) internalized moral perspective, (3) balanced processing, and (4) relational transparency. Although to a certain extent leaders' authenticity, as influenced by their self-awareness, is highly dependent upon their life experiences (Shamir & Eilam, 2005), these four elements can be developed as leaders strive for personal and organizational improvement (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005). Additionally, the positive psychological capacities (psychological capital) of (1) confidence, (2) hope, (3) optimism, and (4) resilience are preconditions of a leader's ability to develop the four core elements (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), as is moral reasoning (Olsen & Espevik, 2017). Northouse (2016) provided a convenient synopsis of the authentic leadership development process in the adapted model below (Figure 1).
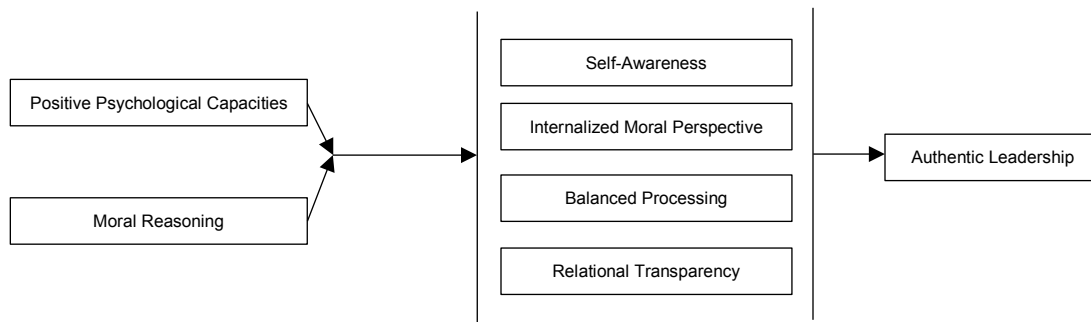
Figure 1. Authentic leadership components and process (Northouse, 2016, p. 202).

As far as outcomes, authentic leadership emphasizes followers' eudaemonic well-being, as distinct from hedonic (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). Authentic leadership positively affects followers' organizational commitment, extra work effort, and satisfaction with leaders (Peus, Wesche, Streicher, Braun, & Frey, 2012; Olaniyan & Hystad, 2016), as well as followers' attitudes and engagement (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2016). Authentic leadership has a positive influence on followers' creativity and innovation (Müceldili, Turan, & Erdil, 2013), improves followers' resilience (Gaddy, 2016), and can improve safety (Hoyt, 2018). It can also inhibit unethical conduct among followers undergoing temptation (Cianci, Hannah, Roberts, & Tsakumis, 2014). Authentic leadership even decreases leaders' stress and increases their work engagement (Weiss, Razinskas, Backmann, & Hoegl, 2018). As the theory is exposed to time and additional testing, the positive ethical implications thus far appear to be growing.

However, the applicability of authentic leadership to complex ethical situations remains relatively unexamined. As in some areas of public sector leadership, being responsible for others creates ethical complexities that appear nearly impossible to navigate (Keohane, 2014). A vital, yet overlooked, antecedent to the possibility for authentic leadership to be effective is compatible organizational culture. Chan, Hannah, and Gardner (2005) state, "Organizational culture moderates the extent to which authentic leader behaviors are interpreted as authentic by followers" (p. 29). For behavior to be considered leadership, a follower must grant some moral legitimacy to a leader (Blom & Alvesson, 2014; Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2015); yet, it is possible for leaders' and followers' value systems to overlap, leading to an impression of authenticity, even in the absence of a universal moral standard (Sidani & Rowe, 2018). As Eagly (2005) demonstrated, authentic leaders can even limit their effectiveness by being true to their core beliefs and values. Thus, cultures characterized by or tolerating ethical lapses will challenge and possibly prevent a commitment to authenticity. To add to the discussion of authentic leadership, the following section will address the intersection of authentic leadership theory with Jeremiah 1 principles from an ethics perspective.

IV. INTERSECTION OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY, JEREMIAH 1, AND ETHICS

A majority of the antecedents to and core elements of authentic leadership theory are supported by the Jeremiah 1 pericope. This section will briefly discuss those. However, the focus will be to identify and address dissimilarities in order to engage in an ethical assessment of authentic leadership theory with the hope that it can be improved, or at least better understood.

