

## POWER AND AUTHORITY IN PENTECOSTAL LEADERSHIP<sup>1,2</sup>

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### Introduction

The concept of power is a familiar one for Pentecostals. Belief in the power of the Holy Spirit to work in and through our lives is part of our theological and experiential DNA. For those of us old enough to remember when singing in church was from the hymn book instead of the video screen, songs with words such as "Oh, Lord send the power just now," "Pentecostal power is falling, praise the Lord it fell on me!" and, "He will fill your heart today to overflowing, with the Holy Ghost and power" were frequently a part of our worship. Pentecostals speak of "power encounters" with demonic forces and our services are punctuated by prayer for God's power to heal the sick, to bring deliverance from demonic influence or to intervene supernaturally in human affairs. We understand that this kind of power is the result of the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifesting themselves in supernatural ways in and through our ministries. One of the key biblical passages for Pentecostals is Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . ." (NIV) There is no doubt that the expression of God's power in these ways through Pentecostal pastors, evangelists, missionaries and laypersons is a major reason for the growth of the Pentecostal movement around the world.

While the spiritual dimensions of power are vital to Pentecostal ministry, for the purposes of this paper we will take a broader view,

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the content of this paper is based on the course "Advanced Leadership and Management" that I have taught for many years at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines and elsewhere. I wish to thank Steven Carter for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> A version of this paper was presented at a theological symposium conducted at Alphacrucis College in Sydney, Australia by the Asia Pacific Theological Association on Sept 9, 2009.

including the aspects of power as they operate within any leadership context, but especially in an organizational setting such as one finds in a school or church. This kind of power is not unique to Pentecostals but is inherent in any leadership situation, whether Christian or secular. In fact, it can be said that the exercise of leadership is ultimately an exercise of power. We might call this kind of power “human power” in contrast to God’s power, since it derives from human personality, experience and leadership activities. Nevertheless, it is how power of any kind is used that is of concern within a Christian context.

It must be acknowledged that Christians are not always comfortable with the idea that to lead is to use power. Most of us are familiar with the famous quote from the 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Lord Acton that “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”<sup>3</sup> American President, Abraham Lincoln, is quoted as saying, “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”<sup>4</sup> These sentiments suggest that there is a dark side to the use of power that must also be considered in any examination of power in Christian leadership.

This paper will examine the nature of leader authority and power in terms of both the research literature and an analysis of key biblical passages regarding Christ’s teaching on the nature of Christian leadership, and by implication, the use of power. It will discuss the importance of servant leadership, moral authority, integrity, and the exercise of spiritual gifts as essential to the power base of Pentecostal leaders. The thesis of the paper is that the nature and exercise of power by Christian/Pentecostal leaders<sup>5</sup> and in Christian/Pentecostal organizations must be based on an understanding and consistent application of the biblical model for leadership as taught by Christ, which involves an explicit concern for the wellbeing of those *being* led, and dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide both the leader and those he or she leads.

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<sup>3</sup> Lord Acton, Contained in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887. From The Phrase Thesaurus, 7/30/09. <<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/288200.html>>

<sup>4</sup> Abraham Lincoln, From The Quotations Page, 7/30/09. <[http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Abraham\\_Lincoln/](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Abraham_Lincoln/)>

<sup>5</sup> Pentecostal leadership is understood to be a subcategory of Christian leadership and much of what is written here could equally apply to Christian leadership, more generally, as will be indicated from time to time by the term Christian/Pentecostal leadership.

## The Many Faces of Leader Power

### Definitions of Power

Power has been defined in different ways by theorists. Hillman suggests that power can be conceived of as "... persuasive force, muscular struggle, decisive command, productive result, widest practical usefulness."<sup>6</sup> Pfeffer defines power as "the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do,"<sup>7</sup> and Vecchio simply as "the ability to change the behavior of others."<sup>8</sup> Authority, on the other hand, is generally understood to be the *right* to influence others that typically derives from a role or position held by the leader. Sometimes called "formal" authority, it is based on a definition of the prerogatives of a leadership position, such as might come from a job description or constitutional provision. Authority involves the *right* to make requests of others and expect them to comply as a function of the requester's position.

