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Conceptualizing and Engaging with Pastoral Authority

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CONCEPTUALIZING AND ENGAGING WITH PASTORAL AUTHORITY

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GLOSSARY

Discussions about authority and power tend to utilize a wide range of meanings for these concepts. Therefore, a brief glossary of key terms, as used in this document are included for the reader's convenience. A precise understanding of these definitions is important to an accurate understanding of the concepts and arguments herein.

Affection: a follower's feelings of loyalty, respect, friendship, admiration, or affection toward a leader that compels the follower to comply with the leader.

Authority: a quality one person has that motivates another to listen to, be influenced by, or perhaps even obey him or her. This quality can be granted to a leader by a follower, and/or assumed and exercised by the one possessing it.

Coercive power: a type of force exercised by one person to gain compliance from another who is willfully resisting compliance.

Critical yielding: a positive form of engaging a leader's directive or initiative. The follower engages thoughtfully with the leader – potentially even disagreeing – but ultimately yields to the leader's authority if required.

Expert authority: a quality in a leader that is perceived by followers as a form and degree of expertise that motivates a follower to willingly obey that leader.

Information: a follower's understanding of and conviction about why obeying a leader makes sense. This understanding motivates the follower to willingly obey the leader's directive.

Legitimacy of Directive: this refers to the criteria with which the follower determines whether to follow a specific directive given within the period between role commencement and role termination, i.e. during the period of role authority.

Legitimate authority: the specific range of authority given by a document. This is similar to Weber's "legal/rational."

Pastoral authority: a pastor's personal authority and role authority.

Personal authority: the authority of a leader that stems from affection and expert authority. It does not include information, role authority, or coercive power.

Referent (charismatic) authority: see Affection.

Role authority: the authority a leader holds by virtue of the role he or she plays as a leader in the congregation.

Role commencement: the process that marks the beginning of the obligation to respect a leader's pastoral authority. The specifics of role commencement may vary from one church to another.

Role termination: the process that marks the ending of the obligation to respect a leader's pastoral authority. The specifics of role commencement may vary from one church to another.

ABSTRACT

Church conflict harms those in the church, obscures God's glory, and hurts the church's witness to a watching world. Some church conflict is related to congregants' limited ability to conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority. While secular academia has begun to explore the discipline of followership, there is a lack of research and writing in the Christian world that provides direction to congregants on this topic. That which does exist often creates confusion rather than clarity. In response to this problem, sixteen congregants and six pastors from six churches in the Washington, DC metropolitan area were interviewed about how they conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority. Transcripts of those interviews were analyzed using a modified grounded theory approach. The analysis suggested that congregants have an overreliance on a pastor's personal authority and have an underdeveloped sense of a pastor's role authority. A pastor's personal authority results from the affection those he leads has for him and the expertise they believe he possesses. A pastor's role authority is grounded in the role the pastor holds as a leader in the congregation. Drawing on the results of the field research, the relevant literature, and the Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17 biblical texts, an argument is offered to provide congregants with a practical theology of authority and submission. Several practical steps are also suggested to help congregants better conceptualize and engage pastoral authority. This includes a study of the anatomy and nature of authority, techniques congregants can utilize to develop a pastor's personal and

role authority, and methods to work through occasions when following authority is especially challenging. The study's aim is to help congregants become followers who are well-equipped to help leaders exercise their authority in ways that create an environment of flourishing for the entire church and bring glory to God.

DEDICATION

To God – You have called me to pastoral ministry, the greatest privilege there is. Though I sometimes resent that call to my shame, You are gracious to remind me ever again of its majesty.

To Julie, Sarah, and Cole – you have stood by me far more than I deserve. Next to God, there is nothing I treasure more.

To mentors who have shaped me – you have modeled for me the value of teaching others by giving away a part of yourself. I hope to be stirred by that same sense of the worth of another person as I give of myself as a teacher.

To congregants I have had the privilege to lead – you have taught me far more than I have taught you. I hope I have left you something in return.

EPIGRAPH

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. … Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

– Hebrews 13:7, 17 (ESV)

CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A Note about the Reader's Perspective

This study is directed at followers. It is intended to help create good followers, not good leaders. Attempting to read followership literature as if it were designed to instruct leaders is like looking through the wrong end of a telescope. Therefore, the reader will have to work hard to change his or her perspective from the beginning. Though the study deals with the subject of pastoral authority, the researcher will not be focused on instructing leaders about what strategies to use to earn respect for their authority, though this is important. Nor is the researcher attempting to create a justification for Lone Ranger or authoritarian leadership. In fact, the researcher's personal leadership style is one of empowering qualified people, calling people to lead who are not comfortable leading, and creating a generally collegial environment. The researcher introduces himself by his first name and tends to dress casually like most of the congregants in the church he pastors. His preference is for a qualified elder leadership style, where elders are carefully vetted to ensure they are competent, biblically eligible, and have the right heart for the task. None of this is said to suggest that this is the best way for pastors to lead. It is simply mentioned up front because of the potentially inflammatory nature of the term *pastoral authority*. The reader is asked to bear these things in mind as he or she moves forward.

Statement of the Problem

Few would argue that churches have conflict and pastors experience stress from the leadership challenges they face. In an attempt to address these issues, much has been written about church conflict and pastoral leadership. The vast majority of this literature, however, is written to leaders and for leaders. As a result, church leaders have been able to become more sacrificial leaders, overcome insecurities that might negatively affect their leadership, and understand the dynamics of the congregations they serve. But this focus on leadership leaves some significant gaps for the church.

Some church conflict is between pastors and laity. Moreover, some portion of this type of conflict results because laity does not choose to follow the leader. There is considerable literature guiding pastors to navigate situations where people are resisting their leadership, but there is not much literature designed to help laity follow well. Obviously, it is easy for laity to follow a pastor when the laity holds a high respect for that pastor's personal authority. This type of respect could be because laity think the pastor has expertise that is worth embracing. Perhaps they have deep affection for the pastor, or they admire the spiritual example the pastor sets. There are instances, however, when this type of respect for the pastor's personal authority is weak. For example, a pastor's personal authority might be weak when the pastor is newly installed as pastor at a church and there has been insufficient time for the pastor to develop personal authority with the congregant. A pastor's personal authority could also be weak when that pastor has made a decision that a congregant does not like. When a pastor's personal authority is weak in the eyes of a congregant, the congregant must appeal to the type of authority that comes from the office of pastor itself. This is a pastor's role authority. When a

congregant appeals to a pastor's role authority, she decides to yield to the pastor's directive solely based upon the fact that the person is the pastor. This yielding assumes that the pastor is not asking her to do anything unbiblical.

Unfortunately, many among the laity do not seem to be able to make use of the pastor's role authority. Some laity simply are unaware of this form of authority, or it is not a form of authority they consider to be valid. Therefore, if a pastor does not have personal authority in their eyes, then the pastor has no authority. Without any respect for a pastor's authority, therefore, laity are likely to leave a church, resist a pastor's leadership, or even attempt to have the pastor removed from office. In response to this lack of respect for pastors, some have responded with simplistic and muscular statements. For example, in 1988, the Southern Baptists issued a statement that simply admonished the laity to "obey the pastor."[1] While such statements may be true on their face, this type of approach does not equip laity to employ a healthy respect for the authority of the pastoral office – it simply instructs them to do it! This, however, is like demanding that people start tithing without teaching them the biblical reasoning behind it and how to budget. Others have been tempted to label anyone who resists pastoral authority as a "clergy killer." While these pathological clergy haters certainly do exist and must be addressed, it is important to note that not everyone struggling to submit to pastoral authority is a clergy killer. Many are just normal, fallen people who are unprepared to navigate situations when it is very difficult to follow a leader. A more pastoral approach toward such people is warranted.

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[1] E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, Pulpit and Pew Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 338.

The trouble is that there is very little literature that teaches laity how to process the type of authority that comes from the office of pastor itself. Because of this, pastors, scholars, and laity resort to various forms of leadership-oriented literature for guidance in navigating situations where little respect for a pastor exists. This literature is inadequate for this purpose, however. Pastoral leadership literature often assumes that the pastor has at least some degree and some form of authority to work with. Even in cases where it acknowledges that a pastor may not have any authority, it often sends a message to pastors that this is simply the cross they must bear as pastors. It may also imply that they must simply learn to lead more effectively. Much of this leadership literature can be of great benefit to pastors in difficult situations. These type of messages, however, whether explicit or implicit, only serve to demoralize pastors who are exercising reasonable leadership skills but facing a crippling lack of respect for their authority.

Furthermore, when congregants use leadership-oriented literature to learn to become good followers, they will not find much there to help them to that end. They may even find things that mislead them. When leadership literature does address how laity should engage the authority of pastors, it is unlikely that laity will read it because it is written to pastors. In literature that laity are more likely to read, the references to respecting the authority of pastors are often buried among myriads of other important ideas such that they are easily overlooked by followers. Even if laity seriously engages leadership literature, it is possible for them to be misguided by it, because the perspective from which it is written can substantively change the emphasis. For example, leadership literature might declare that a “sacrificial leader” will “empower” people to engage in ministry. This is sound counsel to an insecure pastor who is tempted to hoard decision

making power. A follower might misuse the same counsel, however, to accuse a leader of not sufficiently empowering her. Her complaint may be valid, but there is also the possibility that the pastor's best judgment informed him that the woman was ill-suited for a certain role. Assuming for the sake of this example that the pastor's judgment is sound, the woman would be better served by learning how to navigate this type of situation in which she did not agree with the pastor's decision. The perspective of leadership literature, while being of great value to the leader in such a case, will do little to assist the woman in this example. It may even misdirect her.

Therefore, there is a need for sound Christian literature that teaches laity to be good followers. The secular world is far ahead of the church in this area, though the secular "followership" movement is still in its infancy within broader leadership studies.[2] While there is much that the church can learn from secular followership literature, it ultimately proves insufficient because it is not grounded in Scripture. Helpful Christian followership literature would contain many elements to help congregants thrive in the church. For example, instruction on ecclesiology would help followers understand what the church is in God's eyes and what their responsibilities are in the church. Insights into potential blind spots they might have along with an application of the Gospel to those blind spots would also be helpful. Additionally, this literature should include a robust theology of authority and submission, as well as guidance and training that equip laity to navigate through challenging situations when respect for authority is difficult.

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[2] Melissa K. Carsten, Peter Harms, and Mary Uhl-Bien, "Exploring historical Perspectives of Followership: The Need for an Expanded View of Followers and the Follower Role," in Lapierre, Laurent and Melissa K. Carsten. *Followership: What Is It and Why do People Follow?*. 1st ed. Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014), 4.

The researcher believes that a logical step in the early stages of the development of Christian followership would be to study how laity conceptualize and engage pastoral authority. It would seem to be a pastoral aim to try to understand the perspectives of members of the church who need help in this area. Because there is very little research examining perceptions of and engagement with pastoral authority among church attenders, this project attempts to establish a beachhead.

To address this problem, the researcher approached it from several angles. First, the meaning and implications of the biblical injunctions that congregations ought to respect the authority of their leaders were examined, with particular focus on Hebrews 13:17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."[3] The researcher believes that this is one of the clearest statements on the authority of the pastoral office and is rich with meaning and guidance for followers. If one of the things that would benefit followers is a clear understanding of what is expected of them as followers, this text is a concise and clear summary that can help guide their hearts and minds through tricky situations which require a reliance on role authority.

Second, a review is offered of the relevant research on pastoral authority, followership, pastoral leadership, and church conflict in order to establish a context for this study. Additionally, there is an examination of literature that observes, attempts to influence, or offers insight into the way that people perceive the authority of pastors. The review attempts to demonstrate why each broad subject is germane to the central topic of

[3] All references are from the English Standard Version Bible, unless otherwise noted. *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2001).

this project. Rather than attempt an exhaustive review of each literature category, however, only the most relevant resources are included.

Third, field research was conducted in order to gain insights into how laity conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority. The subjects sampled held varying degrees and forms of respect for pastoral authority based upon the perceptions of their current or former pastors. The churches involved in the study varied in polity, but all were culturally American and located in the greater Washington, DC area.

Fourth, the researcher attempted to identify some of the primary variables that determine lay perceptions of and engagement with pastoral authority and to provide suggestions for the expansion of this field of study.

Delimitations of the Problem

Because the problem this paper addresses is a lack of research about lay conceptualization and engagement with pastoral authority, delimitations were purposefully minimal along certain categories in order to collect data from a diverse sample. Variations in church polity, church culture, and church denomination were deliberately sought because it is plausible that these variables might impact perceptions of pastoral role and authority. In order to maintain some control, however, several delimitations were applied. All churches solicited for participation were evangelical churches (i.e., they would likely agree with the National Association of Evangelicals' Statement of Faith[4]) – though the congregants interviewed were not necessarily evangelical. The churches in the study were from the greater Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia metropolitan region (the DMV). The researcher deliberately did not include

[4] National Association of Evangelicals, "Statement of Faith," http://nae.net/statement-of-faith, accessed on June 26, 2015

his own church, because the process of interviewing his own parishioners could adversely affect the pastor-parishioner relationship, and the validity of the interview responses would be questionable. The churches targeted were under 300 people, in order to increase the odds that the pastor felt some connection to a greater percentage of the congregation. The churches were non-ethnic White, Black, or mixed American churches. The churches had male pastors, though those pastors did not necessarily hold to a complementarian position regarding women in the pastorate. Having served exclusively in complementarian churches, the researcher was not familiar with settings where women hold senior pastor positions. Therefore, the inclusion of churches with female senior pastors would have potentially introduced variables the researcher did not feel well prepared to consider.[5]

Assumptions

The first assumption is that Scripture is the highest arbiter of truth. The researcher believes that God has created people with the ability to know Him, albeit imperfectly. Therefore, the revelation He has provided is useful as the ultimate appellate source for all truth claims. Though flawed human cognition will result in some difference of interpretation, God has created people with the capacity to gain understanding through the Scripture. .

The second assumption is that people are not always aware of their perception of pastoral authority or how they engage with it.

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[5] For a perspective on the challenges to pastoral authority written by a female pastor, see Diana DeWitt, "A Biblical Model for the Nurture, Support, And Respect of Pastoral Leadership," (DMin diss., Ashland Theological Seminary, 2007). DeWitt writes that part (though not necessarily all) of the challenges she experienced to her pastoral authority were due to the fact that she was a woman. She offers ideas about how congregants might learn to embrace a female pastor.

The third assumption is that people do not always tell the truth about their feelings regarding pastoral authority.

Assumptions two and three are rooted in an assumption of doctrine of the depravity of man, specifically that sin limits a person's understanding of himself and the world around him.[6]

The fourth assumption is that a healthy church brings glory to God, blessing to its members, and points the unbelieving world to the Living God.

The fifth assumption is that the term pastor is generally used for those holding the role of shepherd, elder, overseer, and teacher (i.e., those holding ultimate human authority in the church). This will look different in different polities. In some cases, there will be a single pastor and in others there will be a group of these leaders. It is an assertion of this study, that these principles can have application among various polities. Arguing for or against a specific form of polity is beyond the scope of the study. For simplicity and textual flow, reference is generally made to a single pastor, though sometimes the plural term *pastors* or *leaders* is used. Therefore, when a single pastor is referenced, it does not necessarily imply a certain polity.

The sixth assumption is that God employs fallible human beings to lead His church. Therefore, these leaders are subject to error. They can have a mix of pure and impure motives in their decision making processes. They can allow themselves to be blinded by emotion. Their logic can be flawed. They can be tempted by the flesh. In short, their decisions or pronouncements can never be assumed to be infallible.

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[6] Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of how Sin Affects our Thinking* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).

Setting of the Project

The researcher found churches in the DMV of varying polities, varying church culture, and varying denominations. The researcher observed certain characteristics of each pastor and church in case those details were relevant to the research findings. The study also noted the degree to which the pastor felt that his authority was respected, his general morale, and the reasons he cited for poor morale (if that applied).

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

Over the course of his life, the researcher has detected in himself an anti-authority propensity. This has led to significant soul searching and Bible study in an attempt to bring his thinking and behavior more in line with what the Scriptures teach about respecting authority. The researcher understands firsthand how rebellious the human heart can be. Furthermore, the researcher has been tremendously helped by biblical teaching about respect for authority and the concept of submission as a willful act of love that is ultimately enabled by a confidence in and love for Christ, as difficult as those teachings sometimes were.

As a pastor, the researcher has encountered people in the church who had very little respect for his authority as a pastor. Some of these people appeared to be driven by a desire to harm the researcher. Most, however, simply appeared to be unaware of their own lack of respect for authority and uneducated about what the Bible teaches about respecting pastoral authority. Therefore, they did not know how to handle disagreements they had with the researcher as their pastor, so they acted out in ways that harmed the researcher, themselves, and the church. Additionally, because many in the church were uneducated about the propensity of some to disrespect pastoral authority and about what

the Bible teaches about pastoral authority, the church as a whole was unable to respond constructively to the few people who acted out in very unhealthy and harmful ways.