Positive Psychological Capacities

The positive psychological capital of confidence, hope, and resilience find support from Jeremiah 1 as important variables to leadership. Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggested that these variables were prerequisites to authentic leadership. Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) later demonstrated that, while each of these variables were predictors of greater work satisfaction and performance, they were even greater predictors when treated as a composite whole, when including optimism. Confidence, sometimes tested synonymously with "efficacy" or "self-efficacy" (Luthans et al., 2007) is reflected in Jeremiah 1 when YHWH assured Jeremiah that he would give Jeremiah the divine words Judah needed to hear (Jer. 1:7). YHWH placed the words in Jeremiah's mouth (Jer. 1:8) and essentially gave Jeremiah an inspirational "pep talk," vividly illustrating that he had intentionally appointed Jeremiah to stand above whole kingdoms in order to execute his judgment (Jer. 1:10). YHWH also instilled hope in Jeremiah by promising that, despite the likelihood of physical attacks, he would protect Jeremiah from fatal injury (Jer. 1:19). Presumably, Jeremiah's survival and continued leadership would be key to positively constructing a healthier organization of people under YHWH's guidance (Jer. 1:10). Jeremiah 1 strongly supports the variable of resilience as well. YHWH went to great extent in this pericope to illustrate to Jeremiah that, regardless of the number or strength of attacks, Jeremiah would be a hardened fortress, always assured of YHWH's deliverance (Jer. 1:8,18-19). The one element of positive psychological capital that Jeremiah 1 refines is optimism.

Refining Optimism

Within the theory of authentic leadership discussed here, it is posited that optimism is essentially an antecedent to authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Research largely supports a wide array of optimism's positive effects for organizations (Allen, 2017; Crosno, Rinaldo, Black, & Kelley, 2009; De Hoogh & Hartog, 2008; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Medlin & Green, 2009; Rego, Lopes, & Nascimento, 2016). However, the Jeremiah 1 pericope paints a distinctly different picture regarding optimism in leadership. It can be argued that the brief mention of eventual "building and planting" in Jeremiah 1:10 inserts a slight picture of optimism which Jeremiah may have been able to use. However, this is perhaps better characterized, in this context, as providing Jeremiah with the hope discussed above. The remaining social and cultural texture of YHWH's rhetoric to Jeremiah containing instructions for what Judah's near future would look like did not hold any optimism (Jer. 1:11-19). The message he would

be delivering to Judah was one of pure rebuke, punishment, humiliation, and destruction of all that they held dear. While Judah would eventually receive glimpses of optimism from YHWH (Ezra 1:1-4; Jer. 31:33-34), the leadership scenario that took place in Jeremiah 1 displays distinct pessimism. This begs the question must a leader always, in all situations, foster and convey optimism in order to fully engage in authentic leadership?

Jeremiah 1 refines this element of authentic leadership by demonstrating that optimism is sometimes not conducive to authentic leadership. Although research is relatively quiet on this particular issue, a few examples exist wherein negative messaging reflected the most authentic leadership available as dictated by the situation (Denton, 2000; Karsten, Keulen, Kroeze, & Peters, 2009). If the definition and purpose of authentic leadership is to lead truthfully, genuinely, and realistically, then it cannot be the case that optimism is always the order of the day. While optimism has clear organizational and personal benefits, responsible leadership should consider optimism as "flexible" (Peterson, 2000; Schulman, 1999). President George Washington demonstrated mixed optimism when he expressed the need to "make the best of mankind as they are, since we cannot have them as we wish" (Newell, 2012, p. 199). William Wilberforce mixed optimism and pessimism at various times as he witnessed the horrors of the slave trade, prison conditions, and child labor and sought to reform British society (Vaughan, 2002). While the substantial research on optimism has merited the academic and practitioner emphasis on it, a more holistic understanding of authentic leadership might benefit from a closer look at the ethics of occasional, situationally-based pessimism in leadership, as demonstrated in Jeremiah 1. It may be that the sense of helplessness that the absence of optimism creates (Luthans & Youssef, 2007) is sometimes needed for individuals and organizations to change from one state to another more spiritually elevated state (Ps. 50:15; Mt. 5:3; Lk. 11:11-13, 18:13-14; Jn. 5:2-9; Rom. 7:18-25). As will be discussed further below, this possibility has substantial ethical implications for leadership in general and authentic leadership in particular.