There are seven Greek words that are translated "power" or "authority" in the New Testament. Two that have special interest for us in this analysis are "*dynamis*," usually translated "power" or "mighty work" and "*exousia*" usually translated "*authority*."<sup>9</sup> Jesus is noted to have exercised both forms of power in Luke 4:36 "All the people were amazed and said to each other, 'What is this teaching? With authority [*exousia*] and power [*dynamis*] he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" (NIV). Christ affirmed His authority in Matt 28:18 "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority [*exousia*] in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" (NIV). In other words, Christ had both the right (authority) and the ability (power) to accomplish His purposes.

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<sup>6</sup> James Hillman, *Kinds of Power: A Guide to its Intelligent Uses*. New York: Currency Doubleday, 1995, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1992, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Robert P. Vecchio. "Power, Politics and Influence in Leadership," in Vecchio, R. ed, *Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, 69.

<sup>9</sup> Blue Letter Bible, LexiConc search for power. 8/12/09 <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/lexiconc.cfm?Criteria=power&st=any.>>

Influence, power and authority are often used interchangeably, but for our purposes we will define influence as a *generalized effect* of one person on another, power as the *ability* of a leader to influence others, and authority as the *right* of a leader to influence others. It should be apparent that authority and power can operate either independently or concurrently. That is, one can have the right but not the ability to influence others, or the ability but not the right to do so, or both the ability and the right to do so. Finally, I assume that power is neither inherently positive nor negative—it is how power is used that makes it positive or negative.

Table 1 French and Raven's Taxonomy of Power (including Raven's later revision)	
Type of Power	Description
Coercive	The power to force someone to comply against their will. The follower complies to avoid threats or punishments by the leader.
Reward	The power to dispense rewards for the follower's compliance. The follower complies in exchange for the rewards offered by the leader.
Legitimate	The power that comes from the formal authority of a leader related to his/her role or position. The follower complies because the leader has the right to make the request. The follower views it as his/her responsibility to comply.
Expert	The power that comes from the specialized knowledge and ability of the leader and the desire of followers to benefit from this. The follower complies because he/she believes the leader knows best.
Referent	The power that comes from the attractiveness of the leader and the follower's desire to be like the leader. The follower complies because he/she wants the leader's approval.
Informational	The power that comes either from the leader's control of the sources of information or from a persuasive communication used to influence followers.

### Sources of Leader Power

One of the most widely accepted frameworks for understanding the different sources of leader power was developed by French and Raven.<sup>10</sup> Originally, the taxonomy depicted five levels of what they called “social power:” Coercive, Reward, Legitimate, Expert, Referent, including “informational influence” as an aspect of Expert Power. Most references to the French and Raven taxonomy include only these five levels.<sup>11</sup> Later, however, Raven expanded the taxonomy to include Informational Power, as a sixth level.<sup>12</sup> These six levels are summarized in Table 1.

*Coercive power* involves the use punishment or threat of punishment to force compliance by others. For example, the power to fire an employee or reduce wages for failure to follow orders is coercive power. In the religious context, cults frequently use coercive power when they threaten to punish or excommunicated followers if they don’t obey the leader. Criticism and psychological abuse used to “keep people in line” through threats and fear are also examples of coercive power. The use of coercive power tends to produce resentment of the leader rather than respect and invites resistance and retaliation.

*Reward power* is the use of incentives to induce compliance. Salaries and bonuses are obvious examples, but there are other kinds of rewards that may be controlled by a leader, such as the distribution of resources within an organization, granting access to the leader, and public recognition for exemplary performance. It is intangible rewards such as recognition for a job well done or the expectation of a “heavenly reward,” that are most often used by Christian leaders to motivate volunteers.

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<sup>10</sup> John R. P. French and Bertram Russell, “The Bases of Social Power,” in Dorwin Cartwright, (ed), *Studies of Social Power*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 1959, 150-167.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard *Management of Organizational Behavior*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982, p. 178-179; Harold Koontz and Heinz Weihrich, *Essential of Management*. New York: McGraw Hill Publishing Co, 1990, p. 177; Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998, p. 178

<sup>12</sup> Bertram Russell, “Social Influence and Power,” in Ivan Steiner & Martin Flshbein (eds), *Current Studies in Social Psychology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, 371-382.