The researcher is also familiar with many other pastors who have suffered in similar ways, in part, from a lack of respect for their pastoral authority. The researcher hopes that in some way this study can serve as a resource to help address some of the challenges they and their congregations faced.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

The researcher is currently planting the church he leads. Therefore, he enjoys a high degree of respect from the congregation. Nevertheless, the study's findings will help those in the church better understand their own potential proclivities toward pastoral authority. It will help them engage with pastoral authority in constructive and godly ways that are healthy for the individual, the congregation, and the researcher. An ancillary benefit of the study could be to equip laity to better engage with any church authority under whom they serve. This could be an associate pastor, ministry director, or even a small group leader. Finally, the researcher hopes the project will better equip him to effectively steward the authority and respect others in the church give him. Submission and respect for authority is a precious gift of love from the congregation to the pastor. The researcher would never want to take that for granted, use it to constrain rather than equip and liberate, or make it unnecessarily difficult for those in the church to respect his authority.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

It is relatively easy for a congregant to follow a pastor when the congregant has great respect for the pastor, or when an idea the pastor is advancing makes good sense to

the congregant. One would hope that this is the case most of the time in the church. There are situations, however, when this type of personal authority will not likely be sufficient to induce a person to follow an otherwise qualified pastor. Consider the following examples:

> When a new pastor comes to a church and has not had time to establish personal authority;
>
> When a respected pastor is unfairly maligned by someone and confusing rumors begin to circulate;
>
> When a respected pastor is forced to make a tough choice because consensus does not seem possible among the congregation and some type of decision must be made;
>
> When a respected pastor inadvertently offends someone (e.g., preaching the pastor's best understanding of truth from the pulpit or even succumbing to the pastor's own sin and saying something clumsy);
>
> When a lay person begins to feel a sense of entitled ownership or gets more spiritual responsibility and these things lead to a form of pride which tempts the person to want to "dethrone" the pastor;
>
> When a person's natural sin propensity to rebel against authority manifests itself in some way that is unjustified.

In these cases, it may be necessary for a congregant to engage with a pastor's role authority, since personal authority is not likely to be sufficient. This will be much easier if the person better understands the nature of a pastor's role authority and has a developed sense of what submission to that authority is and is not. Such engagement would be complemented by good followership skills, which would include self-awareness of one's own authority biases. It would also include practical skills that facilitate effective communication with the authority and the cognitive and emotional processing of decisions with which one does not agree. Thus, research that leads to the development of

tools that can help congregants follow better under various forms of authority could be highly beneficial to the church.

There appears to be a paucity of research on this subject, however. There are several things that might contribute to this lack of research. The idea that some people have problems with authority, particularly pastoral authority, tends to arouse deep emotion. Also, the claim that pastoral authority should be respected can sound self-serving when suggested by those in the field of ministry. Finally, many people have witnessed the damage caused by the abuse of pastoral authority. Thus, research suggesting the importance of respecting pastoral authority could risk the charge of contributing to such abuse. If people are instructed about the importance of respecting pastoral authority, some might worry that people will be more easily manipulated by an abusive authority. Such teaching might create an intensified sense of obligation to follow this injunction. These concerns could dissuade the research community from actively and honestly pursuing research in this area.

Nevertheless, hard data from the research community assessing the nature of conceptualization and engagement with pastoral authority and demonstrating the damage that negative dispositions can do in the church could provide an incentive for some healthy self-reflection within the Kingdom. If the research community does not believe that congregant interaction with pastoral authority is a significant issue for the church, however, it will not tend to research the topic. Therefore, the researcher hopes he can contribute insights that can be used to form theories that the research community might investigate more in depth.

The researcher does not believe that the issue of pastoral authority is the most important thing to the health of a church. In a normal, relatively healthy church, it may not be a particularly salient issue at all. When churches are under stress, however, it becomes more significant. Perhaps the main reason the researcher believes this topic is crucial for the church is because it is largely ignored. The fact that it is not addressed more directly propels it into a place of prominence. This is because when it is ignored, it can be the source of significant trouble in the church. For example, the care of a blister on the back of a runner's heel is not the primary focus of her training. There are many other more important elements like eating well, exercise, and technique. If she ignores the blister, however, it will become a wound that will cripple her ability to run. If, on the other hand, she understands how to deal with a blister through prevention and early treatment, it never becomes an issue of much significance. Likewise, if pastoral authority were addressed more deliberately and effectively, the researcher believes it would slide down on the scale of importance.

Research Methodology

This project was qualitative in nature. Grounded theory research was the main model employed. The primary tools used in this project were personal and phone interviews. The primary data consisted of interviews with sixteen people from six churches. The target ratio was three people per church, but this was not possible for every church. The pastor of each church was also interviewed.

Secondary data included biblical, theological, and secular literature. This literature explored impressions about pastoral authority and the general pastoral image,

pastoral role, church conflict and health, leader-follower dynamics, and general sociological and psychological discussions about power and authority.

The first step in the research examined the meaning and implications of the biblical injunctions that congregations ought to respect the authority of their leaders, with particular focus on Hebrews 13:17.

For the second step the researcher reviewed the relevant research on pastoral authority, followership, pastoral leadership, and church conflict in order to establish context for this study. Literature that observes, attempts to influence, or offers insight into the way that people perceive the authority of pastors was also studied in order to form the researcher's understanding about the extent and nature of how church members might conceptualize and engage with the authority of pastors.

For the third step, the researcher formed interview questions to be asked of the church pastors and the congregants to be interviewed. These questions were largely based upon the theological study of step one and the literature review of step two.

The fourth step identified five churches of varying church polities from non-ethnic, White and Black American churches. Each church was located in the DMV and had an evangelical statement of faith or was led by a pastor who adhered to an evangelical statement of faith. After agreeing to participate in the project, each pastor was asked to provide names and contact information for three current or former church attenders who he considered to have varying levels of respect for his pastoral authority. One attender was to have a healthy respect for the pastor's authority. One should have very little respect for the pastor's authority. The third should either be more neutral or have an unhealthy, obsequious respect. These judgments were based solely on the

subjective opinion of the pastors. At this time, the pastors did not tell the researcher which congregant belonged to which category. A sixth church was included in order to obtain the targeted samples.

For the fifth step, the researcher met with each of the selected congregants in person or by phone to conduct the interview. The congregants were all asked the same set of questions, and were asked to answer according to their own subjective opinions. The interviews were recorded. After each interview, the researcher noted some preliminary analyses in accordance with the recommendations of grounded theory.

In step six, the researcher interviewed the pastors of each church. Each pastor was asked a standardized set of questions, but also engaged in more informal conversation with the researcher about the topic.

In the seventh step, the researcher analyzed the data according to grounded theory procedures. After some preliminary analysis, the researcher attempted to classify each of the congregants according to the way the pastors classified them. At this time, the researcher asked the pastors to give him the classifications they ascribed to each congregant. The researcher compared his own observations with the categories the pastors assigned.

For the eighth step, the researcher synthesized the analysis of the grounded theory research with the biblical and literature insights from chapters two and three. Based upon the trends and patterns suggested by the synthesis, the researcher offered some practical steps to help congregants better conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The object of this section is to develop a practical theology of pastoral authority that can be utilized by congregants in their role as followers. To this end, Hebrews 13:7-19 will be examined, with a specific emphasis on verses seven and seventeen. These are some of the clearest exhortations of how followers should relate to and think about leaders in the church. As it is unwise and exegetically fallacious to base a doctrine on a single verse, verses that support the principles extracted from this segment of Hebrews will also be identified.

Qualifications about Spiritual Leadership

Any argument that attempts to establish or legitimize some type of pastoral authority would benefit from a brief qualification. The idea of authority can be emotionally incendiary in 21st century American culture. Moreover, most people are familiar with or have even experienced the abuse of authority – perhaps even in the church. Therefore, it is important make several points about pastoral leadership at the outset of the argument.

First, leaders are not to exercise authority for their own gain or glory. In Luke 22:24-27, the disciples were arguing over who would be greatest in the Kingdom of God. The clear implication of the scenario implicates each of the disciples as desiring power and position over the others for his own advantage. Jesus rebuked them by redefining the intention of leadership. He said they were thinking about leadership from a pagan perspective. The pagans desired leadership in order to gain an advantage. Jesus was clear

that His disciples were not to think that way. He told them that true biblical leaders were to serve. Jesus reinforced this by stating in this passage that He "was among them as one who serves." A leader who views leadership as service is oriented toward those he or she leads. In John 13:1-17, Jesus visually demonstrated this principle by washing His disciples' feet. In taking on one of the most menial tasks in the household, Jesus taught that leadership is not about the prestige of position. Rather, leaders must be lead out of a sense of humility for the sake of those they lead. The Apostle Peter reiterated these very things in 1 Peter 5:2-3. Church leaders are not to be "domineering" over those they lead. Neither are they to lead for "shameful gain." In other words, church leaders should not abuse those they lead nor exploit their leadership positions for their own advantage. The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus, as the leader of the church, "laid down His life for [the church]" (Eph. 5:25). Since spiritual leaders are to follow His example, one can infer that they too must be willing to sacrifice for the sake of those they lead. Therefore, whatever conclusions are reached about pastoral authority, these verses make clear that the possession or execution of such authority is to be a humble and sacrificial responsibility that is for the benefit of the church – not for the gain of the leader.

The Context of Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17

An accurate understanding of any text requires some knowledge of its context. This brief discussion will establish a framework for the analysis of these key verses.

Authorship, Date, Destination, and Recipients

Most modern scholars assert that the author of Hebrews is unknown.[1] In a departure from most, Gareth Lee Cockerill[2] argues for Apollos of Acts 18:24-19:1 and David Lewis Allen finds that the impressive similarities with Acts and Luke suggest a Lucan authorship.[3] Despite the reluctance of the majority to name a specific person, however, some scholars are willing to offer some descriptive statements about the author. William Lane writes that the author "surely knew Paul and was in his circle," since the writer refers to Timothy at the end of the book in 13:23. Lane and Peter O'Brien note that the Greek is of a very high caliber and the LXX is cited exclusively, which suggests a well-educated, Hellenistic Jewish Christian. The description in 2:3-4 of witnessing God's demonstration of "signs and wonders" in support of the received message of salvation implies that the writer was likely a witness to Christ.[4] Cockerill emphasize that the writer was "a pastor" to the church who was intimately familiar with the challenges it faced.[5]

The destination for the letter is not specifically mentioned. Nevertheless, a majority of modern scholars favor Rome, albeit tentatively.[6] F. F. Bruce is more certain that it was not written to people in Jerusalem, since references in the letter are to the

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[1] William L. Lane, *Hebrews. 9-13*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47B (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), xlix.

[2] Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 8-10.

[3] David Lewis Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, 35 (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 61.

[4] Lane, xlix; Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 14-15

[5] Cockerill, 2.

[6] Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 49-50.

desert tabernacle not to the Jerusalem temple, which would have made more sense were it addressed to those in Jerusalem.[7] Craig Koester is uncertain about whether the letter was written to Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians.[8] Cockerill argues that whether one thinks the hearers are Jews or Gentiles makes a considerable difference in interpretation. He argues that the recipients were clearly Jewish Christians, based upon the reference to "outside the camp" in 13:10-13. He holds that this reference is too esoteric to be intended for Gentile Christians. Furthermore, the appeal to the Old Testament would not make sense to Gentile believers who would only recently have started to consider the Old Testament a credible source when they became Christians.[9] O'Brien and Thomas Schreiner agree.[10] Because of certain extreme rituals and ascetics mentioned in the text, Bruce argues that the recipients were likely Hellenistic Jewish Christians from the non-conformist Jewish sects (e.g., Essenes).[11] Lane sees a Hellenistic Jewish Christian house church in Rome.[12] Allen agrees, but goes a step further in suggesting that the members were former Jewish priests who were Christians.[13] Dennis Stoutenburg agrees that they were Hellenistic Jews, but is not convinced the text requires that they are all Christians.[14]

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[7] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 10-14.

[8] Koester, 11.

[9] Cockerill, 19.

[10] O'Brien, 11; Thomas R. Schreiner, Andreas J. Köstenberger, T. Desmond Alexander, James M. Hamilton, K. A. Mathews, and Terry L. Wilder, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 5-10.

[11] Bruce, 6-10.

[12] Lane, liv.

[13] Allen, 79.

[14] Dennis C. Stoutenburg, *Redemption and Lordship as Motivations for Worship: A Study of Hebrews 13:7-17* (Tacoma, WA: Evangelical Theological Society, 1990), 1-2.

The dating of the letter ranges from AD49, the date of the expulsion of some Jews from Rome under Claudius, to AD100, a plausible date for the death of Timothy who is mentioned in 13:23. This upper limit is supported by Clement of Alexandria's paraphrasing of the letter in *1 Clement,* commonly dated AD90-96.[15] Cockerill is not willing to speculate any more narrowly than the range of AD50-90.[16] Harold Attridge shifts slightly to AD60-100.[17] Neither, along with Bruce, believes that the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD70 is an upper delimiter, since the allusions in the letter are to the desert tabernacle, not the Jerusalem temple. Those favoring a Roman destination are willing to narrow the range some. For example, O'Brien believes AD60-65 to be a plausible range. The recipients remember certain afflictions (10:32-24) which could correspond to the Claudius edict of AD49. They had not yet "suffered to the point of death," however, which would not have made sense after Nero's deadly persecution beginning in AD64.[18] Lane dates the letter between AD64-68 during Nero.[19] Paul Ellingworth believes it was likely written before the AD70 destruction of the Temple but after the AD49 persecution.[20]

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[15] Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989, 6; O'Brien 14-15.

[16] Cockerill, 41.

[17] Attridge, 8-9.

[18] O'Brien, 14-15.

[19] Lane, lxvi.

[20] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), 29-33.

Purpose and Genre

The purpose and genre of Hebrews impact the exhortations about leaders in chapter thirteen. The majority of contemporary scholars consider Hebrews to be primarily a hortatory sermon intended to cause the readers to respond decisively. Kevin Anderson affirms that Hebrews is not primarily a theological treatise, but a "word of exhortation" (13:22). It is a sermon, thus he often uses the term "the preacher" to refer to the writer of Hebrews. Anderson advocates the traditional view that the Church was threatening to fall back into Judaism and abandon the Christian confession.[21] O'Brien agrees, emphasizing that the sermon was intended to be read aloud.[22] Lane believes the writer wrote "reluctantly" to exhort and warn Jewish Christians, some of whom appeared to be growing weary and were tempted to fall away.[23] Herbert Bateman holds that the strong language of some passages serves an "emotive need" to generate fear that will prevent the people from suffering serious consequences.[24]

These scholars express some divergence on the nature of the crisis the recipients faced. O'Brien, Schreiner, and James Thompson take the traditional view which believes the recipients are in danger of falling away from the true Gospel and returning to Judaism. O'Brien speculates that the 13:13 exhortation to "go to [Jesus] outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured" suggests they are tired of being ostracized from the

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[21] Kevin L. Anderson, *Hebrews: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition. New Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013), 45-48.

[22] O'Brien, 20-21.

[23] Lane, li.

[24] Herbert W. Bateman and Gareth Lee Cockerill, *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2007), 28.

greater Jewish community.[25] Koester and Allen demur from the traditional view and consider the main threat the readers faced to be apathy, not necessarily falling back into the Jewish community.[26] For Attridge, the community was dealing with persecution from someone on the outside and also a disaffection with their faith. Thus, the writer warns them against falling away and reminds them of the superior salvation of Christ.[27]

What is perhaps even more controversial are the consequences of the recipients' sin. The writer of Hebrews is deeply concerned that the writer's audience avoid the consequences of their actions, so the writer sternly admonishes them in five warning passages. Bateman sees a chiastic structure to the warning passages. Hebrews 2:1-4 and 12:14-29 warn against "drifting away" and exhort the church to "hear/listen and believe." Hebrews 3:7-4:13 and 10:19-39 exhort the church to "trust and obey" with an explicit warning against "distrust and disobedience." Finally, the warning of 5:11-6:12 forms the heart of the warning passages and admonishes the people to be lifelong learners and not become complacent and "fall away."[28] Verse 6:4-6 is the epicenter of this passage and captures the ultimate consequence of this "falling away" which is that "it is impossible … to restore [those who have fallen away] again to repentance."

There is a wide range of views about the meaning and consequences of "falling away." Allen helpfully summarize the five common views. First, the "loss of salvation view" is the classic Arminian perspective of apostasy and consequent loss of salvation.

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[25] Schreiner, 10-14; James Thompson, *Hebrews*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 10; O'Brien, 13.

[26] Koester, 72; Allen, 368.

[27] Attridge, 12-13.

[28] Bateman, 84-85.