Authentic Leadership Core Components

Jeremiah 1 principles support authentic leadership theory's core elements of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency. Jeremiah initially voiced concern over his lack of abilities with respect to whether he was capable of being successful in the vocation to which YHWH called him (Jer. 1:6). As it turned out, this was of no concern to YHWH because YHWH would divinely empower Jeremiah with whatever abilities Jeremiah needed (Jer. 1:7-10, 18-19. However, Jeremiah did initially demonstrate the type of self-awareness that reflected how his strengths and weaknesses would enable or inhibit his leadership within his sociocultural setting (Jer. 1:6). Moreover, YHWH communicated the fact of his intimate knowledge of Jeremiah and taught Jeremiah that he would become more powerful and influential than he realized, further increasing Jeremiah's self-awareness prior to commissioning his specific tasking (Jer. 1:5, 7-10). Internalized moral perspective is strongly supported by the notion of YHWH consecrating Jeremiah so that he would be guided only by the inner morality of YHWH's word as he was sure to face intense social pressure which

would test his ethics. (Jer. 1:5). Relational transparency is compatible with Jeremiah 1 principles as well. Every allusion and concept of Jeremiah as a leader within this pericope indicates that YHWH expected him to both maintain his inner morality and to present this part of himself with the utmost fidelity to YHWH's word. In fact, YHWH even gave Jeremiah the stern warning that Jeremiah must not falter in fear of the Judaeans (Jer. 1:17); YHWH went to great extent to illustrate how fortified Jeremiah would become, specifically for the purpose of Jeremiah presenting his authentic self and, by extension, YHWH's authentic self to the Judaeans (Jer. 1:18-19). Balanced processing, as defined by authentic leadership theory, however, slightly differs from Jeremiah 1 principles.

Refining Balanced Processing

According to authentic leadership theory, balanced processing is concerned with approaching leadership situations with an open mind and unbiasedly analyzing available options. Balanced processing requires leaders to remain objective and listen to opposing viewpoints prior to making decisions. While Jeremiah may or may not have demonstrated balanced processing in his discourse with YHWH (Jer. 1: 6), it is clear that YHWH did not have any expectations for Jeremiah to convince the Judaeans of his balanced processing when he approached their situation (Jer. 1:10, 14-19). According to this text, Jeremiah was required to approach the Judaeans with a fully formed bias for judgment. While subsequent principles in Scripture suggest withholding judgment is a virtuous trait (Mt. 7:1-2; Rom. 2:1, 14:13), the keys in the Jeremiah 1 principles are that: (1) Jeremiah had direct, divine revelation from YHWH that provided perfect insight, and (2) the Judaeans had long been engaging in clear, explicit, known sin and apostasy. Followers perceive leaders as authentic when it appears leaders are willing to objectively consider their concerns and perspectives (Rego, Cunha, & Simpson, 2018). However, Jeremiah 1 indicates that leadership situations exist in which such consideration may not be ethical. This is not, however, a removal of true balanced processing from the leader's cognitive processing. On the contrary, leaders have an ethical responsibility to carefully and objectively analyze information in order to make decisions that promote virtue (Badaracco, 1997; Fedler, 2006). This refinement suggests that the type of balanced processing that focuses on followers' perspectives of a leader's consideration or bias need not always be exercised.

Organizational Culture and Authentic Leadership

Organizations develop and maintain their own unique personalities. Essentially, the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the many individuals that make up an organization combine to evolve into a culture with established, shared beliefs, values, and norms that eventually become taken-for-granted facts (Hultman, 2002; Schein, 2017). Leaders can embed and transmit shared cultural characteristics to followers, and followers can influence leaders' and organization's culture as well (Schein, 2017). According to Hultman's Motivational System Model (2002), individuals, teams, and organizations all go through a cycle of assessing wants and needs through a lens of their values, determining whether the wants and needs are met, and intervening accordingly. Some

of the innermost, core psychological needs of humans are self-esteem, self-respect, social acceptance, societal contribution, and personal mastery (Hultman, 2002). Since these needs are so fundamental to individuals' well-being, challenges or disruptions to these personal elements can sometimes have significantly negative consequences. As such, organizational-level culture changes can disrupt the fundamental individual wants and needs, causing cynicism, loss of trust, frustration, and decreased morale (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). When individuals feel their core values, wants, and needs are attacked, a number of dysfunctional outcomes can be expected.