*Legitimate power* or *formal authority* derives from a position or role a leader holds. For instance, the leader of an organization may be granted certain prerogatives or spheres of decision making by a job description, constitution or board of directors that define the scope of action a leader may take without referring to a higher authority. This kind of power is “legitimized” by definition of a role or position, having nothing to do with the particular individual who happens to be the incumbent. Followers are expected to comply with the expectations and orders of the leader because he or she has the *right* to make them within the scope of his or her defined authority.

Unlike the previous sources of power, *expert power* is a characteristic of the person, not his or her position. We follow leaders who are experts because we believe they have knowledge beyond our own and know best how to help the organization reach its goals. Expert power may reside in a person with no formal role or position of leadership who is recognized to have special knowledge or ability. For instance, a wise and godly layperson in a church may exercise considerable “*expert*” power through knowledge of the history of the church, the internal dynamics of the relationships among members and the community in which it exists, well beyond that of the person who carries the title “pastor.” From the standpoint of Pentecostal leadership, expert power includes one’s knowledge of God, exercise of spiritual gifts and the ability to communicate spiritual truths to others in ways that enhance their spiritual development.

*Referent power* exists when a follower admires, identifies with and wants to be like a leader. Again, this has nothing to do with the position or role of the leader. Importantly, with regard to Pentecostal leadership, sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit, evidence of the operation of spiritual gifts in the leader’s life, and integrity are qualities that enhance referent power.

Finally, *informational power* may be a dimension of a leader’s position involving control over the sources and dissemination of information or a characteristic of the person related to the leader’s ability to present a persuasive or logical argument that influences followers.

#### Position and Personal Power

Going beyond French and Raven’s analysis, one can classify power into the general categories of *position* and *personal*. As noted

above, coercive, reward and legitimate power generally derive from a leader's position, while expert and referent power relate to personal aspects of the leader. Information power can be related to *position* (involving control over information or *personal* when related to the persuasive influence of the leader).

As noted above, *position power* involves control over rewards and punishments, and the recognized legitimacy of the leader's role. Other sources of position power include control over resources, information and the ecology of the work place (e.g. assignment of work spaces, access to technology and the allocation and assignment of work tasks).<sup>13</sup>

The problem when a leader's power derives primarily from his or her position is that it is short-lived and weak unless coupled with personal power. When a person is initially appointed to a position, there is a period when legitimate power is sufficient to support the leader. However, unless the incumbent demonstrates relevant expertise and other desirable leadership qualities, the power of the position tends to diminish over time and the leader becomes weak, ineffective and easily eclipsed by those with greater personal power.

On the other hand, personal power is independent of position and tends to be more enduring and robust than position power. It is not unusual for a person with high personal power to overshadow someone operating largely from position in a group decision process. Personal power confers respect for the leader's expertise and other inherent leadership qualities such as the ability to use persuasive communication effectively. Followers are motivated by their belief in the leader's ability to effectively navigate the group towards its goals and to articulate and accomplish the organizational vision. Followers see the leader as someone to be admired and whose behavior provides a model for others to emulate. Followers aspire to be like the leader and to learn from him or her through formal and informal mentoring. It should be noted that personal and position power are not mutually exclusive and when leaders have personal power that supports their position power, this greatly strengthens their leadership potential.

#### Outcomes of the Use of Leader Power

With any attempt to influence a follower using some form of power, one can identify several possible outcomes, including

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<sup>13</sup> Yukl, 184-185.

*resistance, compliance and commitment.*<sup>14</sup> *Resistance* involves a follower's active attempt to oppose, undermine or avoid the request of the leader and is the most likely outcome of the use of coercive power since it attempts to force an individual to do what he or she might not be willing to do otherwise. Resistance might be overt or subversive as followers attempt to thwart the goals of the leader.