Second, the "hypothetical view" posits that the idea that a person would not be able to be saved again if they ever apostatized is merely a hypothetical scenario to be considered. Third, the "tests of genuineness view" argues that this passage describes some who are saved and some who are not. Those who "fall away" were never genuinely regenerate. Fourth, the "means of salvation view" sees the warnings as genuine, but holds that God uses the fear of the loss of salvation that the warnings engender to ensure a person's perseverance. Fifth, "the loss of rewards view," holds that the judgement on those who fall away is not loss of salvation. Rather it has to do with God's discipline and the loss of temporal and an eschatological blessing.[29]

Perhaps the Arminian view is the most straightforward and terrifying. Anderson writes, "There is no escaping the terrifying conclusion that, for Hebrews, final apostasy is irreversible."[30] Allen rejects the Arminian view because of other Scriptures that militate against the possibility for truly regenerate people to lose their salvation. Perhaps, his assertion that the consequence of falling away is a mere loss of rewards has less deterrent force. He does, however, hold that God's discipline might include premature death. [31] Schreiner's perspective may offer a greater deterrent while allowing for the believer's security. He affirms that the text means that restoration is impossible if one apostatizes. The letter's writer is confident, however, that the Christians he is addressing will not fall away, because God will ensure that the severe warning has its effect.[32] Bateman offers a summary statement of Hebrews 6:4-8 with which all viewpoints would likely agree:

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[29] Allen, 370-77.

[30] Anderson, 187.

[31] Allen, 377.

[32] Schreiner, 484-85.

> Believers who are reluctant learners are prone to abandon the only foundation there is for repentance and faith and are thereby liable to face some sort of divine punishment. Regardless of how one views the various theological debate surrounding the [Hebrews 5:11-6:12] warning, the unit as a whole appears to be an excursion to scold believers into advancing in their knowledge about Jesus."[33]

Whatever the theological perspective, all interpretations suggest a warning that, if not heeded, will result in severe consequences. By including four additional warning passages, the writer clearly expresses the writer's urgent concern for the church.

Structure and Integrity of Chapter Thirteen

Before proceeding to the specifics of verses 13:7 and 13:17, it is important to establish the relationship of chapter thirteen to the rest of the letter. At first glance, the thirteenth chapter appears to be something of an appendix of random thoughts that have little to do with the rest of the epistle. The matter of the chapter's integrity bears heavily on the interpretation and weight given to verses 13:7 and 13:17.

Attridge writes that doubts about the integrity of chapter thirteen have largely been discredited. He sees the chapter as a final paraenesis in a document displaying a pattern of balance between doctrinal exposition and paraenesis.[34] Lane holds that chapter thirteen is "clearly not an addendum." It is stylistically similar to the rest of the document which lends credence to its being original. He writes that verses 12:28-29 connects the chapter to the rest of the document. Therefore, chapter thirteen describes the kind of worshipful holiness that the community should practice in light of God's fierceness and covenant grace, as described in 12:28-29.[35] Koester sees 12:28-13:21 as a peroration

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[33] Bateman, 81-83.

[34] Attridge, 13, 21.

[35] Lane, 497-98.

designed to show what acceptable worship looks like. It is nevertheless an integral part of the sermon and not an add-on.[36] O'Brien likewise finds that chapter thirteen generates out of 12:28. He emphasizes that everything that follows in chapter thirteen is a call to "acceptable worship" and carries the weight of God as a "consuming fire."[37] It is in this context that verses 13:7 and 13:17 must be considered. These are not afterthoughts, but rather vital instructions essential to avoiding the consequences of the warnings in the rest of the letter and experiencing the blessings of the true Gospel.

Who Are the "Leaders" of 13:7 and 13:17?

To understand the significance of these passages, it is necessary to consider the "leaders" mentioned in verses 13:7 and 13:17. The term employed in these verses (and also in verse 24) is the verb *hégeomai*. Thus, the more literal meaning is "those who lead you." The term is used in several places in Scripture. In Luke 22:26, Jesus used it as he described how those who "lead" among the disciples should not exercise lordship like the Gentiles, but should "serve." In Acts 14:12, the use is somewhat counter-intuitive. It refers to Paul as the "chief speaker," yet the people referred to Barnabas as Zeus, which implies leadership. In this case, it would seem that the translation more generally implies that Paul was the one who "led the speaking." In Acts 15:22, *hégeomai* is used of Barsabbas and Silas in a general sense saying they are "leading men among the brethren," but not necessarily stating they hold an official office.[38] Nevertheless, in Matthew 2:6 *hégeomai* refers to Jesus as a ruler by citing the Micah 5:2 prophecy that out of

[36] Koester, 554-55.

[37] O'Brien, 514-15.

[38] O'Brien, 515-16.

Bethlehem "will come a ruler who will shepherd [God's] people." Acts 7:10, uses *hégeomai* to describe how Pharaoh made Joseph a "ruler over Egypt and over all his household." In the LXX, the form is used typically of political and military leaders. Thus, within the Scriptures, the word can have a fairly wide range as generally indicating someone who leads in some way, but it can also refer to a clear position of leadership. Lane writes, "The term is not reserved for a specified official position or administrative task but designates a person entrusted with responsibility for leadership, who on the ground of the official position receives authority."[39] For Schreiner, *hégeomai*, as used in Hebrews, "clearly refers to leaders in the church."[40] Koester agrees, but qualifies that the plural verb form indicates a plurality of leadership. He is clear, however, that this is not the developed official office of a single pastor or the bishop of later centuries. Rather, it refer to a distinct group of leaders who he is willing to associate with the Pauline office of elder. Koester cautions that the term used in Hebrews could also apply to deacons or other leaders.[41] O'Brien posits that the general reference to "leaders" is evidence of an earlier date for the letter. A more specific hierarchical reference might have been expected in a later-dated document.[42]

Moving to the specifics of the leaders in 13:7, 13:17 (and 13:24), it is generally accepted that the leaders of 13:7 are different that those of 13:17 and 13:24. Of the 13:7 leaders, Lane writes that the call to "consider the outcome of [these leaders'] way of life"

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[39] Lane, 526.

[40] Schreiner, 418.

[41] Koester, 75-76.

[42] O'Brien, 19.

suggests some sort of terminus. Perhaps these leaders have died or retired.[43] All of the commentators considered here agree that these leaders are no longer involved with the church. Attridge believes they may be the same leaders mentioned in 2:3 (i.e., "those who attested to us [the salvation that the Lord taught us]"). Thus, they had the authority of having known Jesus.[44] Cockerill says this direct association with Jesus is unnecessary to validate the respect they should be given and asserts that the writer claims neither the apostolic authority of Paul nor the authority of the ecclesiastical appointment for either himself or the founding leaders of 13:7. Their authority rests solely on the proclamation of God's word as fulfilled in Christ.[45] In a slight departure, Stoutenburg holds that the 13:7 leaders are the leaders of chapter 11 who demonstrated great faith and finished well.[46]

Though no longer part of the community, these 13:7 leaders are to be respected. Lane points to the use of the present imperative in the injunction to "continue to remember your leaders." This remembrance was to be an ongoing, focused activity for the community.[47] Anderson argues that the call to remember the leaders who spoke the word of God to the recipients reflects one of the sermon's key themes of hearing God's Word, which is what originally brought them life. The church should also consider the outcome of the leaders' lives, suggesting that these leaders persevered to the end, even in the midst of suffering. The church should imitate their leaders' faithfulness as

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[43] Lane, 522.

[44] Attridge, 391.

[45] Cockerill, 689-90.

[46] Stoutenburg, 5.

[47] Lane, 522.

demonstrated by the leaders' "not falling away."[48] O'Brien suggests that this injunction to remember, consider, and imitate is really the essence of discipleship. He sees a parallel with the 12:2 exhortation to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."[49] Lane summarizes the essence of the 13:7 leaders' credibility: "They were validated by the faithful word that they preached, the charismatic gifting they received to preach it, and the final outcome of their lives (i.e., faithfulness and perseverance). This gave them authority to hold the positions they held."[50]

Bruce, Lane, Anderson, and Allen affirm the 13:17 leaders to be the current leaders in the church. Bruce, however, is uncertain whether these leaders are specific to the house church to whom he believes the letter is addressed or are from the broader city community from whom this house church is tempted to break away.[51] Though these 13:17 leaders were a different group of people than those of 13:7, the text suggests a relationship and continuity between them. O'Brien sees the passage containing the first two instances of *hégeomai* as running from 13:7 to 13:19.[52] Verses 13:7 and 13:17 form an *inclusio* around 13:8 to 13:16. Therefore, these encapsulated verses are important for understanding the role of the 13:7 and 13:17 leaders. O'Brien finds the 13:8 assurance that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" to have been intended to reassure the listeners that even though their 13:7 leaders who spoke the word to them were gone, the confession upon which their faith was built is still valid. They can be

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[48] Anderson, 351.

[49] O'Brien, 515-16.

[50] Lane, 527.

[51] For example Bruce, 385, Lane, 553-54, Anderson 358, Allen 325.

[52] O'Brien, 514-15.

assured that their current 13:17 leaders will continue to preach this confession to them.[53] Lane writes that the current 13:17 leaders' validation comes through the faithful preaching of the Word of God as a continuation of what the leaders of 13:7 had preached. They are to keep the people from departing from the Word and pursuing the "diverse and strange teachings" mentioned in 13:9. The text implies that these leaders are charismatically endowed with gifts of discernment which equip them to help prevent the congregation from going after these false teachers and jeopardizing their eternity.[54]

Ellingworth sees the exhortation in 13:13 to "go to [Christ] outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured" as a call to the church to be willing to suffer the humiliation of being associated with Christ and His ignominious death. Thus, the people can draw inspiration from their 13:7 and 13:17 leaders to continue to pursue Christ and associate themselves with His Gospel.[55] Allen writes that these 13:17 leaders are entrusted with the authority of leadership, based upon their function of teaching and preaching the Word of God in the church.[56] Schreiner goes a step further and sees the leaders' charge to "keep watch over your souls" as comparable to the function and office of overseer.[57] O'Brien affirms that these are the same leaders as those mentioned in

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[53] O'Brien, 516-18.

[54] Lane, 553-55.

[55] Ellingworth, 712-18.

[56] Allen, 661.

[57] Schreiner, 424-25.

13:24: "Greet all your leaders and all the saints."[58] Anderson and Allen suggest that the letter's author considers himself to be one of the 13:17 leaders.[59]

To sum up, the scholars mentioned above all agree that the 13:7 leaders are no longer leading the church, and that verses 13:17 and 24 refer to the current leaders. There is some discrepancy among these scholars about whether the leaders hold an established office or whether their leadership represents a less developed position of formal leadership. Nevertheless, most of these scholars see the leaders as holding some type of authority. Furthermore, all agree that the leaders were identifiable among the congregation. The discussion will continue with an examination of the function of these leaders and the exhortation for the church to "obey" and "submit" to them.

An Examination of the Biblical Injunction to "Obey" and "Submit"

Hebrews 13:17 is perhaps one of the clearest injunctions in Scripture about the expectations for followers' interaction with the authority of their leaders. It is helpful, therefore, to explore the generally accepted meanings of the terms frequently translated "obey" and "submit."

The text says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." The first word that appears in the 13:17 phrase is *peithó*. This word is usually translated as "obey."[60] The NIV translates it as "have confidence in" and *The Message* as "be responsive to." O'Brien likes the translation "to put trust in someone" and sees a parallel meaning with

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[58] O'Brien, 215-16.

[59] Anderson 358, Allen 325.

[60] "Obey" is the translation for the following versions: ESV, ASV, KJV. NKJV, NASB, NLT, NRSV.

another instance of its use in Hebrews 2:13: "I will put my trust in [God]."[61] The word is used 52 other times in Scripture and frequently has connotations of "to persuade" or "to be persuaded." Lane and Schreiner prefer the translation "to be persuaded by" leaders as used in 13:17.[62] Though the term most literally means, "be persuaded," Koester is clear that there is a sense of expectation that the person will or ought to "heed' and "take directives" from their leaders. He cites the use of the term in Romans 2:8 ("those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury") and James 3:3 ("If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us") as examples where the term carries the expectation that the directive will be, or at least should be, followed.[63] Ellingworth emphasizes the present imperative form of the verb and prefers to translate it as "keep on obeying" your leaders. He associates the term with the broader concept of submission in the Christian community.[64] Anderson agrees with the NIV and O'Brien that *peithó* may well mean "have confidence in," but its pairing with *hupeikó* in the phrase makes the idea of obedience and submission to authority clear.[65]

The term *hupeikó* occurs only here in the New Testament. It is often translated "submit." O'Brien sees *hupeikó* as somewhat stronger than *peithó*. It carries the sense of "to give way, yield, or submit to someone."[66] Koester agrees that *hupeikó* implies that

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[61] O'Brien, 529.

[62] Lane, 554; Schreiner, 284.

[63] Koester, 572-73.

[64] Ellingworth, 723.

[65] Anderson, 358.

[66] O'Brien, 529.

one who follows should ultimately yield to the leaders when there is a disagreement. He is careful to qualify, however, that the idea does not refer to the type of "hierarchical structure" of a child-parent or master-slave relationship.[67] Allen writes that *hupeikó* originally meant to "withdraw or give way to," and then figuratively came to imply a "yielding to authority." Like Koester, he considers it a stronger and more specific word than the preceding *peithó*. In 13:17, it carries with it the exhortation that the follower is to yield when the "leaders' rule is at variance with the readers' wishes."[68] Ellingworth also considers *hupeikó* to be the stronger term and claims it refers to "the due deference that is due leaders because of the benefits the leaders provide."[69] Lane sees the implication of authority so strongly that he translates the term "submit to another's authority." Though the word "authority" is not in the 13:17 phrase, Lane believes that an accurate translation of its meaning must include the term "authority."[70] Cockerill places less significance on the nuances of the two words. Rather, he simply argues that they are two ways to emphasize the same idea that the people should exercise a "faithful, thorough adherence to the oversight offered by their leaders." The submission to authority called for in 13:17 is not the unconditional obedience of a subject to a king. Rather Cockerill clarifies that the church should submit to their leaders because of the relationship they have to them. The church is familiar with the leaders' character. The church understands their leaders have the task of "watching over their souls" for the good of those in the congregation.[71]

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[67] Koester, 572-73.

[68] Allen, 624.

[69] Ellingworth, 723.

[70] Lane, 522-24.

[71] Cockerill, 707.

Stoutenburg reinforced this notion, stating, "The [13:17] leaders are to be obeyed because they watch over souls and give an account.[72]

Leader Responsibility and Accountability

The 13:17 leaders are called to "keep watch over the [readers'] souls." Ellingworth writes that the term for "keep watch over [*agrupneó*]," is a shepherding image, and he points out that "it is common in the biblical tradition [for] rule and caring [to be] joined."[73] Koester writes that the term refers to the function of "sleeplessly being alert." It is not necessarily a direct reference to the oversight rule of an *episkopos*. Rather, its use in Scripture carries an eschatological connotation and is associated with staying alert and ready at all times for the coming judgment.[74] Anderson sees a practical outworking of the function that *agrupneó* describes, since warning the people with this type of letter is a very pastoral thing to do.[75]

If the 13:17 leaders are to "watch over souls," it is helpful to understand what the term "soul" [*psuché*] refers to in this verse. There is some divergence of opinion here. Lane and Koester both see *psuché* as referring back to 10:39, "we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." They hold that "preserving the soul" here refers to preserving eternal life and avoiding eternal death. Therefore, the task assigned leaders of "watching over souls" is an

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[72] Stoutenburg, 9-10.

[73] Ellingworth, 723.

[74] Koester, 572-73; cf. Mk. 13:33; Lk. 21:36; Eph. 6:18 for the eschatological sense of *agrupneó* ("to watch over with sleepless alertness").

[75] Anderson, 358.

extremely serious one.[76] Allen demurs, however, and rejects the assertion that "watching over souls" has to do with salvation. Rather, he asserts that the term refers to "spiritual well-being," rather than to a loss of salvation. Nevertheless, Allen thinks the consequences of harmed souls are exceedingly serious and therefore the charge to watch over souls is exceptionally weighty.[77] Ellingworth does not believe that *psuché* implies a separation of soul and body in this instance. Rather, it refers to the whole being. Therefore, its use expresses the writer's more general concern for the good of the entire community, rather than a reference to salvation.[78]

By any understanding, the charge with which these leaders are tasked is a serious responsibility. Furthermore, the text states that these 13:17 leaders will "give an account." Attridge is not specific about the party to whom the leaders will give an account, saying rather generally that they will give an account to whatever authority under which they serve.[79] Most others, however, are more specific that this account is to God. Koester is clear that this text stresses the leaders' accountability to God, not to other people.[80] Cockerill emphasizes that it is the accountability to God for the outcome of the task of shepherding souls that makes these leaders worthy of the submission of the people.[81] Lane and Allen reflect that the emphatic use of *autoi* in the phrase "they [themselves: *autoi*] watch over your souls" emphasizes that only the 13:17 leaders have

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[76] Lane, 522-25; Koester 572-73.