The problem YHWH and Jeremiah faced was that the Judaeans at the time had been warned about their cultural sins before, yet they continued willingly down the wrong path. This posed a limitation to authentic leadership. If a culture is unsupportive of needed change, an authentic leader with a mind for ethics will necessarily seek to confront the cultural problems. However, it has already been established that the culture would not support the change. Therefore, in the definitional sense of leadership as changing an organization from one state to another (Winston & Patterson, 2006), the authentic leader will not have led at all in this case. As Sidani and Rowe (2018) demonstrated, it is possible for an organization with a completely unethical culture to consider a leader authentic if the leader's value system simply overlaps with that of the organization's. Such would be the example of the false prophets of Jeremiah's day (Jer. 23:9-40, 28:1-17). However, ethical leadership required Jeremiah to act in a way that seemingly exposed a paradox for authentic leadership. To be authentic, Jeremiah would apparently not be able to "lead." Perhaps this painfully dissonant reality is one reason why Jeremiah ended up so frustrated and came to be known as the "weeping prophet." Authentic leadership has been such a popular focus in the study of leadership recently particularly due to its ethical promise in light of seemingly increasing unethical activity. In light of the paradox mentioned above, authentic leadership ought to be more closely observed under an ethics lens, as informed by Jeremiah 1. Perhaps the best place to start is in the aspect of authentic leadership that claims to deal with precisely this issue: moral reasoning.

Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning as a contributing factor in authentic leadership is distinct from the core element of internalized moral perspective. Internalized moral perspective is the self-regulatory process of ensuring one is controlled by one's inner moral compass, as opposed to external sources, such as societal pressure (Walumbwa et al., 2008). This ensures followers can see that there is fidelity between a leader's espoused beliefs and the leader's actions. Moral reasoning is gaining ground as a fundamental precondition of authentic leadership in general (Olsen & Espevik, 2017). It can be understood at the component level described by Johnson and Hackman (2018) as (1) moral sensitivity (recognition), and (2) moral judgment. At the basic level, this includes being morally sensitive enough to recognize when a moral issue arises and being able to use logic, prudence, and judgment to deduce ethical solutions. As with any theory or style of leadership, morality's influence is difficult to analyze since there are so many competing viewpoints. Additionally, the influence of moral judgments upon the values and motivations within organizational cultures is great and diverse. Still it is widely

recognized as necessary for good leadership. However, this begs the question: What is good?

From a Christian perspective, the only way to ensure one maintains an accurate moral compass is to calibrate it with a transcendent value source, that being God, divine revelation, and his divinely-inspired word. Otherwise, ethical dilemmas, which are already difficult, become nearly impossible to effectively navigate. As Badaracco (1997) illustrated, ethics is not black and white; many "right versus right" scenarios are presented to leaders every day. Even when some leaders put forth a good faith effort, they often find upon self-reflection that they are not as ethical as they initially thought (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Even the highly popular theory of transformational leadership, which is often considered essentially synonymous with ethical leadership, has recently been suggested to not be as ethical as a more federalist approach (Keeley, 2014). The values and ethics of charisma as a leadership trait have been questioned as well (Solomon, 2014). Keohane (2014) illustrated the inherent difficulty of attempting ethical leadership in the public sector, particularly from a democratically elected position. In public sector leadership, aspiring leaders find themselves caught between what they think is ethical and what their constituents desire on a daily basis. As is often the case, good-sounding policies attract mass approval among the electorate while they actually hold terrible, even fatal, unintended consequences (Sowell, 2009). Even public elementary school teachers face situations in which they must either operate from their own genuine moral reasoning and ethics or be dismissed (Henry, 2018; Moomaw, 2018; Schaub, 2017; Smith, 2018). A teacher could just make the compromise in order to continue teaching under the reasoning that she would be positively influencing greater numbers in the end (the utilitarian approach). Or she could live the example by staying firm to her values, modeling what she believes is ethical (the deontological approach), yet be fired and never teach at the school again.

Although authentic leadership theory is widely recognized for its emphasis on ethics (Northouse, 2016), it appears insufficient in its current form to be able to address the types of situations mentioned here. Walumbwa et al. (2008) suggested that authentic leadership rests on the requirement that leaders use strong core values to make difficult decisions while adhering to high standards of ethical conduct. Relying on such inner and ideally resolute guidance is how leaders are able to truly express their "real" selves to followers in a way that gains the greater trust and commitment that practitioners seek (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). However, authentic leadership theory has not yet addressed how an authentic leader can ethically lead when faced with an organization holding on to unethical beliefs, values, or behaviors. The ethical leadership principles from Jeremiah 1 may offer an answer. YHWH demanded and expected Jeremiah to strictly adhere to his tasking without faltering (Jer. 1:17). When it was determined what the Judaeans needed, YHWH decisively placed Jeremiah in a position to rebuke the unethical culture (Jer. 1:10). Even though it would mean Jeremiah would be in harm's way, YHWH still required him to obey (Jer. 1:17-19). Jeremiah's vocational calling was independent of any utilitarian concept of sociocultural or career success. Although YHWH did not express optimism in his initial judgment of Judah, and the YHWH-Jeremiah leadership team did not have sufficiently overlapping values with the Judaeans, YHWH still expected Jeremiah to lead with an ethically inflexible approach.