*Compliance* involves the follower's willingness to accept and put forth effort to accomplish the leader's request when he or she views it as legitimate (based on legitimate power) or there are rewards that the follower wishes to obtain from accomplishing the task (based on reward power). However, the level of effort expended may be only minimal if the follower does not see the importance of the request. Even with the use of coercive power, compliance may result, or perhaps we could better say "resentful compliance," when the request is believed to be legitimate or the follower lacks the ability or courage to resist.

*Commitment* involves the willing acceptance of the leader's request and genuine effort to accomplish it. Commitment occurs when the follower freely accepts the leader's legitimate power and understands the importance of the request, recognizes and respects the expertise of the leader and/or identifies strongly with the leader based on his or her referent power. Commitment most likely results when there is a correspondence between the followers' and leader's goals and values. When followers have internalized the vision, goals and values of the leader or organization and consider them their own, they want to do everything possible to achieve them. When leaders can foster commitment on the part of followers, they are most likely to accomplish their vision and goals.

### The Use of Power in Christian Leadership

We now turn to the issue of the use of power in its various forms within the context of Christian/Pentecostal leadership. It is important to understand the biblical basis for leadership and the sources of power that can appropriately be used by leaders. We begin with the explicit teaching of Jesus on the nature of Christian leadership in the New Testament. The four key passages are found in Matt 20, Mark 10, Luke 22 and 1 Peter 5:

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 176.

Matt 20:25-28: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many [emphases mine]."

Mark 10: 42-45: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many [emphases mine]."

Luke 22:25-28: Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. <sup>26</sup>But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. <sup>27</sup>For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves [emphases mine]."

1 Peter 5:2-3: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup>not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock [emphases mine].

The key elements in these passages involve a contrast between two forms of leadership and the associated exercise of power that is involved. On the one hand is the "Gentile" form of leadership and power that involves "lording it over" their followers. In contrast is the "Christian" form of leadership and use of power that involves what has come to be known as "servant leadership," expressed in the words of Christ as "whoever wants to become great among you must be your

servant” (Mk 10:43) and “the one who rules like the one who serves” (Lk. 22:26).

I think we can also contrast these two forms of leadership as primarily involving *position power* on the one hand, since Christ names these as “rulers of the Gentiles,” (“ruler” being a position) and *personal power* on the other hand, as characterized by the attitude of a servant who occupies the lowest of social positions.

What does it mean to “lord it over?” The phrase comes from the Greek word *kurieuo* which means “to have dominion over”<sup>15</sup> and is usually translated “dominion” in the KJV. *Kurieuo* is used in Rom 6:9 where it says that death no longer has “dominion” (KJV) or “mastery” (NIV) over Christ. So the word implies control over someone or something, which according to Rienecker and Rogers, implies that it is “to their disadvantage and one’s own advantage.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, in both Christ’s and Peter’s teaching, scripture is clear that Christian leaders are to avoid authoritarian control or dominance over followers. Could Christ’s words “Not so with you!”<sup>17</sup> be any clearer or more definitive on this? So, whatever use of power a Christian/Pentecostal leader might make, and as I have said above, all leaders, whether Christian or not, use power, it must not involve authoritarian control, coercion or domination over others. This is not the way of Jesus, and it must not be the way of those who lead in His name. And, if we are seeking commitment to our goals and vision instead of simple compliance, the authoritarian approach is unlikely to achieve this.

In contrast, the Lord teaches that the Christian model of leadership is servanthood:

- “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave.” (Matt 20:26b-27a)
- “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” (Mk 10:43b-44)
- “The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.” (Lk 22:26b).

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<sup>15</sup> Strong’s Greek Lexicon, 7/31/09. <<http://www.elijah.com/cgi-bin/strongs.cgi?file=greeklexicon&isindex=2961>>

<sup>16</sup> Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers. *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Matt 20:26, Mk 10:43

From these passages it is impossible to escape the notion that Christian leadership involves *servicing* others and we are obligated to determine what that means and how it works out in the actual day-to-day world of leading Christian organizations, such as schools and churches. Robert Greenleaf is generally credited with popularizing the term “servant leadership.”<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, his book is not written from an expressly Christian perspective but from a background in corporate management. The essential message of his book is that the right to lead is bestowed on those who are servants first, who see their role as elevating and empowering others and helping others to achieve their goals. To apply this to a Pentecostal context, we might say that servant leadership is assisting others to discover and realize their greatest potential as children and servants of God, and experience the fullness of the Spirit in their lives. This understanding applies whether we are speaking of the staff of a church, school or mission organization, or members of a church congregation.