[77] Allen, 624.

[78] Ellingworth, 723.

[79] Attridge, 402.

[80] Koester, 578.

[81] Cockerill 708-09.

accountability for this responsibility.[82] Lane posits that the text and context suggest some tension between the people and the current leaders as a consequence of the people being lured away by the false teachers (cf. 13:9). Therefore, he believes the use of *autoi* is an attempt to make clear that the false teachers are not accountable for watching over the people's souls; only the current leaders are truly committed to and accountable for that labor. Therefore, these 13:17 leaders should be respected.[83] Lane finds that the use of *hōs* here with the future participle form of *apodidómi* (to give [an account]) expresses a strong purpose and intention. Thus, he prefers to translate this phrase as "those who intend to give an account." In other words, not only will the 13:17 leaders give an account, but they are keenly aware that they will do so. They embrace the responsibility enthusiastically because they understand what is at stake and the responsibility to which they have been called.[84] In fact, the submission of the people should be partly based upon their acknowledgement that the leaders recognize that they exercise authority within an authority structure where Christ is the ultimate head of the church. Therefore, the leaders will give an account to Jesus.[85]

The fact that the 13:17 leaders have ultimate responsibility and accountability does not necessitate that others in the church have no accountability or responsibility. Koester writes that the letter ascribes responsibility and accountability to everyone in the church for similar functions described in 13:17. He writes:

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[82] Lane, 522-25; Allen, 624.

[83] Lane, 555.

[84] Lane, 522-25.

[85] Lane, 556.

> All in the community call each other brother (Hebrews 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22-23), all must render an account to God (Hebrews 4:12-13), and all are called to approach God (Hebrews 4:14-16). All must develop capacities to teach the faith (Hebrews 5:11-14). All have responsibility to help others withstand the deceptiveness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13; 12:15-16) and to provoke each other to love and good works with a view to the coming day of the Lord.[86]

Nevertheless, Koester is clear that the 13:17 leaders give more of an account than the non-leaders in the church. They have a "special responsibility."[87] Anderson make a similar point. He sees a pun in 13:7, "spoke the word [*logos*] of God," and 13:17, "give an account [*logos*]". Hebrews 4:12-13 uses the same pun with the same word [*logos*] employed in both of these senses. He concludes from these parallels that everyone in the church has similar responsibilities, and all will give an account, but pastors have a special responsibility and unique account to give.[88] Donald Guthrie summarizes this point by insisting that authority and responsibility are inextricably linked. Those who exercise authority must also take responsibility for their actions by giving account for them.[89]

Mutual Benefit

The writer calls the church to love its leaders in the way that it engages with the leaders' responsibilities. This love is an appropriate response because of the leaders' unique role, unique responsibility, and unique burden; and also because this demonstration of love is beneficial to the church. It benefits both the leaders and congregants.

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[86] Koester, 75-76.

[87] Koester, 572-73.

[88] Anderson, 358.

[89] Guthrie, Donald, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 277.

The writer of Hebrews urges the recipients to "let [the leaders] do this with joy and not with groaning." Attridge suggests that the writer was merely reciting a saying within the community.[90] Guthrie seems to imply that leaders are the ones who carry the responsibility for leading with joy not grief. Therefore, leaders should not be overbearing. This is an outlying interpretation and Guthrie gives no analysis for his conclusion.[91] Others commentators see more significance in its meaning.

There appear to be two general perspectives on the sources of the leaders' joy and groaning – keeping watch and giving an account. If keeping watch is the source of joy (or groaning), then the implication is that the way people obey and submit to their leaders affects the leaders' joy or groaning. O'Brien states that the term "let them do this" is an imperative that likely commands followers to let leaders exercise their responsibility of watching over souls with joy. Therefore, the congregation should do whatever they need to do to facilitate leaders leading with joy not grief.

Followers help leaders lead with joy when they trust leaders and cooperate with them. In contrast, when the attitudes of trust and cooperation are lacking, leaders "groan as under a heavy burden."[92] Cockerill writes that this "groaning" has to do with deep soul suffering, as used in the LXX in Psalm 6:6 ("I am weary with my moaning") and 30:11 ("You have turned my mourning into dancing"), in 2 Corinthians 5:2 ("In this tent we groan") and Romans 8:23 (we … groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption"). It refers to profound suffering.[93] For Ellingworth, joy is what should be desired for leaders

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[90] Attridge, 402.

[91] Guthrie, 277.

[92] O'Brien, 530.

[93] Cockerill, 708-09.

as they keep watch. He thinks that groaning is likely also related to keeping watch, but he acknowledges that it could refer to the shame of giving a bad account for church members who fall away from the Gospel.[94] Lane sees a clear split reference here. He holds that the *hina* clause connects the exhortation to obey leaders with the outcome of their work being a joy. Thus, obeying directly affects whether their work is a joy, such that Lane states the sense of the phrase as "obey your leaders so that their work may be a joy." Lane connects "groaning" with "giving an account," however, not necessarily with leading.[95]

If the source of joy is in the leaders' giving an account, then the implication is that the way the church obeys Jesus and adheres to the Gospel impacts the kind of account leaders can give. If the church is faithful to Christ, the leaders will be able to give a joyous account of them. Koester associates "doing this with joy" with "giving an account," not with "keeping watch." Nevertheless, when people drift away, leaders groan because they are accountable for those they lead.[96] Anderson writes that leaders will give an account to God for how the community perseveres and obeys. He suggests this implies more responsibility to the community. Thus, the community should responsibly grow and persevere in order that the leaders can boast about them.[97] Similarly, Bruce argues that the writer wants the leaders to be able to give a joyous account to God. He writes that this was the same spirit in which the Apostle Paul exhorted the Philippians to godly pursuits in Philippians 2:16 so that he could give Christ an account that he did not labor in vain

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[94] Ellingworth, 724.

[95] Lane, 525.

[96] Koester, 572-73, 578.

[97] Anderson, 358.

for them.[98] Stoutenburg agrees that the leaders' joy comes in witnessing the people submitting to Jesus the Messiah.[99] Schreiner writes if the people obey Christ, the leaders will be filled with joy; if they do not obey the Lord, then this is a possible sign of their apostasy which will grieve the leaders.[100]

The writer of Hebrews further states that if the leaders groan as a result of their leadership, "it would be no advantage" to the church. Ellingworth, Koester, Attridge, Cockerill, and Anderson see the phrase, "it would be no advantage to you" as ironic understatement, considering the "actually terrifying" consequences of leaders groaning as a result of their leadership.[101] For Lane, the consequences of not respecting leaders "puts the church in jeopardy."[102] O'Brien writes that the symptom of not following leaders indicates a falling away from the sound doctrine toward which the leaders are trying to point people.[103] Schreiner reinforces this notion by equating submission to leaders with submission to God, as long as the leaders are following the Scriptures.[104] Thompson cites Hebrews 10:39 ("we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls") and holds that the community's submission to the leaders is necessary for ensuring that the community endures to the end.[105]

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[98] Bruce, 385.

[99] Stoutenburg, 9-10.

[100] Schreiner, 424.

[101] Ellingworth, 724; Koester, 572-73; Attridge, 402; Cockerill, 709; and Anderson, 359.

[102] Lane, 556.

[103] O'Brien, 529-30.

[104] Schreiner, 426.

[105] Thompson, 284.

Bruce and Lane expand upon the practical outworking of the "advantage" to the church. The implication is that it would be of great benefit to the church if the leaders were able to discharge their responsibilities with joy. Bruce writes:

> There would always be a tendency throughout the churches for visitors who came purveying new and esoteric doctrines to be regarded as much more attractive and interesting personalities than the rather humdrum local leaders, who never taught anything new, but were content with the conservative line of apostolic tradition. Nevertheless, it was those local leaders, and not the purveyors of strange teaching, who had a real concern for the welfare of the church and a sense of their accountability to God in this respect. If the discharge of their responsibility and the ultimate rendering of their account were made a burden to them, the resultant disadvantage would fall on those who were led as well as on the leaders.[106]

Lane argues that the term *peithó* ("be persuaded") implies an engaged interaction with leaders where congregants do not blindly follow. Rather, they have a great respect for the leaders' gifting, calling, and training, such that they take the time to engage and evaluate the leaders' teachings. Wherever possible, the congregants try to see the perspective of the leaders. If the leaders are carefully guarding doctrine, this deferent engagement will be of great benefit to the congregant.[107] Allen adds that if the leaders' work is a burden because the people are uncooperative, this lack of cooperation is not going to benefit the church.[108]

A Request for Prayer and a Clear Conscience

Verses 13:18-19 provide a few additional insights into the main texts of the discussion. The writer asks for prayer "for us" and declares that "we have a clear conscience." Ellingworth point out that the writer asks the church to pray for him and the

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[106] Bruce, 385-86.

[107] Lane, 554.

[108] Allen, 625.

other leaders so that they can do the Lord's work.[109] O'Brien believes that the writer's request for prayer shows how much he recognizes the awesome nature of spiritual leadership. Therefore, the church should pray for all its spiritual leaders because of the great responsibility they shoulder. O'Brien sees a connection to the 13:7 leaders in this request for prayer. The cognates *anastrophé* ("life conduct" *n.,* translated "way of life" in ESV*)* and *anastrephó* ("to conduct one's life" *v.*, translated "to act" in ESV) are used in both sentences. The prayer is therefore so that the 13:17 leaders may "act [honorably in all things]," and thus imitate the 13:7 leaders' "way of life."[110]

Lane sees some tension between the church and the current 13:17 leaders. Therefore, the writer aligns himself with the current leaders and asks for prayer for them all, knowing that prayer and his association with the leaders will hopefully help diffuse the tensions and resentment they have toward the current leaders. His declaration that they have a clear conscience implies that he is confident they are in good standing with God, knowing they will give an account and have to ask this question of themselves at all times. This should assure the church that these leaders are worthy of their trust.[111] Bruce likewise holds that in the writer's request for prayer, he equates himself with the other leaders. He, along with Attridge and Cockerill, sense that the writer's appeal to a clear conscience is similar to the Apostle Paul's in 2 Corinthians 2:12 ("For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with

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[109] Ellingworth, 724-25.

[110] O'Brien, 530-32.

[111] Lane, 556.

simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.”).[112]

Koester agrees that the appeal to a good conscience implies that someone is impugning the writer’s and the 13:17 leaders’ integrity. The writer is therefore asserting that the writer and the other leaders are clean before the Lord to whom they will give an account.[113] Anderson believes the appeal to a clear conscience either refers to a comparison with the leaders of old who had an admirable way or life, or it could be slightly defensive after giving the harsh exhortations found in the letter. Nevertheless, he is open to the possibility that there may be pre-existing tensions between the people and the 13:17 leaders.[114] Schreiner does not mention conflict between leaders and church. Rather, he suggests that the writer is claiming a clear conscience before the governing authorities, perhaps indicating that the writer is in prison.[115]

Toward a Practical Theology of Pastoral Authority

The discussion above was intended to demonstrate that the texts of Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17 are not shallow afterthoughts that modern leaders have hijacked to lord it over the church. Rather, they are rich, instructive, integral parts of an impassioned exhortation from a concerned pastor to a church over which the pastor feels deep love and responsibility. It is now possible to draw on this sampling of modern scholarship for the development of a practical theology of pastoral authority. The theory to be established

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[112] Bruce, 386; Attridge, 403; Cockerill, 712.

[113] Koester, 572-73.

[114] Anderson, 359.

[115] Schriener, 427.

here is: *Congregants have a moral obligation to submit to pastoral authority within certain parameters.* This statement will be broken down and its significance discussed.

Clarifications and Qualifications

Before tackling the statement directly, it might be helpful to address some potential misunderstandings. First, it is important to reiterate that the statement applies to congregants only and has nothing to say about the moral obligations of church leaders. Certainly, there are an abundance of texts describing the moral commitments that leaders have toward those they lead. Though exceedingly important, those considerations are not the concern of this study. Rather, this is to be a practical theology of pastoral authority. It is practical because it is intended to be a guide that congregants can use for engaging with church leadership. It is not a guide for church leaders, though leaders may derive some benefit from it.

Second, there are authority relationships in Scripture where one person is enjoined to defer to the authority of another in some way, under certain circumstances. In Ephesians 5:22-6:9, wives are called to "submit" to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters. In Romans 13:1-7, citizens are to "be subject to" the governing authorities. The Apostle Peter's first letter exhorts its readers "to be subject to every human institution" and servants to be "subject to masters – even those who are unjust" (1 Pet. 2:13, 18). While one might argue about the specifics and the form of these authority relationships, it seems clear that the Scriptures are calling for some type of deference to authority.

Third, the exercise of authority is compatible with the commonly accepted qualities of a servant leader. These qualities would include: leading as a service to those

led, rather than for the selfish gain of the leader; leading sacrificially by placing the needs of those led before the leader; leading by persuasion rather than fiat whenever possible; and not seeking a position of leadership out of a desire for power or glory, but rather to equip and exhort others to ministry. Several examples from Scripture are included here. God gave Moses a position of leadership at the top of an authority hierarchy. Nevertheless, Numbers 11:24-30 describes a scene where some of the leaders under Moses' authority were prophesying. Joshua was jealous for Moses and wanted the men to stop. Moses, however, told Joshua that he wished all would prophesy. Thus, this leader, Moses, with absolute authority desired that others display spiritual gifts, even if they drew attention away from Moses.

The Apostle Paul sacrificed his life for the churches he founded. He wrote letters to them to advise and edify them. He agonized over their condition. Nevertheless, at times he wrote as if he expected people to respond to his authority when he felt it would be beneficial. He wrote to Philemon, "I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you" (Philem. 8-9). Paul cared deeply for the Corinthians, yet he wrote them: "What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Cor. 4:21). Coming with a "rod" is clearly an exercise of authority. Paul mentioned his authority very specifically to the Corinthians for their own good: "I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down" (2 Cor. 13:10).

Jesus operated as if he had authority and expected people to respond to it. After modeling the attitude of a servant and washing their feet, He told them:

> Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you (John 13:12-15)

Clearly, Jesus did not deny His authority as Lord, yet He also modeled a servant. Modeling a servant, however, did not mean that Jesus did not also exercise His authority at times. When Jesus told His disciples He would go to Jerusalem to die, Peter attempted to stop Him. Jesus did not hold council about His decision. He rebuked Peter sternly, expecting that Peter would listen and stop hindering Him from His mission (Matt. 16:21-23).

One could counter that Jesus is Lord and Paul was an apostle. Therefore, they have unique authority that modern church leaders do not have. Certainly, nobody can speak with the same type of authority as the Son of God. Furthermore, most Protestants would deny that modern pastors have apostolic authority as Paul did. Nevertheless, there seems to be a continuity of some type of spiritual authority. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to "imitate him as he imitates Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul told his disciples Titus and Timothy to exercise authority as spiritual leaders. Paul told Titus to, "declare [God's truths]; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you" (Titus 2:15). Paul says something similar to Timothy, though authority is only implied: "Command and teach [the truths of God]. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:11-12). Neither Titus nor Timothy had apostolic authority, yet the Apostle Paul implied that they had some type of authority that was at least analogous to his own, which was analogous to Christ's. Paul implied that Titus and Timothy should have an expectation that others would respect – not disregard – their authority.

One might say that these Pauline protégés had unique authority from Paul, but Paul implies that this authority is possessed by leaders coming after Titus and Timothy. Paul told Timothy, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). It seems plausible that Timothy might give the same reassurances to his protégés about the authority they are to exercise. If these "faithful men" are to be spiritual leaders in the church, the idea of authority being endowed to leaders beyond Paul and his immediate disciples is suggested.

In Paul's general description of church elders from 1 Timothy 3:3-4, one observes servant leader qualities (e.g., "not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money") alongside authority (e.g., "manage his household well"). The term used for "managing one's household" is also used of elders who "lead" (1 Tim. 5:17), the spiritual gift of "leadership" (Rom. 12:8), and for respecting leaders who are "over you" (1 Thess. 5:12). To sum up, even a cursory look at these texts strongly suggests that sacrificial, servant-like leadership is not incompatible with the exercise of pastoral authority.

Finally, the concept of pastoral authority does not necessitate that the one holding authority has greater access to God than the non-leaders, nor does it imply that the authority holder has more value in the eyes of God than those led. The Hebrews 13 texts do not require that, and the argument made in this paper is silent on that point. The unique qualities that these leaders have over the others in the church is the level of accountability they have to God and the submission they are to receive from the church.

A Moral Obligation

If one has a moral obligation to do something, it means that one ought to do the thing in question. Thus, if one does not do that thing, then one is doing something wrong in the moral sense. For Christians, doing something that is morally wrong means they are sinning against God. In the Hebrews 13:17 text, there are at least three reasons indicated why it is morally right to submit to pastoral authority and morally wrong not to submit to it.