Summary of Authentic Leadership Core Elements with Jeremiah 1 Refinement

Authentic leadership theory was intended to satisfy the need for greater trust and commitment in organizational leaders. Within the theory, authentic leaders must be genuine, conveying their true, inwardly moral, ethical selves. To develop and maintain leadership authenticity, leaders must develop the core elements of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. These also depend on maintaining positive psychological capital of confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience. The entire theory hinges on leaders' capability to master moral reasoning. Additionally, organizational culture moderates the effect of authentic leadership, since followers' value systems must overlap with leaders in order to accord enough moral legitimacy to sustain the change efforts inherent in the leadership process.

Principles derived from the social and cultural texture analysis of the Jeremiah 1 pericope largely support authentic leadership theory and its emphasis on ethics. Yet, Jeremiah 1 refines the variables of optimism and balanced processing in a more ethically aligned way. Jeremiah 1 suggests that optimism is not always an antecedent to authentic leadership. Its principles contend that situations exist in which pure optimism may in fact be unethical. At a minimum, a more measured, balanced optimism is sometimes necessary. While the vast majority of recent research rightly highlights the sweeping, positive effects of optimism as a component of psychological capital (Allen, 2017; Crosno et al., 2009; De Hoogh & Hartog, 2008; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Medlin & Green, 2009; Rego et al., 2016), temporary suspension of optimism may sometimes be necessary for spiritual elevation. And although followers generally give leaders more trust and commitment when they perceive that leaders are unbiased and objective, situations exist in which leaders must strictly transmit the values derived from their internalized moral perspectives in order to remain ethical. When clear ethical violations are taking place, particularly those that pose a dangerous threat to people, leaders should not feel the need to automatically afford followers consideration of their unethical viewpoints.

Authentic leadership theory finds itself caught up in a paradox. It requires moral reasoning and internalized moral perspectives to anchor leaders in truth and enable them to make ethical decisions for their organizations. Yet, the leadership process relies upon a learning-capable, change-ready, value-compatible culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Eagly, 2005; Schein, 2017; Sidani & Rowe, 2018). Thus, the morally unsupportive organizational culture will prevent the ethical leader from engaging in authentic leadership. In this case, to be authentic is to limit leadership. This appeared to be the case in Jeremiah 1, at least initially. The phrase "lead by example" may be applied here; it is true, Jeremiah's actions demonstrated virtue, and subsequent generations would benefit from the example he set. However, when the process of leading an organization means changing the organization from one state to another, ideally better state (Winston & Patterson, 2006), authentic leadership presents itself as definitionally-limited regarding the present organization. If the leader remains ethical and authentic, then virtue will have been preserved. However, this will not always mean success for the organization or its followers.

V. CONCLUSION

Authentic leadership theory, Jeremiah 1, and ethics have much in common. As these principles intersect, the theory and practice of leadership gain valuable insight. Future research should extend the propositions revealed from this analysis into further theoretical and empirical study. Specifically, the variables of optimism and balanced processing should be more closely examined from different approaches. While optimism's massive collection of positive organizational outcomes is well-documented, it should be further examined from an ethics perspective and in more focused, situationally-based experimentation. Conversely, while pessimism has largely been represented in psychological research as having a negative effect on people and organizations, it should be studied further from an ethics perspective focused on situations resembling the scenarios described in this study, particularly viewed as a moderating compliment to optimism. Similarly, the balanced processing variable should be further examined under an ethics perspective, specifically as it relates to situations in which leaders must approach organizations that are practicing known and unknown ethical lapses. While the still burgeoning field of authentic leadership research still appears a promising approach to leadership ethics in its noble attempt to foster greater trust and commitment through genuine relationships, the principles from Jeremiah 1 highlight ethical concerns that scholars and practitioners should consider. As Jeremiah 1 refines authentic leadership theory, practitioners should take caution that authentic leadership, as delineated in contemporary research thus far, may not always adhere to ethical standards necessary for developing and maintaining organizational virtue.

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