#### Who is a Servant Leader?

Greenleaf answers the question, “Who is the servant leader?” this way, “The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”<sup>19</sup> I would add to Greenleaf’s list, “and more Christlike.” Greenleaf suggests that the way we can know if we are servant leaders is to examine the effect of our leadership on those we lead. Are they as persons, and children of God, better off because of our leadership? Have they, because of our leadership, grown closer to God, more devoted to His work, more open to His leading, more involved in His purposes, more conscious of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives? If we see the employees of a Christian organization or the members of our churches simply as “workers” whose role is to help us achieve our purposes as leaders or the purposes and vision of our organization, however “God honoring” we might believe that to be, then they are not being served and we are not servant leaders.

When we cast leadership in servant terms, it also changes the dynamics of power and the way we use power. The power that derives

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

from position, while not, in itself, antithetical to servant leadership, cannot be the primary power source for a Christian leader. Position power is all about expecting others to follow us because of our right to lead or our use of rewards and punishments to induce others to follow. The focus is on the leader and what he or she wants. Servant leadership, on the other hand, focuses on followers and what they need as much as on the organization and what it needs. Now, some might argue that a leader's role is to discern a vision that comes from God and lead others by whatever means necessary to accomplish that vision, be it to build a great church, or build a great school, or accomplish a great missionary purpose. But I would submit that unless both the *ends* for which a Christian organization exists, and the *means* by which a Christian organization operates are consistent with the teachings of Jesus, it is, in effect, just another business and the fact that it operates under a Christian label has little significance and may actually bring dishonor on the One we presume to follow. Unless we take seriously the words of Jesus to lead as *servants*, I do not believe we can call ourselves Christian leaders.

#### Servant Leadership vs. Transformational Leadership

While the concept of *servant leadership* has been widely articulated within the Christian community to describe leadership that conforms to the teachings of Christ, within secular leadership theory the term *transformational leadership* is more widely developed. According to Yukl,

Transformational leadership is defined in terms of the leader's effect on followers: they feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward the leader and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to so. . . the leader transforms and motivates followers by: (1) making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes, (2) inducing them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization or team, and (3) activating their higher-order needs.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Yukl, p. 325

Transformational leadership is usually contrasted with *transactional leadership*, which focuses on satisfying follower's self-interests by providing rewards in exchange for compliance.

It should be obvious that the definition of transformational leadership has much in common with the concept of servant leadership. From a Christian perspective, Leighton Ford defines transformational leaders as those

who can enable us to see beyond our narrow and often selfish horizons, who can empower us to be more than we have been ... [and who] divest themselves of their power and invest it in their followers in such a way that others are empowered."<sup>21</sup>

He goes on to suggest that Jesus can be viewed as the ideal example of a transformational leader.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, Greenleaf's criteria discussed above for knowing if one is a servant leader also fit the description of a transformational leader. For our purposes, then, I would assert that the two concepts, if not identical, occupy a highly similar semantic space as descriptions of what Christian leadership should be.

### Implementing Servant Leadership in an Organization

I have been greatly influenced in my thinking about organizational leadership by Ray S. Anderson's *Minding God's Business*.<sup>23</sup> Anderson argues that "The character of a Christian organization is rooted in its quality of life as measured by the love of God in Christ displayed in the basic human and personal relations that constitute the daily life of the organization as a *community* [emphasis mine]."<sup>24</sup> He laments that "Christian organizations have not always been noted for the quality of life experienced on the part of those who work in the organization."<sup>25</sup> "Excellence in Human Ecology" according to Anderson, is found in the "mandate of love—do no wrong