The first reason is simply that submitting to pastoral authority is commanded by God. More detailed explanations of pastoral authority, the nature of submission to it, and the parameters within which it is appropriate to submit to it will be offered below. For now, the argument will simply note that virtually all the scholars surveyed agree that the text of 13:17 enjoins congregants to "be persuaded" and to "yield." Irrespective of the precise meaning of these terms (further discussed under the concept of submission), these are clearly commands. The context of the letter as a hortatory sermon that serves as a warning intended to avert a serious consequence further reinforces the importance of commands given in the letter and the expectation of adherence to those commands. To the extent that one believes this letter to be Holy Scripture (an assumption of this paper), its directives are the commands of God. Thus, to disobey a command of God is disobeying God Himself.

The second reason for this moral obligation is that submitting to pastoral authority is beneficial to pastors where resisting pastoral authority can be hurtful to pastors. Pastors carry a burden because of the nature of their work and the account they will give to God. The text states that the leaders sleeplessly keep watch over the church. The implication is

that this work is difficult and has some degree of stress associated with it. The very need for the writer of Hebrews to make the exhortation of 13:17 implies that some people in the church were not doing this. The writer is concerned that the church not fall away from the Gospel but adhere to the Gospel that brought salvation to the people. The context suggests that a significant part of the 13:17 leaders' job to watch over souls comes in the form of the preaching of the Gospel, preventing the preaching of false Gospel, and disciplining people who are at risk of incurring the discipline of the Lord. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God chastens shepherds who avoid challenging the people with difficult truths that would save them from God's wrath. God says these shepherds have shirked their responsibilities by "healing the wounds of my people lightly" (Jer. 6:14). Paul told Timothy to silence false teachers because they are upsetting entire families (Titus 1:9-11). Since people in the church can freely choose whether to remain with the congregation or leave it, pastors always face the prospect that people will fall away if the preached Word offends them in some way, or if their efforts to protect the church from falling away from the Gospel are misunderstood. This is exacerbated by the prospect of false teachers luring people away from the true teachers, as Bruce suspects was happening in the Hebrews churches.[116] Therefore, it seems reasonable that the leaders will always experience the pressure that people will become upset with them for faithfully discharging their duties to watch over their souls. This might result in people leaving the church or making it difficult for the leaders if they remain.

Pastors will also give an account to God. The scholars surveyed are divided on whether this account will be given for the way in which the pastors watch over souls or

[116] Bruce, 385-86.

for what they can say about the people they led. Whichever the true sense here, and even if these pastors willingly embrace the prospect of giving an account as Lane argues, the burden of giving an account to God still looms. Congregants can affect the degree of this account-giving burden by being easy to govern (if the account refers to the task of leadership) or by faithfully persevering and growing in the Gospel (if the account is for the church's progress in Christ). In practice these two items are likely related anyway, as it is difficult to imagine a person who is easy to lead as not also being responsive to the efforts of the shepherd to exhort them to spiritual growth.

Thus, disobeying the injunction to submit to pastoral authority will potentially cause pastors to groan rather than experience joy. A simple appeal to texts calling for those in the church to love and bless one another is all that is required to establish that enabling pastors to discharge their duties with joy rather than groaning is morally right. Paul wrote the Philippians: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). Certainly, pastors are included among those who should receive this consideration. Paul mentions pastors specifically in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work."

The third reason for this moral obligation is that submitting to pastoral authority is beneficial to the church, where resisting pastoral authority can be hurtful to the church. The scholars surveyed agreed that the writer of Hebrews was understating the seriousness of the consequences of rejecting pastoral authority. While the scholars are not united

about the nature of the consequences, even the least serious consequence of loss of rewards (represented by Allen's view) is quite serious. Allen allows that disobedience can even result in premature death.[117] Some other views see chronic resistance to pastoral authority as potentially leading to a loss of salvation. This loss of rewards or salvation is disastrous to the individual who is considering how they engage pastoral authority. The consequence, however, is applied to the entire church. Therefore, once again, the appeal to texts calling for those in the church to love and bless one another establishes that harming the church by grieving pastors is morally wrong.

The Nature of Submission

Submission (to pastoral authority), in this context, is taken from the Hebrews 13:17 text and defined as faithfully adhering to the injunctions to be persuaded and ultimately yield to the one(s) holding pastoral authority. This is not a blind, thoughtless obedience, and it has limits that are described in the section below on parameters. In Hebrews 13:17, those led are enjoined to "be persuaded." It is important to qualify that this is an injunction to followers – not to leaders. It does not command leaders to use persuasion as opposed to appealing to pastoral authority (though there are other texts that suggest this is ideal, such as Acts 17:4, 18:4, 19:8 and 2 Corinthians 5:11). Rather, it commands followers to "be persuaded" by their leaders. The idea here is to listen attentively, to be teachable, to carefully consider the leader's arguments, to engage with the leader's arguments and diligently compare them to the Scriptures. Paul's commendation to the Berean Jews in Acts 17:11 is illustrative: "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all

[117] Allen, 377.

eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Though these Berean Jews were not part of the church at the time and neither Paul nor Silas held any pastoral authority over them, they nevertheless engaged Paul and Silas in a spirit of "being persuaded." There is nothing here about uncritically or blindly accepting what Paul and Silas say. Rather, there is an active and respectful engagement that assumes they have arguments that are worth considering. One must assume a vigorous discussion that asks thoughtful questions, expresses sincere concerns, and shares original ideas. In the 13:17 text, the sense of being persuaded would include these things and go a step further to try to understand the perspective of the leader and to even try to convince oneself to embrace the idea. The injunction "to yield" indicates a willingness to ultimately accept the will of the leader, after having had the opportunity to engage in the process of being persuaded. The acceptance of the will of the leader assumes that this yielding is within the bounds of the parameters described below.

There are several other factors that, while not explicitly stated in the 13:17 text, nevertheless can be applied to the act of submission to pastoral authority. First, submission to a human authority should be grounded in submission to God. This would mean that the one submitting understands that submission to the human authority is a command of God. Therefore, submission to the human authority is ultimately an act of obedience to God. Since the 13:17 injunction is to keep the people from falling away from God, Schreiner equates submitting to leaders as submitting to God, as long as the leaders are following the Scriptures.[118] Other texts support this view. Ephesians 5:21 exhorts the church to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." The following

[118] Schreiner, 426.

verse tells wives to submit to husbands "as to the Lord." For the Christian, this makes submitting easier than if submission were strictly to the human authority. Furthermore, the 13:17 text says that leaders will give an account for the way they discharge their duties. Since the church is called to submit to the leaders, the implication is that the church is not accountable for the way the leaders lead. Rather, it is accountable for the way it obeys the command to submit to the leaders.

Since God puts leaders in place to "watch over souls" and holds leaders accountable, it follows that God is sovereign over the ultimate well-being of the church. Since God calls followers to submit to leaders, it then follows that congregants can obey a decision with which they disagree (but cannot say is unbiblical). They can do this ultimately out of submission to God and trust in God. While congregants may well have a responsibility to engage thoughtfully with leaders, offer sound counsel, and express concerns, they are not ultimately accountable for the decisions the leaders make. Only the leaders will give an account to God for the decisions they make (assuming the decisions are within the parameters discussed below). This implies that the church must trust God for the outcome of its obeying the leaders. Thus, congregants obey God by obeying the leader and trust that God will redeem even a bad leadership decision. This is plausibly one reason the church is encouraged to pray for its leaders in Hebrews 13:18. Paul instructed Timothy in the same way: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions" (1 Tim. 2:1-2). This principle would certainly apply to pastors.

The fact that the writer of Hebrews is warning the church to submit to their leaders implies that the church is not exercising that task well. The thrust of the letter

suggests that the threat the church faces is increased by this rebellion and would be reduced by a healthy submission to the leaders. It is possible that the church is aware of this rebellious activity but is simply not convicted of it or is rationalizing it in some way. It is also possible that the church is not aware of its rebellion. The witness of Scripture suggests that people have a propensity to rebel against authority. The writer of Hebrews acknowledges this in Hebrews 3:15: "As it is said, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'" The specific context in Hebrews is rebellion against God, but the text refers back to the rebellion of the Israelites during their desert wanderings. In accounts such as Exodus 17:1-7, the rebellion was frequently against Moses and other leaders, though it was ultimately against God. One can hardly read these accounts without concluding that the human heart is capable of rebellion against authority. If God's people will rebel against Him, surely they are capable of rebelling against human leaders. Scripture also reveals that humans are often unaware of their sin. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" Proverbs testifies: "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit" and "there are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth" (Prov. 16:2, 30:12). This means that congregants should be cautious when disagreeing with leaders in the church. They should be aware of their potential to rebel against pastoral authority and their potential to be unaware of that rebellion. David reflected an awareness of his potential blindness to his own sin when he cried: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Pastoral Authority

It is necessary to define precisely what is meant by *pastoral authority*. The first term to define is *authority*. The history of the conceptualization of authority and power reveals a wide variety of perspectives and ideas. Therefore, anyone writing about the concepts must carefully define the terms as employed.[119] The researcher's definition is used here: Authority is a quality one person has that motivates another to listen to him, be influenced by him, or perhaps even obey him. This quality can be granted to a leader by a follower, and/or assumed and exercised by the one possessing it. *Pastoral authority* is the type of authority that pastors have. It consists of both *personal authority* and *role authority*. Personal authority and role authority can be applied to leaders in roles other than pastor. There are, however, certain dynamics that are unique in their application to pastoral authority.

Personal authority rests on grounds that are similar to Max Weber's charismatic ground for authority. Personal authority is based upon a follower's perceptions of a leader's expertise, experience, spiritual qualifications, personal charisma, integrity, or a natural affection for the leader. A leader's personal authority only exists in the mind of the follower. Another way to say this is that the leader has no personal authority unless it is granted by the follower. It is organic in that it may naturally develop, but it also can be consciously developed by the follower. Unlike role authority, it is optional and transitory. It is optional in that it is not necessary that it exist for the requirement of submission to pastoral authority to still be valid. It is potentially transitory, in that it may wax and wane. It would seem that the Hebrews 13:7 leaders had this type of authority. They had

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[119] Steven Lukes, "Power and Authority" in *A History of Sociological Analysis*, edited by T. B. Bottomore and Robert A. Nisbet, 633-675 (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

established themselves as worthy of respect because of the impact they had on the readers by sharing the Word of life with them. Also, their integrity and spirituality was evident because they finished well and persevered to the end of their lives. However, they were not currently serving in any type of official role in the church, as were the 13:17 leaders.

Role authority is the authority a leader holds by virtue of the role he or she plays as a leader in the congregation. This role authority is semi-permanent within certain parameters. It is semi-permanent because it does not wax and wane as personal authority does. It is not necessarily contingent upon the leader or follower. Within certain parameters, it exists irrespective of the behavior of the leader or the opinion of the follower. Thus, it can always be appealed to within the parameters, even when personal authority cannot. The Hebrews readers are urged to submit to the 13:17 leaders because of the work they do (i.e. to watch over souls), not because of their character. This does not mean that these leaders should not be of high character, as there seems to be a link between them and the 13:7 leaders. Nor does it mean that character is irrelevant to the legitimacy of the 13:17 leaders. It simply means that the primary driver of the call to submission is the nature of the work that the 13:17 leaders do – in other words, because of the role they play in the church.

Authority is an abstract concept. The concept of the *flow of authority* is helpful in better understanding its nature as the researcher defines it. Authority flows two ways. The *granting* of authority is the flow from the follower to the leader. The *exercise* of authority is the flow from the leader to the follower. This granting and exercising is somewhat different for personal and role authority.

The granting of personal authority is where the follower deliberately develops a personal regard for the leader. This process may be easy and feel almost unconscious or natural. This is the ideal case. Nevertheless, there may be occasions in which granting personal authority is difficult. For example, an older congregant might find it challenging to grant personal authority to a younger leader because of his age. A male congregant might find it challenging to grant personal authority to a female leader. In such cases, it is possible for the congregant to develop the leader's personal authority. This might be done by taking the time to look for and learn to appreciate the leader's strengths. The point here is that this is an activity in which the follower engages and for which the follower has responsibility and some control. It seems plausible that this is what the recipients of Hebrews were encouraged to do in 13:7 where they were told to remember their leaders and reflect on the outcomes of their lives. While there are things the leader can do to facilitate this process, it is not contingent upon the leader. Rather, that question gets into the concept of leadership which is beyond the scope of this paper.

The flow of personal authority from leader to follower is the exercise of personal authority. This is something the leader does. It may take the form of making recommendations or attempting to persuade the follower. What is important to this discussion is how this flow looks from the follower's perspective. When the leader is exercising personal authority, the follower receives that flow as a willingness to "be persuaded" if at all possible. This would involve the careful and open engagement with the leader's ideas, which may also include the follower sharing her ideas with the leader or challenging the leader's ideas in appropriate ways. It is important to note that the leader has no personal authority to exercise if the follower does not grant it. Also, the

more personal authority the follower grants the leader, the easier it is for the follower to "be persuaded."

The flow of role authority likewise involves granting and exercising. The granting of role authority is the flow from the follower to the leader. It is the recognition of the follower's moral obligation to respect authority. The exercise of role authority is the flow from the leader to the follower. From the leader's perspective, this might manifest itself as the leader asserting the authority claims that she perceives are attached to the role she holds. This is what is sometimes referred to as "pulling rank." Again, what is important to this discussion is how this flow is perceived from the follower's perspective. From the follower's perspective, this looks like ultimately "yielding" to the leader in accordance with the principles of submission. It should be noted that a follower's failure to grant role authority does not mean it does not exist. In such cases, whether the follower ultimately complies with the leader's directive depends upon the amount of *coercive power* the leader has.

A person has pastoral authority when that person holds a role in the church that involves the functions commonly associated with the terms shepherd, teacher, overseer, and elder; and is held ultimately accountable for the exercise of these functions. A full ecclesiology is beyond the scope of this paper, as is an argument for a specific church polity. Furthermore, as observed in the discussion of Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17, scholars are not universally agreed on the precise nature of the role of these leaders. It is the position of the researcher that it does not matter whether these leaders hold an office that is analogous to Paul's *poimēn* ("shepherd/pastor"), *episkopos* ("overseer") or *presbyteros* ("elder"), or whether their role was a more organic precursor to that role. Nor does it

matter whether these leaders refer to the second century concept of priest and bishop, which the scholars surveyed reject. The concept of pastoral authority can be applied to all of these instances.

The salient point here is to note that the 13:7 and 13:17 leaders are specifically identified as having a specific role and the 13:17 leaders as having a unique accountability that is associated with that role. Presumably, these leaders are clearly identifiable to the church, as the church is told to remember and imitate them (13:7) to submit to them (13:17) and to greet them (13:24). These things would be impossible if the leaders were not identifiable. The command in 13:17 is not for the church to submit to one another, but to an identifiable group of leaders. Furthermore, the context of the 13:17 injunction implies that leaders have a shepherding responsibility to watch over souls by preaching sound doctrine and guarding against false doctrine. There is also an implication of encouraging the church in its obedience to God and discouraging it from straying away from God and into sin. These functions are consistent with Paul's qualification of an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:2 as "being able to teach."

Paul and Peter seem to equate the functions of shepherding, overseeing, and eldership with the same set of people. Paul tells the Ephesian elders that the "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to [shepherd] the church of God," He tells them to be careful of "wolves" who would teach things that would lead the people away from God (Acts 20:17, 28-30). Peter tells the elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising [the function of an overseer]" (1 Peter 5:2). Moreover, the 13:17 are held accountable in ways that the others in the church are not. Koester has suggested that

individuals in the Hebrews church will give an account for their obedience to God.[120] Nevertheless, the 13:17 text specifically cites the account that the specific set of leaders will give as being one important reason why submission to them is commanded. Thus, the role the 13:17 leaders held does not necessarily have to be a fully developed office to say that these leaders were identifiable, had clear shepherding responsibilities, and would give a unique account from which the others in the church were exempt. Therefore, these specific leaders had pastoral authority.

It is important to note that the 13:17 leader's pastoral authority is derived from their role, not from their behavior. The injunction to submit implies that for some reason it was difficult for the church to respect the leaders' personal authority. Perhaps this was because they were unfairly idealizing the previous leaders. Perhaps they were falling for the allure of the false teachers. Or, perhaps they were offended by the chastening warnings of the 13:17 leaders. Thus, the writer's appeal is to what the 13:17 leaders do and for what they are accountable. The grounding for the appeal to submit has little to do with personal authority (though this does not mean that the writer does not desire the development of the leaders' personal authority). Nevertheless, it does not imply the expectation that the church submit without any limitations. The discussion now turns to those parameters.

Parameters of a Pastor's Role Authority

Because the argument asserts that role authority exists independently of personal authority and is not contingent upon personal authority, it is critical to acknowledge that a pastor's role authority has important parameters. These parameters are the conditions

[120] Koester, 75-76.

within which role authority is valid. They could be applicable in principle for all forms of role authority, but the focus here is specifically as regards the role authority of pastors. The researcher suggests three parameters.

The first is the parameter of *role commencement*. This refers to the process that marks the beginning of the obligation to respect a pastor's role authority. The specifics of role commencement may vary from one church to another. The process has some way of identifying that the leader serves in a role that has pastoral role authority. This might include some type of ordination, public announcement, church vote, initiation rite, and so on. The process also includes an evaluation that determines whether the leader meets the requirements for holding the role. These requirements might include a formal ordination by a church or denomination, a call from God to the ministry, certain expertise or special training, a demonstration of a level of spirituality, spiritual gifting, ministry experience, integrity, a concern for others, and so on.

The second parameter is *role termination*. This refers to the process that marks the ending of the obligation to respect a pastor's role authority. As with role commencement, the specifics of role termination may vary from one church to another. The process has some way of identifying that the leader no longer has pastoral role authority. This might include a public announcement, a retirement ceremony, a notice of suspension of duties, and so on. In the case where the termination is forced upon the leader, the process would also include an evaluation that determines whether the leader no longer meets the role commencement requirements. The concept of role termination is significant because pastoral role authority does not end simply because an individual follower perceives that the leader is not demonstrating integrity, concern for others, or expertise, for example.

These items can be very subjective in the perception of the follower. Therefore, inside of this parameter, pastoral role authority is still valid. It should also be noted that just because pastoral role authority is removed after role termination, the leader might nevertheless still possess considerable personal authority.

The third parameter is the *legitimacy of directive*. This refers to the criteria with which the follower determines whether to follow a specific directive given within the period between role commencement and role termination (i.e., during the period of role authority). Because God employs fallible human beings to lead His church, these leaders are subject to error. They can have a mix of pure and impure motives in their decision making processes. They can allow themselves to be blinded by emotion. Their logic can be flawed. They can be tempted by the flesh. In short, their decisions or pronouncements can never be assumed to be infallible. This is a doctrinal assumption in this paper, so it will not be defended here. Nevertheless, the concept of submission to pastoral authority does not require that the follower agree with the leader in order to still be subject to the moral obligation to submit. Therefore, followers must be able to evaluate the legitimacy of a directive given by a leader holding pastoral authority.

The main criteria for evaluating the legitimacy of directive is consistency with the truth of God. For the Christian, this truth is contained in the Bible. There are several places in Scripture where the directives of a leader are invalidated by God's truth. The general principle is established in Acts 5:28-29, where the apostles are told by the authorities to keep silent about Jesus. The apostles disobeyed that instruction on the grounds that "they must obey God and not men." The implication is that where a human command runs counter to God's commands, the follower is not only justified in

disobeying that human command but also is morally obligated to disobey that human command. Paul established this criteria in Galatians 1:8 by stating that if anyone preaches a Gospel that runs counter to the Gospel he preached, then that false teacher should be disregarded. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul rebuked Peter for not acting in accordance with the Gospel when he refused to eat with Gentile believers. Peter's pastoral authority was not in question. Rather, the legitimacy of directive of Peter's behavior was the issue, as Peter was acting in a way that was unbiblical. Presumably, if Peter had told a protégé to follow his example, the protégé would have been justified in disobeying Peter.

That Scripture should serve as the criteria against which the Hebrews recipients evaluate legitimacy of directive is implied in the text. The warning passages exhort the people to embrace the Word of God in order to keep from falling away. The 13:7 leaders brought them the Word of God that saved them. They were exhorted not to listen to those who departed from the true Gospel as contained in the Word of God, but rather they should submit to the 13:17 leaders. Presumably, these 13:17 leaders were faithfully preaching the Word of God or they would have been relegated to the ranks of the false teachers. In summary, therefore, it seems reasonable to infer that the modern follower can use the criteria of consistency with the Bible to evaluate the legitimacy of directive for decisions made by those with pastoral authority.

It should be noted that the reliance on Scripture to determine legitimacy of directive requires a high view of Scripture. If Scripture is thought to be subject to error, and thus unreliable as an appellate source, then the follower must rely on individual reason or spiritual revelation. These criteria are spurious, however. Individual reason is subject to human imperfection. Spiritual revelation is not easily testable if one has

dismissed the Scriptures as an evaluative criterion. It is certainly true that human limitation will impact the interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, if one assumes that the Scriptures are reliable, then the focus is on understanding what they truly mean. If one erodes their reliability, then one must include other criteria for determining legitimacy of directive, such as the collective will or understanding of the community, the individual's common sense or perceived spiritual leading, and so on. When these items are included, the door is left wide open for the follower to justify resistance to pastoral authority for almost any subjective reason.

A Practical Theology

The statement defended here is: "*Congregants have a moral obligation to submit to pastoral authority within certain parameters."* Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17 have been appealed to as simple and clear scriptures that support this statement. In some ways, the statement seems base and perhaps obvious. It does have significant practical application, however.

First, it implies that pastoral authority is constant and stable within its parameters. Personal authority is an important element of pastoral authority. Personal authority alone, however, can be capricious; it waxes and wanes. Hebrews 13:7 recognizes personal authority: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." It is arguably preferable for leaders to lead from a foundation of personal authority. Likewise, followers should develop the personal authority they grant to leaders. It would seem that the Hebrews church had great regard for the 13:7 leaders. Stated another way, the 13:7 had great personal authority. These 13:7 leaders are no longer leading, however. They are either

dead or gone; thus, they are distant. It is, therefore, easy for the church to idealize them. They no longer have to make controversial decisions or speak challenging truths that may diminish their personal authority.

The 13:17 leaders, however, are the current leaders, and there is some evidence that there is a degree of tension between them and the congregation. These current leaders are in the everyday lives of the church members. This daily exposure to their human flaws makes it difficult for the church to idealize them. Thus, the church might unfairly hold the 13:17 pastors to an overly high standard. In fact, the church might consider them somewhat mundane and be tempted by the novelty of new ideas coming from other teachers. Perhaps these 13:17 leaders are younger and less experienced than the 13:7 leaders were. All of these things diminish the personal authority of the 13:17 leaders. If the church will only follow leaders based upon personal authority which has temporarily waned, it will have no reason to follow these leaders. This would yield harmful consequences. Personal authority is only one component of pastoral authority, however. Role authority is the other. Role authority exists even when personal authority does not. Therefore, if the church believes that it has a moral obligation to submit to role authority within certain parameters, it will not be forced to ground its submission to the leaders on personal authority, which has temporarily waned. Rather, it can engage role authority as it determines whether to follow the leadership. Thus, the statement serves a very practical purpose in helping the church navigate a period where personal authority has been eroded.

Second, statements that seem to deny the existence of role authority and rely solely on personal authority are confusing to followers and potentially damaging to the

church. T. M. Willis exemplifies this view. Willis argues that the reasons the Hebrews readers are encouraged to be persuaded and yield has nothing to do with pastoral authority (as defined in this paper). Willis writes:

> Most immediately, the rationale given for yielding to the [13:17] leaders is their responsibility towards God, not any authority that they wield over the church membership. The readers are reminded in verse seven of those earlier leaders' way of life and their faith. It is the person not the office of those leaders which is emphasized.[121]

Willis' statement is confusing. He argues that the reasons people should yield to leaders is because of their responsibility to God, but not any authority they wield over the members of the church. Perhaps the problem is Willis' definition of authority, which he really does not provide in detail. One only gets a clue that Willis thinks of it as some type of weapon pastors can wield over the church. This connotation of authority seems like a strawman that is easily dispatched, which is what Willis does by dismissing its existence – or, at least by dismissing its propriety. A follower attempting to take a cue from Willis is left confused about whether he has a moral obligation to yield, or if this yielding is optional. Willis provides no guidance here. In fact, Willis suggests that any exercise of authority to which the follower might yield is necessarily oppressive.

Willis rightly says that people are to yield to leaders because of the leaders' responsibility to God. In the same breath, however, he says it is the person not the office that is emphasized. Again, this seems like something of an equivocation. The very reason these leaders must give an account is not because of who they are, but because of what they do. They give an account because of the role they play. It is not necessary that they hold an office with an official name in order to carry the type of authority (i.e., role

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[121] T. M. Willis, "'Obey Your Leaders': Hebrews 13 and Leadership in the Church," *Restoration Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1994), 322.

authority) that is attached to their role, not to their person. Willis also assumes the 13:7 leaders and the 13:17 leaders have the same type of authority (though he does not use the word "authority"). He rightly identifies the personal authority of the 13:7 leaders, but then automatically assumes this is the only valid form of authority for the 13:17 leaders. He denies the role authority of the 13:17 leaders.

Willis' confusing language and indictment of authority provides nothing practical to get followers through periods when the personal authority he calls for is eroded. Recognizing specific leaders for the right reasons establishes them as identifiable people to whom one should give appropriate deference. If they are to "watch over souls" – which includes admonishing people – the people would be well served to have some degree of recognition that submitting to the godly and qualified authority of specific individuals is important. Otherwise, people are at risk of falling away in some manner when they are in disagreement with the leaders or when they become bored or dissatisfied with the leaders who teach them and watch over their souls.

Third, there is a universality to the concept that can apply to many authority relationships. Because the focus here is the Christian church, application will be limited to that sphere. Varying polities identify and empower leaders in different formal ways. Some churches have an episcopal structure or a single pastor. Others are led by a small group of leaders, and some involve the entire congregation in most decisions. It has been argued above that pastoral role authority is a unique form of role authority that applies only to certain leaders in the church. Each church must decide who these leaders are that possess this form of role authority. Nevertheless, the principle of the statement defended above can apply in some way to any form of role authority, irrespective of *de jure* polity.

Consider the case of a highly congregational church that is led by a group of elders and has three full-time pastors, one of which is the most experienced. The example will assume that none of these leaders has any legitimate authority (which is the *de jure*, legal authority granted by official church governing documents). In the example, the congregation is divided about a course of action. After significant wrangling, the congregation has reached an impasse. Appealing to the principle of role authority and submission discussed above, someone in the congregation suggests that the church defer to the decision of the small group of leaders. Responding to this principle, the church agrees to voluntarily submit to whatever decision these leaders collectively make. When the small group of leaders take up the issue, they are unable to come to an agreement. Again, in an appeal to the principle of role authority and submission, they decide to defer to whatever decision the three full-time pastors make. These three are unable to come to a unanimous decision, so the two more junior pastors defer to the more senior pastor and a decision is made.

All in the church embrace the decision. Those who disagree with the decision are satisfied because they understand that those who made the decision are accountable for the decision, and they trust that God is ultimately in control of the outcome. No doubt, considerable discussion occurred as the decision was made. In the end, however, it was a voluntary submission to role authority that enabled the church to move forward in peace. In this example, the leaders held no *de jure*, legitimate authority. Nevertheless, that does not mean the people did not have a moral obligation to submit; it has been argued that they did. The people in this case responded to that moral obligation and ultimately

submitted. In many cases, however, this does not happen. Thus, churches are advised to consider the degree of coercive power their leaders have to exercise their responsibilities.

Therefore, the fourth practical consideration is that churches should consider reinforcing this principle by ensuring that those leaders with pastoral authority also have access to some form of coercive power. *Coercive power* is a type of force exercised by one person to gain compliance from another who is willfully resisting compliance. The idea of coercing a person to act counter to her will need not imply some form of cruelty.[122] Consider the case of a Bible study teacher who begins to teach a doctrine that denies the deity of Christ. The teacher is asked not to teach that doctrine, but continues to teach it. A leader with role authority removes the teacher from the position of teaching the Bible study. In this case, the Bible study teacher was forced to do something against her will (i.e., to stop teaching the study). Irrespective of what the teacher might think, this is not an act of cruelty.

Coercive power may take several forms. It may take the form of the exercise of role authority. Ideally, role authority should be granted. That is, it is left to the follower to submit, according to the principles of submission described herein. Sometimes, however, the leader must exercise role authority. In such cases, the leader is essentially saying, "I am making this call because of the role I hold and you ought to follow me in this for the same reason." In such cases, the leader must have confidence in the responsibility and accountability of this role, and the "clear conscience" spoken of in Hebrews 13:18. The Apostle Paul exercised role authority when he warned the Corinthians: "What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Cor.

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[122] Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 45.

4:21). He must have assumed this exercise of role authority would compel the Corinthians to change their behavior, though they did not appear to be willing to do so.

Coercive power might also take the form of the formal, legal right of a leader (or leaders) to remove someone from a ministry or initiate a process of church discipline, i.e. the legitimate authority the leader(s) hold. Ultimately, coercive power involves an appeal to the sword of the civil government. For example, where a person is attempting to rob elderly church members of their retirement and refuses to leave the church, one might engage the civil government and solicit a restraining order. The precise nature of the legitimate authority and disciplinary procedures that might provide some degree of coercive power is beyond the scope of this paper. It is sufficient to say here that those churches who rely solely on the voluntarism of the congregation to submit to pastoral authority are likely setting up those who hold this authority for failure and frustration, not to mention the threat to the health of the church.

To sum up, the researcher has argued for a practical theology based upon the Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17 texts that is summed up in the statement: "Congregants have a moral obligation to submit to pastoral authority within certain parameters." When its elements are properly understood against these biblical texts, this statement provides a useful way to engage pastoral authority. The statement attempts to provide a clear alternative to discussions of leader-follower dynamics in the church that either deny the existence of authority or rely solely on the personal authority of the leader. It is hoped that this practical theology of authority can be integrated into a set of practical guidelines that congregants can employ to engage their leaders in constructive ways that offer blessing to all in the church and bring glory to God.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

It is argued in this paper that there is a dearth of literature that specifically probes lay concepts of and engagement with pastoral authority. The researcher's own search in databases yielded very little material that directly treated the issue. Also, several scholars who have closely studied laity and thought about the issue of authority affirmed that they were unaware of this type of study. Jackson Carroll, who has written extensively about pastoral authority, indicated that he did not know of any such studies about lay conceptualization and engagement with pastoral authority.[1] Nathan Kirkpatrick, Managing Director of the Alban Institute at the Duke Divinity School, likewise was unable to point to studies that dealt specifically with the issue of laity and clergy authority.[2] Glen Heinrichs wrote an article about the skillful use of various forms of a pastor's authority and power in the church. When he wrote the article in 1993 he urged researchers to delve more into this topic. The researcher recently asked Heinrichs if he was aware of whether any of the type of research that he called for had been conducted since the time he wrote his article, but he was not.[3] Diana DeWitt wrote her doctoral dissertation on the topic of teaching the church about the nature of pastoral authority. She informed the researcher that her explorations indicated that this was an understudied

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[1] Jackson Carrol, e-mail message to researcher, July 14, 2015.

[2] Nathan Kirkpatrick, e-mail message to researcher, May 20, 2015

[3] Glenn A. Heinrichs,. "Power and the Pulpit: A Look into the Diversity of Ministerial Power." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 21, no. 2 (1993, 1993): 149-57; Glenn Heinrichs, e-mail message to researcher, July 9, 2015.

topic. She remarked how many pastors and laity who used her training materials asked why the church was not doing more work in this area.[4] The researcher reached out to LifeWay Research, a more conservative evangelical source of church research, to ask whether they had conducted or were aware of any studies dealing with pastoral authority. They indicated they were not aware of any such studies.[5] The fact that these researchers were not aware of studies specifically addressing lay perceptions of pastoral authority does not mean such studies do not exist. These conversations, however, do seem to support the researcher's own challenges in locating this type of study. If nothing else, it appears reasonable to assert that the topic of laity interacting with pastoral authority is not a well-developed field of study.

This does not mean that there is no relevant literature to be discussed, however. In fact, the researcher found much literature that bears on the topic in some way. A review of a sampling of that literature is offered here. The literature surveyed below served several purposes. First, it helped to refine the researcher's thinking about the topic. Second, it suggests some areas that future researchers might consider as they explore related issues. Finally, it offers some critique of literature that might influence the way that pastoral authority is conceived and implemented in the church setting.

In order to better inform the reader about the relevance of each work mentioned in this review, the subchapters listed will support the following reasoning:

> Pastors have conflict with their congregations. The lack of respect for pastoral authority is likely to be a contributing factor in some of this conflict. Therefore, it is worth investigating.

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[4] Diana DeWitt, e-mail message to researcher, April 20-21, 2015; Diana DeWitt, "A Biblical Model for the Nurture, Support, And Respect of Pastoral Leadership."

[5] Kevin Walker of Lifeway Research, e-mail to researcher, May 7, 2015.

Current church conflict and pastoral leadership literature is not adequate to address the issue of respect for pastoral authority.

There is very little literature that teaches laity how to engage pastoral authority. There is, however, some Christian and secular foundation upon which future thinking can be constructed.

There is a diversity of influences that reflect and even contribute to various images, ideas, and impressions of pastoral authority.

It is hoped that this argument and the literature review based upon it will inform the reader about the relevance of this study and help to frame the context of the issue.