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<sup>21</sup> Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1991, 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Ray Anderson, *Minding God's Business*, Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 107

to your neighbor. . . . This means that love does not exploit others for its own gain.”<sup>26</sup> I would add to Anderson’s assertion, “even if the goals, purposes and vision of the Christian organization are presumed to be in service of God’s kingdom.” In other words, believing that we are serving God’s purposes and following God’s vision for the organization, whether it is a church, school or otherwise, does not justify misusing or exploiting God’s people to do so. If servant leadership has any meaning for a Christian leader, then it must be expressed in care and concern for the wellbeing of the members of the community who make up the organization. “The whole may be greater than the sum of the parts,” to paraphrase the famous quote from Gestalt psychology, but in this instance, the whole (the organization) cannot be separated from its human parts and treated as distinctively more important than those who contribute to and are served by the organization and its purposes. Again, to quote Anderson,

The frequent admonitions in the New Testament concerning the practice of love as an indispensable element of Christian community do not leave Christian organizations exempt. For Christian organizations are under the same twofold mandate as is any form of the body of Christ: to uphold the basic value of human persons as created in the image of God, and to embody the life and character of Jesus Christ in every action and relationship.<sup>27</sup>

The earlier discussion concerning the nature of commitment suggests that Christian organizations in following the biblical mandate to serve God and make disciples should benefit from a high level of commitment from those involved in these endeavors based on the fact that these are also their internalized goals and values. When believers join Christian organizations, either as employees or volunteers, they usually do so with these purposes in mind, even when it may (and often does) involve personal sacrifice to do so. However, when Christian organizations fail to maintain conscious attention to the needs and concerns of those who serve within it, the result is greatly diminished commitment and even disillusionment on the part of followers.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 114

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 107

## Vision in Christian Leadership

So, where does this leave us in terms of achieving the vision and purpose of a Christian organization? If Christian leadership involves serving followers, then what is the role of the follower in serving the goals and purposes of the organization? Willing participation in achieving a compelling vision that corresponds to an understanding of what God is saying to a church, school or other Christian organization as it seeks to pursue God's will, produces tremendous motivation for service, and even sacrifice, on the part of followers. But here is the rub. Where does that vision come from? Some would argue that God gives vision to the leader (and Pentecostals, especially, see this as an explicit work of the Holy Spirit in their lives), who then communicates it to followers, and motivates and organizes them to work toward its accomplishment. Unfortunately, the pattern one sees in some Christian organizations is that the members of the organization, or the congregation in the case of churches, are reduced to the role of pawns whose purpose is to unquestioningly implement the vision communicated by the leader. And, unfortunately, sometimes leaders manipulate followers by using the coercive power of guilt to motivate participation, suggesting that if they don't cooperate they are unfaithful or disobedient to God.

Now, I would strongly agree that God gives vision to leaders, and that leaders should, indeed, seek a vision from God for the ministries they lead. Vision is often mentioned as one of the key elements in effective leadership.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Barna<sup>29</sup> and Malphurs,<sup>30</sup> among Christian writers, have argued that vision is a critical element in effective Christian leadership. But the key is not just for leaders to have a vision, but for leaders to *inspire others* to follow that vision—to lead them to make the vision their own, not just that of the leader. Kouzes and Posner, for instance, include as one of their “Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership,” that leaders should “Inspire a Shared Vision.”<sup>31</sup> Notice the key word “Shared” in this title. Unless the vision becomes genuinely corporate, enthusiastically adopted by all those who are expected to contribute to its fulfillment, it is impotent to motivate

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<sup>28</sup> James Kouzes & Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

<sup>29</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Vision*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992

<sup>30</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Kouzes & Posner, 13.

commitment, and consistent and effective action. This takes more than position power where the leader asserts that because he or she is “pastor” or “president” or “CEO” that others must follow his or her lead or they will be disobedient to God, and, by implication, subject to God’s discipline (an appeal to coercive power). It takes personal power. Many leaders fail at this point and resort to the power of their position to try to impose their vision without doing the hard work of fostering a team spirit and bringing others along with them, not as robotic followers but as enthusiastic supporters of the common goal. Conger states that

Generally speaking, unsuccessful strategic visions can often be traced to the inclusion of the leader’s personal aims that did not match their constituent’s needs. . . . They might construct an organizational vision that is essentially a monument to themselves and therefore something quite different from the actual wishes of their organizations or customers.”<sup>32</sup>

Could it ever be said that a church or ministry organization is a “monument to the pastor or church leader” instead of to the Lord? I hope not, but I suspect so.

This also invites the question of how followers can know if the vision their leader is espousing is actually Spirit-given or merely born of his or her own goals and aspirations. Should they simply assume this when a Pentecostal leader says so, with a stated or implied “God told me?” Or, is there a role for followers to also discern the leading of the Holy Spirit in accepting a vision for their church or organization? I would submit that if God is truly in the vision, other Spirit-filled believers will also discern this and willingly follow. In fact, is there any reason to believe that the leader has exclusive access to the Spirit’s leading?—not at all. To the contrary, Pentecostals believe that both leaders and followers have access to the leading of the Spirit and one would expect to see confirmation in the hearts and minds of both leaders and followers where God is the originator of the vision. Where leaders have to coerce or cajole followers into accepting a vision, this may be good evidence that it is not, after all, anything more than the leader’s idea.

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<sup>32</sup> Jay A. Conger, *The Dark Side of Leadership*. In Robert Vecchio, ed. *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, 199-200.

Malphurs reports that the two critical reasons that leaders fail to implement their vision is “The leader’s lack of interpersonal skills and ability to work with people,” and “The follower’s inability to work together as a team.”<sup>33</sup> Relating to people in ways that demonstrate respect for their views and their own sense of God’s purposes and leading in their lives, and facilitating team building are essential parts of the servant leader’s role, resulting in group ownership of the organization’s purpose and vision. Note that these are primarily aspects of personal power, not position power. When a leader is successful in building community, demonstrating authentic concern for the wellbeing of those she or he leads, and helping followers to derive their own sense of purpose, contribution, and meaning from the common endeavor to fulfill the vision of the organization, the leader has gone far toward implementing the qualities that characterize servant leadership. On the other hand, the inability to foster a mutual understanding and acceptance of what God is saying to the group is, in my opinion, a fundamental failure of leadership.

Anderson makes a salient point when he suggests that Christian organizations must excel in “Spiritual Parity.”<sup>34</sup> By this he means

that each member of the Christian organization can receive a full share in the “reward” that comes from faithful service to Christ in the organization... to see that no employee is unrewarded for the full expenditure of faith, time and energy that he or she gives to the organization.<sup>35</sup>

The “reward” that Anderson refers to is not only appropriate compensation for the work done, but that sense of giving something to God and His Kingdom that fulfills the person’s own understanding of God’s purpose in his or her life. In other words, followers must also receive a *fair share* of the spiritual satisfactions that come from faithful service to God.

### Qualities of a Servant Leader

If servant leadership derives fundamentally from personal rather than position power, as I have argued, then what are the essential

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, 121.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 123

personal qualities that must be present to be an effective servant leader? Robert Clinton gives us a clue in his definition of spiritual authority. “Spiritual authority is that characteristic of a God-anointed leader developed upon an experiential power base which enables a leader to influence followers through persuasion, force of modeling, and moral expertise.”<sup>36</sup>

As Pentecostals, we recognize the importance of God’s call and anointing on our lives. We understand that ministry is not just a profession, although it shares some of those qualities, but is based on a mystical relationship whereby the leader perceives that God has ordained and equipped him or her to a specific purpose in the Kingdom. A Pentecostal leader’s calling is validated by evidence of a deep spiritual experience with God. The people we lead want to see that their leader is different from the kinds of leaders we often see in business and government. The practical skills of leadership and management are necessary, to be sure, and should be developed by anyone in leadership, but people long to see evidence of the touch of God and the qualities of prayer, devotion to the Word, the exercise of spiritual gifts and spiritual sensitivity in the lives of their leaders. These are a source of immense personal power to a Pentecostal leader, while their lack reduces the leader to functioning as a business professional. It may be God’s business, to be sure, but without a leader whose life gives evidence of spiritual depth and maturity, its operating principles and the experience of those who work there will be indistinguishable from that the secular business down the road.