Literature Suggesting the Existence of the Problem

A first step to engaging this issue is to demonstrate its reality and its seriousness. If the issue is marginalized or minimized, it will not likely be addressed. In 2011 LifeWay research surveyed 1000 Protestant pastors and found that more than half of them felt that it was easy for them to get discouraged as pastors.[6] Thom Rainer, the President of LifeWay, has spent years in the area of church research. He wrote that his experience as a researcher has led him to conclude that conflict with the congregation is the number one cause of pastoral discouragement.[7] Marcus Tanner, Anisa Zvonkovic, and Michelle Tanner surveyed the existing literature on clergy health and on pastoral terminations in 2014. They observed that there is a difference between firing and forced termination. When a pastor is fired, it is assumed that he or she deserved to be fired for reasons that most observers would condone. A forced termination, however, involves unjustified negative pressure of some type. This could be a response to a formal or

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[6] Lifeway Research, "Protestant Pastors Views on Ministry: Survey of 1000 Pastors" (October 2010), accessed June 27, 2015, http://www.lifewayresearch.com/files/2011/10/LifeWay-Research-Protestant-Pastor-Views-on-Ministry.pdf.

[7] Thom Rainer, "Eight of the Most Significant Struggles Pastors Face" (March 1, 2014), accessed July 7, 2016, http://thomrainer.com/2014/03/eight-of-the-most-significant-struggles-pastors-face/.

informal demand to resign or a decision that a pastor makes due to continual conflict or attack by a person or group of people in the church. According to Tanner's team, current research suggests several common causes of forced terminations. Two of the most significant are conflict between pastor and congregation over "leadership style" and the "vision for the church." In other cases, the congregation believed that the pastor was "unfit" or "uncalled" to the office he or she held. Some forced terminations were the result of congregational politics or powerful people in the church exerting their influence against the pastor. The studies Tanner considered reported that 25 to 41 percent of pastors have experienced at least one forced termination in their lifetime.

Tanner's team used social media to attract pastors for their research. They reached several conclusions. First, forced terminations have considerable negative impacts on the health of pastors. Pastors who had experienced a forced termination showed significantly more struggle with depression, self-esteem, self-efficacy, burnout, and general health. Though the study could not prove causation, this correlation was clear. Second, research on clergy health tends to overlook the effects of forced terminations. Therefore, it is an area that academic research should take more seriously. To this end, Tanner's team created an instrument in an attempt to better assess the specific damage that involuntary terminations caused pastors.[8] Third, details about forced terminations are likely to be anecdotal, rather than statistical. Tanner and his colleagues found that pastors are reluctant to participate in studies about their terminations and most denominations do not track forced terminations. These factors make it difficult to obtain random samples that

[8] Marcus Tanner, Anisa Zvonkovic, and Michelle Tanner, "The Perceptions of Terminated Ministers Scale-Revised," *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 1 (Feb., 2013).

can be validly applied to a broader population. Finally, the team calls for the research community to make it a priority to locate and interview pastors who have been forcibly terminated in order to better understand their perspective about the cause of their termination and the precise ways in which it affected them.[9]

While Tanner's team freely admitted that many questions remain, it seems clear that a large number of pastors feel forced to leave their congregations due to conflict over issues that could have to do with questions about their authority. For example, disagreements over "leadership style" could involve varying perceptions about how a pastor should comport himself. On the other hand, "leadership style" could also have something to do with how laity perceive a pastor's exercise of authority. Carroll and Becky McMillan asked congregants of various denominations which of four leadership styles they preferred. Style one was highly authoritarian where the pastor made all decisions. Styles two and three increasingly included the laity in decision making in incremental degrees. The most highly congregational churches preferred "style four" where "lay leaders make most decisions and the pastor empowers them." Interestingly, there seemed to be an inconsistency between pastor and lay perceptions of leadership styles for most leadership style categories. In the case of leadership style four, 10.3 percent of the pastors surveyed believed they were practicing this leadership style, where only 3.7 percent of laity thought this was the case. Presumably, the remaining laity surveyed thought the pastor was practicing a leadership style that asserted a greater degree of authority. Since this survey question speaks about how decisions are made, one

[9] Marcus N. Tanner, Anisa M. Zvonkovic, and Charlie Adams, "Forced Termination of American Clergy: Its Effects and Connection to Negative Well-being," *Review of Religious Research* 54, no. 1 (March, 2012).

could restate the question as asking about the degree and nature of pastoral authority. It seems plausible then, to ask whether some conflict over "leadership style" involves differing perceptions and beliefs about pastoral authority. It is notable that leadership style four was also associated with a high level of conflict in the church.[10]

Though not necessarily the case, some of the other causes of forced terminations could likewise be traced to disagreements about the extent and nature of pastoral authority. Scott Barfoot, Bruce Winston, and Charles Bruce found that disagreement over the "vision" of the church was the second most common cause of tension that led to a forced termination (second only to "unrealistic expectations").[11] This type of disagreement could boil down to disagreements over whether the pastor has authority to be the primary driver of church vision. In some cases, laity expressed concern that the pastor was "not [genuinely] called" to a certain position. While this could legitimately be the case, another possibility is that a layperson simply does not think the pastor is making decisions in line with the will of God. Thus, in the eyes of the congregant, that pastor has lost any authority he had by virtue of a legitimizing call from God. Additionally, cases of "congregational politics" or "the maneuverings of a few powerful individuals" are fundamentally about conflict over whose authority should prevail in the church. It is important to clarify that the issues cited here are not necessarily solely about authority, but it seems plausible that questions of authority are a factor.

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[10] Jackson W. Carroll and Becky R. McMillan, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*, Pulpit and Pew Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2006), 135-40.

[11] Scott D. Barfoot, Bruce E. Winston and Charles Wickman, "Forced Pastoral Exits: An Exploratory Study" (Regent University: School of Leadership Studies, June 2005).

Menno Epp studied involuntary terminations among the Mennonite churches in Canada. This study is particularly interesting because the Mennonites are highly congregational in polity. In highly congregational polities, pastors are more likely to have to rely on personal forms of authority, since the legitimate authority of office and coercive power are much less available than in more pastor-led polities. Many of Epp's observations describe a church that is highly suspicious of authority, and this would seem to be at the root of some of the problems the Mennonite church faces. Epp understands the Mennonite pastoral model to be one of a "coach" who serves the whole team. Many in the Mennonite church prefer this model because they believe it essentially does away with authority and power. Epp is concerned, however, that the coach model is ultimately a power model also. In this case, the power is reversed such that "the congregation exercises lordship over the pastor." Epp observed that many of the forced terminations he studied were due to what people felt was the pastor's "personal incompetency." He noted, however, that in most of these cases this belief was only felt by a small number of those in the congregation. Epp expressed concern that the Mennonite emphasis on peace often resulted in the majority of the church being unwilling to disagree with the minority. Therefore, the pastor was frequently alone in facing his accusers.[12]

Some of the forced terminations were due to what some in the churches indicated was "interpersonal incompetency." Upon investigating these cases more carefully, however, Epp found that this charge was questionable. The Mennonite pacifist emphasis led many in the church, including the pastors, to condemn any demonstrations of anger, even when anger was warranted. Epp writes that pastors in the Mennonite tradition feel

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[12] Menno H. Epp, *The Pastor's Exit: The Dynamics of Involuntary Termination* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1984), 6-7.

pressure to use words like "frustration, disappointment, concern, or confusion to describe their feelings, but these are inadequate to describe the intensity of feelings." Thus, pastors learn to be "nice, good, emotionally strong, never flustered, patient, and kind." They see anger as among the "works of the flesh."[13] Consequently, pastors tended to withdraw from conflict, rather than risk a display of anger. When anger did manifest itself in some way, no matter how justified, the pastor displaying the anger was often judged harshly as disqualified for ministry.

Epp suggested that pastors in these circumstances frequently experienced stresses that led to considerable frustration. For example, elders would agree to a course of action in the board room, but then they would reverse themselves at the slightest pushback from congregants. This left the pastor to go it alone or reverse his position also. Furthermore, some congregants expressed concerns that the pastor "did not listen to them" or that he was not able to "disagree with them intellectually" while still being able to "support them emotionally." It is difficult to know who is at fault in such cases. But it seems plausible that the cause behind some of these observations could be a congregant simply not feeling that the pastor yielded to her wishes. Arguably, one factor that might be involved in such cases is the question of the degree and nature of the pastor's authority.[14] As a typical example, Epp describes one pastor who said he felt confused because his pacifism would not allow him to display anger, even when he was angry. In withholding his protest, however, he worried that he "gave away too much of his authority and power to someone." When a congregant violated him by disrespecting his authority anyway, he

[13] Epp, 62-63.

[14] Epp, 22-30.

found he had no recourse to take it back. In this case, the pastor meant that taking back his authority would involve "asserting force" through a "demonstration of firmness" that was open to charge of displaying anger. Feeling stuck in this trap, the pastor resigned.[15] This is very interesting considering Ronald Beebe's findings that pastors who utilized "avoiding" or "accommodating" conflict management styles were at higher levels of burnout than those using "competing" or "collaborating" conflict management styles.[16]

Epp observed that in the old Mennonite church, it was more widely accepted that the office of elder had the final word, even though the congregation was included in much decision making. But with the introduction of the office of pastor, this authority structure has become confusing. Often elders and congregations are not willing to give up power to a new pastor coming into the congregation who does not understand the history or culture of the church. Consequently, the pastor is given little credibility, especially when things are going badly. Pastors also feel a temptation to cede power to the strongest personalities. They retreat rather than fight, and then regret "giving their power away" to these persons.[17]

Ironically, Epp's recommendations to the Mennonite churches for the problem of forced terminations is telling. Despite his findings about the vulnerable place in which the pastors find themselves, he rejects the "professional model" of ministry which recognizes certain "special skills" of the pastor as worthy of a degree of respect. Rather, he simply calls for the congregation as a whole to retain authority, but not to "lord it over one

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[15] Epp, 32.

[16] Ronald Beebe, "Predicting Burnout, Conflict Management style, and Turnover Among Clergy," Journal of Career Assessment, 15(2), (2007): 257-275.

[17] Epp, 42-43.

another" – that includes not lording it over the pastor. Rather, among the congregation and between the pastor and congregation, all are to practice mutual submission. This prescription sounds noble, but it seems to leave all parties in the same state of confusion that led to many of Epp's observations, particularly in cases of significant disagreement or when certain people are behaving in incorrigibly self-centered ways.[18]

Epp recommends that congregations receive training in conflict resolution, but he cautions that strong congregational sentiments tend to give insufficient authority to people called in to mediate disputes. In fact, some of the pastors providing Epp with feedback expressed concern that a mediator would be unable to help the congregation get past their differences because his or her authority would not be recognized by a denomination whose people have such suspicion of authority. One respondent to Epp's research concluded, "I have often felt that our autonomy is our own worst enemy." It is interesting to note that Epp even sensed resistance from many in the denomination to the "directive approach" of his recommendations. He attributes this to the "current cautious, non-directive leadership styles" represented within his conference. He speculates that this response also has to do with reservations about the "authoritarian" leadership of the elder/bishop pattern in the conference's recent past. Whatever the reason for the response, it would seem that part of the issue has to do with disagreements about the nature and degree of pastoral authority. [19]

Speed Leas found that two-thirds of all forced terminations he studied took place within the first three years. Between 35-45 percent of the congregations he studied had

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[18] Epp, 67-68.

[19] Epp, 78-90.

pre-existing congregational conflict before the pastor (who ended up being terminated) arrived. Lees observed that only one out of 33 churches will fire a pastor within three years. If a church has previously fired a pastor, however, this ratio goes up to one in every 4.35 churches that will fire a pastor within three years. That does not mean the new pastor bears no responsibility for the forced termination, but it clearly suggests that something is wrong in the church which has nothing to do with the pastor.[20] Leas found that "poor interpersonal skills," "contentiousness and authoritarian behavior," and "conflict over values" were the most significant reasons stated for the firings. Most of the terminated pastors said they did not learn anything from their mistakes, suggesting they placed most of the blame on the congregation. Leas found, however, that these pastors thought they had a greater level of approval than they had. Leas also found that the congregation had misguided perceptions about the actual health of the church, who the factions were, and what was causing the problems. According to Leas, the project showed significant evidence that most of the congregations that experienced an involuntary termination were "stuck at the denial or defensive avoidance phase." He makes this claim because 83 percent of the congregations contacted refused to participate in the project. Also, most lay persons interviewed could not identify behavior on their part or on the part of others that contributed to the termination; they could only find fault with the pastor. Finally, the churches that did participate had done very little to identify problems within the congregation that should be addressed to avoid the same problem in the future.[21]

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[20] Speed Leas, *A Study of Involuntary Terminations in some Presbyterian, Episcopal, and United Church of Christ Congregations* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1980), 8-11.

[21] Leas, 10-23.

In his book *Musical Pulpits: Clergy and Laypersons Face the Issue of Forced Exits,* Rodney Crowell compared his own research with several others (including Leas' 1980 study). [22] He suggested that one can develop "guesstimates" about forced exit factors by averaging the finding of these studies. Crowell found that the top factor in forced exits was "Powerful or warring groups in the church," which was a factor in 68% of the cases. Congregational stress was the second most common factor in 43% of cases. Third and fourth were "Values conflict between members and the pastor" (27%) and "Poor interpersonal skills or passivity of the pastor" (24%). Crowell suggests that "the category of 'poor interpersonal skills or passivity of the pastor,' could be interpreted to mean that the pastor was fired for his inability to make two groups of bitter rivals coexist peacefully, so that his forced departure was merely a cathartic moment in an ongoing battle." [23]

Dean Hoge and Jaqueline Wenger studied pastoral terminations among five denominations: Presbyterian Church (USA), Assemblies of God, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Lutheran (Missouri Synod), and Episcopal. Among all five denominations, conflict was the number one reason pastors left the church. The authors noted that the conflict statistic was most pronounced for the Presbyterian churches they studied, and they speculated that this might be due to "the denomination's democratic approach to decision-making [causing] more internal conflict."[24] Of those pastors that left due to conflict, the majority said they lacked agreement with parishioners over the role of

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[22] Rodney J. Crowell, *Musical Pulpits: Clergy and Laypersons Face the Issue of Forced Exits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 65-66.

[23] Crowell, 65-66.

[24] Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger. *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 77.

a pastor or they felt stress due to challenges from the congregation.[25] According to the authors, the most notable thing about the conflicts that ultimately led to pastors' departures was the "everyday" nature of those conflicts. It was not generally major doctrinal issues that were at stake, but rather things like pastoral style, worship style, use of building space, allocation of finances, staff conflict, and so on. For example, one case study spoke of a consultant that noted the congregation had no common mission. Rather, everyone was pursuing their own agendas. In another case study, a small number of people had been silently resisting the changes a pastor was implementing for three years. This group had stopped giving and organized a small resistance. They finally admitted, "We want our old church back," and became increasingly disruptive at church meetings.[26] The authors found two recurrent themes in church conflicts they studied. First, churches that say they want to grow are unwilling to make the changes they need to grow. Second, if there is conflict in the church, the perception of the congregation is that it must be the pastor's fault.[27]

These studies represent only a sample of the research examining the reasons for poor pastoral morale and, specifically, conditions that result in a pastor leaving a church. They do suggest, however, that pastors and congregants suffer considerably as a result. The number of similar studies implies that the research community takes the issue seriously. The researcher argues, however, that conflict over the role of pastor, personal agendas among the congregants combined with a refusal to follow a pastor toward a unified goal, and a consistent pattern of casting blame on the pastor all suggest that

[25] Hoge and Wenger, 77-78.

[26] Hoge and Wenger, 84-87.

[27] Hoge and Wenger, 93-95.

questions about the nature and degree of pastoral authority are likely factors for these pastors' departures. The results generated from research categories such as "conflict with a pastor," "leadership style," "differences in vision," and "pastoral role" all invite congregants to explore these important issues. The researcher is concerned, however, that if the question of the nature and degree of pastoral authority is clearly not laid on the table for discussion, it will remain a blister on the athlete's heel that, if not treated, will continue to cripple the church.

Current Church Conflict and Pastoral Leadership Literature

When there is conflict in the church, people often refer to literature on church conflict and pastoral leadership for help. There is good reason for this, as there are many excellent resources that pastors can use to become better leaders and learn to navigate inevitable church conflict. In a potentially charged discussion about pastoral authority, it is important to acknowledge the valuable lessons this leadership literature can provide pastors. Pastors are called to lead generously and sacrificially and not abuse their authority. Pastors can gain legitimacy in the eyes of the church by surrounding themselves with a team who can share the burdens of leadership. Pastors can benefit greatly from lessons on wisely managing change in the church. In some cases, however, this literature is unable to effectively address problems caused by unhealthy engagement with pastoral authority.