Pentecostal leaders should be examples of how one lives an effective and productive Christian life. Clinton’s concept of *force of modeling* means that we don’t simply tell and persuade on a theoretical basis, but we “show” what Christian life and leadership is like. John 13:1-17 presents the story of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet. The passage ends with Jesus telling them “<sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (NIV). Modeling is one of the most fundamental ways of teaching others. The personal power of a Pentecostal leader is greatly enhanced when his or her life demonstrates the qualities of character, God-honoring behavior and sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit that the Bible teaches are essential in a believer’s life.

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<sup>36</sup> J. Robert Clinton. *Leadership Development Theory - Influence Perspectives*, June 1988, 77-78

Jack Hayford comments that:

True leadership is found only *at Jesus' feet* and is shaped and kept only *in the heart*... "Fruitful leadership is not the capacity to 'produce results' but the 'capacity to bring those I lead to their deepest enrichment and highest fulfillment.'" Fruitful leadership is not getting others to fulfill my goals (or even my God-given vision for our collective enterprise and good), but helping others realize God's creative intent for their lives.<sup>37</sup>

A Christian leader's personal power includes his or her spiritual power, and great spiritual power comes from a leader's integrity, or *moral authority*, to use Clinton's term. David's words in Psalm 15 give us a biblical view of the integrity expected of a Christian leader.

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?  
Who may dwell in your holy hill?

He whose walk is blameless  
and who does what is righteous,  
who speaks the truth from his heart  
and has no slander on his tongue,  
who does his neighbor no wrong  
and casts no slur on his fellow man,  
who despises as vile man  
but honors those who fear the Lord,  
who keeps his oath  
even when it hurts,  
who lends his money without usury  
and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things  
will never be shaken.

Similarly, Proverbs reminds us of the dangers inherent in a life without integrity:

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<sup>37</sup> George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership*. 1977. Regal Books. 63. Quoted in Richard Rardin, *The Servant's Guide to Leadership*. 2001. Pittsburgh, PA: Selah Publishing Co., 111.

<u>Pro 10:9</u>	The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.
<u>Pro 11:3</u>	The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.
<u>Pro 13:6</u>	Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Integrity implies more than personal morality, although it certainly involves that. Personal power comes from a willingness to right a wrong, to admit a mistake, to rectify an offense or grievance, and to demonstrate repentance when one fails, all of which are essential elements in one's integrity. Space does not permit an examination of the personal power that comes from the qualities of wisdom, courage, and humility but these, too, contribute to personal power. In the high pressure context of leadership let us not forget that it is who we are that makes us leaders, more than what we do.

Finally, the power base of a Pentecostal leader comes from evidence that spiritual gifts are operating in his or her life. Leaders whose life and ministry are characterized by such qualities as sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit, an effective prayer life, the ability to properly discern and communicate God's word to His people, and empowerment for witness will find that he or she has great influence over others in accomplishing God's purposes.

### Summary and Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the nature and sources of leader power and argued that Christian leaders must rely primarily on personal rather than position power. A Christian leader acquires personal power from his or her relationship to God, sensitivity and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, and a high level of personal integrity, as well as demonstrated expertise in leading the church or organization to accomplish God's purposes for the group.

It further argues that the model for Christian leadership is servanthood and that those forms of power that involve authoritarian control and the manipulation of followers to achieve an organization's or leader's purposes and vision are precluded by Christ's teaching. Rather, a servant leader validates his or her leadership most clearly by the effect he or she has on the lives of those who follow, and especially, in the Pentecostal context, on the extent to which followers are

enriched by a deep spiritual encounter with God that results in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in their lives.

A focus on the quality of the experience of followers as a mark of effective Christian leadership means that Christian leaders and Christian organizations must be as much concerned with the wellbeing of those being led as they are with the accomplishment of the organizational vision. Further, it is argued that the organizational vision must be understood and accepted by the community it serves, rather than being simply passed down from a leader. Where a community consensus exists as a result of the Spirit's leading in the lives of both leaders and followers, the leader is likely to find a high level of commitment to the vision, and will have exceptional power to motivate the organization to action. In addition, the work of team building is accomplished as a natural outgrowth of the collective agreement on the organization's purpose and goals.

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