For example, some of this leadership and conflict literature assumes the pastor has at least some degree of authority to work with, yet this is not always the case. In other instances, the literature sends a message to pastors that enduring painful disrespect is simply part of their calling, or that the way forward is for them to simply figure out how

to lead better. Both of these messages can seriously demoralize pastors. Furthermore, much leadership and conflict literature is insufficient for teaching congregants to engage pastoral authority. Learning to exercise authority well is not the same as learning to follow authority well. While there is certainly overlap between these disciplines,[28] there are also potentially competing principles that can lead to confusion. In instances where instruction on engaging pastoral authority is given, it is often part of a larger discussion and is not likely to receive the focus such a charged and challenging topic requires. This brief survey will offer some examples of such literature and show where and how it falls short as a resource to help people engage pastoral authority in a healthy manner.

One of the most popular approaches used to help leaders understanding the dynamics of church conflict today is Family Systems Theory (FST). Based upon the work of Murry Bowen, it was adapted for religious congregations by Edwin Friedman. In his classic work, *Generation to Generation*, Friedman asserts that clergy must learn to consider the dynamics of three families: those families within the church, the church as a whole, and his or her own family.[29] Each has similar dynamics, but they all affect one another. Thus, to really understand and manage these families, clergy must understand the interlinking of all three and develop the skills required to diffuse the anxiety that develops among them. The insights offered as Friedman and others apply FST to the church have been revolutionary to many leaders (including the researcher), but a

[28] See for example, Edwin P. Hollander, "The Essential Interdependence of Leadership and Followership," in *Current Directions in Psychological Science (Wiley-Blackwell)* 1, no. 2 (April 1, 1992): 71-75; Thomas Sy and Tara McCoy, "Being Both Leaders and Followers: Advancing a Model of Leader and Follower Role Switching," in Laurent Lapierre and Melissa K. Carsten, *Followership: What is it and Why do People Follow?*, 1st ed. (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014): 121-140; Susan D. Baker, Susan A. Stites-Doe, Christopher J. Mathis, and William E. Rosenbach, "The Fluid Nature of Follower and Leader Roles" in Lapierre and Carsten, 73-88.

[29] Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

discussion of the benefits of FST is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, the focus here is to highlight some inadequacies of FST for dealing with people who have little regard for a pastor's authority.

Some of Friedman's recommendations for dealing with conflict assume that the pastor has a certain degree of authority and power. For example, one of the five key concepts of FST is the *identified patient*. The idea is that the person actually manifesting signs of dysfunction is not the only "sick person" and is therefore not the only one to be treated. In some cases, that person is not involved at all in the treatment. Rather, when the system around that person is addressed, the person's symptoms are often ameliorated. Friedman calls the leader to change the structures of the system. This restructuring should help release the anxieties and tensions that are building among the congregation. It should also isolate the dysfunctional actor, so he has less effect on the other parts of the system. This approach can be effective, particularly when the identified patient is unwilling to work through the issues. It does, however, assume that the pastor has some ability to make changes to the system that are likely to address the problem. This requires some degree of authority.

Another FST concept is *homeostasis*. This is the idea that a system tends to a sort of equilibrium. If this equilibrium is disturbed, symptoms begin to emerge. The FST leader, therefore, investigates what the previous state of homeostasis was in order to better understand what was disturbed. While this technique can provide profound insight into a system's pathology, the way forward is less clear. According to homeostasis, systems will resist change. A skilled leader, therefore, will make every effort to

understand the anxieties that change will produce, and she will work to address those anxieties.

The FST call for a *self-differentiated* leader, however, suggests that there are times when some within the system will act out in negative ways. Self-differentiation refers to a person's ability to define himself as an individual apart from the controlling influence of others in the system, and yet still remain connected to the system. Bowen had theorized that an essential factor in a system's ability to change is the self-differentiation of key influencers within the system. This is especially critical for those perceived by others as affecting the change that engenders their anxiety. Thus, criticism will often be directed at the leader who is altering the system in some way, even if these alterations are intended to benefit those in the system. In the face of anxiety within the system that in some cases manifests itself as criticism of the leader, Friedman stresses the importance of the leader maintaining a *non-anxious presence*. This non-anxious presence must absorb the un-channeled anxiety within the system in order to keep the organism moving in a direction of health.[30]

In their book, *A Failure of Nerve*, Friedman, Margaret Treadwell, and Edward Beal elaborate on how a leader should lead in the midst of criticism. They warn that, as charitable as a leader's intentions may be, a misuse of *empathy* can undermine the leader's self-differentiated, non-anxious presence. Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal observe that the first people in a dispute to insist that the leader be more empathetic are those who feel the most powerless. Thus, in order to get their way, they accuse the leader of "not listening" or of being "insensitive" (i.e., not being properly empathetic). Friedman

[30] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 18-22.

and his co-writers assert that empathy is a luxury for those who do not have to make "tough" decisions, and warn leaders not to capitulate to the tyranny of the "over-sensitive." Furthermore, dysfunctional members of the system can be like cancer cells which can negatively affect the entire body. Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal insist that those cells must be isolated from the body, rather than allowed to poison it. A successful leader (i.e. a self-differentiated leader) cannot be led by the unhealthy, non-self-differentiated members of the system. Rather, the system must isolate those cells while the leader maintains a non-anxious presence and continues to move the system in the direction of health.[31]

Friedman's work provides exceptional insights into the dynamics of a church and the self-awareness and security required of a pastor. These skills may simply not be adequate in cases where there is an extreme disregard for the pastor's authority, however. FST calls for a leader to absorb the excess anxiety in the system, but everyone has a limit to the frustration they can endure. A reasonably skilled pastor can interpret this type of requirement as an implication of failure if he is unable to handle the stress of a highly dysfunctional environment. Realistically, there are instances where the will of a dysfunctional group overwhelms a pastor's non-anxious presence. The pastor must either restore homeostasis by giving in, or risk being run out. The call to isolate dysfunctional "cancer cells" assumes the existence of some form of church discipline, which is not always the case. Self-differentiation and non-anxious presence assumes the pastor can survive the hostility and has sufficient authority to make decisions that will positively affect the system. In a voluntarist organization like a church, this is not necessarily the

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[31] Edwin H. Friedman, Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 2007), 132-157.

case. In fact, Friedman writes that anxious systems are less likely to allow for differentiated leaders, while leaderless systems are more likely to be anxious.[32] This statement simultaneously highlights the importance of the leader to a healthy church, but also acknowledges the hostility a well differentiated leader will likely encounter in an unhealthy church. Perhaps the solution is a certain respect and yielding to the authority that would allow a pastor to lead the system to health.

While Friedman's work has formed the basis of much of the FST that has been applied to the church, other writers have offered their versions. Ronald Richardson applies FST in *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life*.[33] The main thrust of the book is to teach leaders to become "more fully themselves" and also learn to "manage themselves (not others)" within the congregation. He helpfully advises leaders that being a good church leader is more than just performing a set of job skills. Rather, it is understanding how to manage the complex emotional system that is the church. Richardson applies the principle of non-anxious presence in his recommendation for leaders. Good church leaders will reduce anxiety by managing their own anxiety. Good leaders are able to maintain their differentiation even when there is great anxiety. He emphasizes that this contagious calmness is effective only when the leader spends time with the congregation. Richardson stresses that pastors should "seek to understand" those that disagree with them. He points out that researchers often find they have a calming, therapeutic effect on those they interview, and believes that inquiring pastors can have a similar effect. Richardson admonishes pastors in

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[32] Friedman, *Generation*, 29

[33] Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

situations of disagreement to manage their emotions, not take things personally, and seek to understand.[34]

Nevertheless, as soundly as much of Richardson's advice applies to many instances in church leadership, one wonders how much a pastor should realistically be expected to endure. One is left with the impression that a calm pastor who maintains a non-anxious presence is sufficient to deal with conflict. Richardson also does not appear to recognize that the pastor might not be able to spend sufficient time with the entire congregation to impress this pastoral calmness upon them. Even if this is practiced well, it is possible that people who do not get their way might interpret the pastor's self-differentiation as arrogance or unconcern and become even more inflamed.

Furthermore, while Richardson's prescription of seeking to understand is a very important leadership skill, Friedman's writing would seem to warn the leader about the risk that seeking to understand can become the corrupted form of empathy he thinks can cripple a leader. Highly anxious people will gladly listen to someone who they think will validate their concerns or give them their way. If a pastor is to lead, it implies that the pastor might have to make decisions that not all with agree with. Those who refuse to yield to that pastor's authority, will continue to act out. No amount of seeking to understand will change this. Friedman seems to know this well, yet he assumes the pastor will be able to isolate those who behave poorly. Richardson seems to not even acknowledge the possibility. There is very little here that helps a leader deal with people who simply are not willing to yield to the pastor's authority but insist on getting their way.

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[34] Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, 172-181.

Peter Steinke's *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* acknowledges the existence of people who simply do not seem to respond to even the most skilled leadership.[35] But his counsel does not touch on issues of authority. Rather, it simply states that healthy congregations have the ability to deal with such people.[36] He points out that congregations that do not acknowledge and address their dysfunction will allow infection to fester such that it becomes exceedingly difficult to overcome. Healthy bodies have healthy communication with their leaders and value the direction their leaders provide.[37] Secrets and secret meetings are unhealthy. Therefore, leaders in the church who do not expose this sort of clandestine activity are effectively enabling it. He identifies dysfunctional people as being self-centered people who sacrifice others for their own purposes, and find scapegoats. They often disguise their maneuverings in the guise of righteousness. They are cunning, sly, and manipulative. He even says that an unhealthy church encourages and cooperates with this type of behavior.[38] Steinke has some excellent advice for pastors about what makes a healthy and unhealthy church. Much of his work is descriptive rather than prescriptive, however, and assumes some degree of church health within which the pastor can work. It is difficult to understand how even the most skilled pastor can come into a very unhealthy church and help it become a healthy system, if the church is not willing to grant that pastor a sufficient amount of authority with which to lead.

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[35] Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996).

[36] Steinke, 13.

[37] Steinke, 21-23.

[38] Steinke, 52-55.

Another approach to dealing with difficult people is captured in G. Lloyd Rediger's *Clergy Killers*.[39] Rediger is very sympathetic to the difficulties pastors face in dealing with dysfunctional people. He traces the cause of much of this destructive behavior to the following elements: a general distrust of authority figures in general, an increasing biblical illiteracy, parishioners who are frustrated because they want more responsibility in the church than they are qualified to hold, a culture of entitlement that expects to gain things with ease rather than hard work, and an ethic based upon consequences rather than on beliefs. He also expresses concern that an empowered but untrained laity has given rise to many problems in the church. All of these things added together can reduce a person's respect for a pastor's authority and instill in them a sense that the pastor is merely there to do their will.[40] Books like these can be reassuring to hurting clergy who feel that they have been the victims of cruelty within the congregation.

Rediger and several other abused pastors appeared in the movie "Betrayed: The Clergy Killer's DNA," produced by US Films.[41] The film stated that one of the main reasons for its production was to bring this phenomenon to the attention of the church. Those pastors interviewed in the movie described how they felt that few believed them when they relayed the things they experienced. In many instances, they felt that people strongly suggested that they must have done something to deserve the treatment they

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[39] G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack* (Louisville, KY: Westminster J. Knox Press, 1997).

[40] Rediger, , 20-28. For a similar example see Kenneth C. Haugk, and R. Scott Perry, *Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988).

[41] *Betrayed: The Clergy Killer's DNA*, DVD. Cheyenne, WY: US Films, 2012.

received, or that they were simply deficient as leaders. This alienation was one of the most painful aspects of the experience. Sadly, the movie leaves viewers in a bit of a surreal state, feeling as if the extreme cases described are difficult to apply to their own circumstances. Likewise, while Rediger would seem to have identified some important elements incenting certain people to abuse clergy, his prescriptions appear to boil down to informing pastors that they will likely meet some extremely malicious people in the course of their ministries. When they do they should have already made preparations and developed coping skills to engage such people because not many people will come to their aid.[42] There is little direction, however, about how to deal with people in the church who are not as dysfunctional as some of the extreme cases described, but who nevertheless seem to have difficulty engaging a pastor's authority in a healthy manner.

Arthur Paul Boers' *Never Call Them Jerks* is a helpful reminder that one cannot easily categorize misbehaving people as entirely pathological. Rather, such people are "opportunities for ministry."[43] As the title suggests, one should never give up on a congregant. While this is a good balance to the Clergy Killer approach, one wonders if Boers considers the time and focus that these dysfunctional people steal from others in the church. If pastors spend all of their time attempting to minister to such people, they may end up neglecting others in the church whose wheels are not so squeaky. Boers takes a family systems approach. He is a Mennonite and interestingly warns that one contributor to conflict in the church is a failure to address it head on due to misguided pacifist notions. Ironically, he seems very reluctant to give "too much power" to any one

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[42] Rediger, 124-36.

[43] Arthur P. Boers, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999).

person. The reader is left wondering how to derive any meaningful guidance from him regarding the engagement with pastoral authority.[44]

Another form of church conflict literature decidedly sidesteps secular theories (even if those theories have been adapted by the church), and attempts to take guidance more strictly and originally from biblical texts. An excellent example of this approach is Ken Sande's *The Peacemaker*.[45] Sande carefully derives a set of principles and practices from Scripture that are intended to help people in the church work through many forms of conflict. While the focus of the book is conflict of all types within the church and not specifically conflict between pastors and congregants, many of the principles could certainly be applied to this latter form. This classic book on biblical church reconciliation, however, only devotes a single page out of almost 300 pages to challenges to the authority of the pastor. What Sande does say about the issue is direct and undiluted. While he appropriately qualifies that pastors are not to abuse their authority, he is unapologetic about the expectations the Bible has about congregants respecting their leaders. He speaks of submitting to authority out of reverence for God and affirms that leaders are appointed by God and held accountable by God. He goes as far as saying that "God calls [congregants] to respect the positions of those in authority, even when their personalities leave much to be desired."[46] A single page on this subject is understandable, of course, because issues of pastoral authority are not the sole focus of Sande's book. This illustrates a broader concern, however. In cases where challenges respecting a

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[44] Boers, 19-24.

[45] Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004).

[46] Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker,* 123-24.

pastor's authority are one of the most significant factors causing conflict, reading this popular classic – as exceptional as it is for conflict resolution in general – will not likely address the issue sufficiently. A single page is easily overlooked or minimized.

A similarly excellent book in the same biblical conflict genre is Alfred Poirier's *The Peacemaking Pastor*.[47] While Poirier's focus is not respecting authority, he is realistic about the fact that conflict resolution is not always possible. Some people simply behave badly and will not be open to reason. In those cases, church discipline is essential. Poirier believes that the leaders in a healthy church should have the authority to deal charitably but firmly with misguided congregants.[48] He laments, however, that churches generally only assent to church discipline in principle, but are often reluctant to truly carry it out. If they were more willing to do so when required, incorrigible congregants would be less able to harm others in the congregation, including pastors.[49] As beneficial as this book is for leaders, however, its very title and focus suggest that it will not likely be read by laity struggling to respect a pastor's authority.

When pastors have conflict with church members, many advisors understandably appeal to leadership models. This is partly because the natural orientation of most people tends to be on leadership; very little focus is on the follower.[50] Dianna DeWitt writes that when she was struggling as a pastor with what she concluded was largely a lack of respect for pastoral authority, she "received many informal lectures on servant leadership

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[47] Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006).

[48] Poirier, 283.

[49] Poirier, 226.

[50] Robert Earl Kelley, *The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow, and Followers Who Lead Themselves* (1st ed. New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1992), 15-19.

and earning the respect of one's parishioners."[51] Servant leadership (SL), or some form of it, is likely to be brought into the discussion, as it is perhaps the most popular Christian paradigm for leadership today. This can be exceedingly helpful for helping leaders learn how to lead sacrificially, rather than oppressively. Robert Greenleaf, in the book from which servant leadership takes its name, critiqued the traditional forms of more authoritarian, hierarchical leadership. He believed that training young leaders in certain biblical leadership principles of sacrifice and servanthood would ultimately benefit society.[52] Many of his principles have been adopted into modern leadership literature and his work has spawned a scholarly discipline.

While the approach of servant leadership has important benefits to leadership in general, there are qualifications that are relevant to a discussion on exercising and engaging pastoral authority. First, in its Christian versions, SL tends to be based only upon a few key biblical texts. Robert Russell offers a theology of servant leadership and cites the following texts as foundational: Matthew 20:20-28 ("you shall not exercise authority as the Gentiles [by lording it over] … whoever would be great among you must be your servant"), Mark 10:35-45 (analogous to Luke 20), the servant songs of Isaiah, Luke 22:25-30 (similar to Luke 20), and John 13:1-17 (the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet).[53] Limiting an approach to biblical leadership to the "servant leader" texts runs the risk of overlooking scriptures that call for a godly stewarding of authority. This

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[51] Diana DeWitt, "A Biblical Model," 87-88.

[52] Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Applied Studies, 1973), 26.

[53] Robert Russell, "A Practical Theology of Servant Leadership," (Servant Leadership Research Roundtable. August 2003).

one-sided emphasis finds its way into mainstream church thinking, as demonstrated in the following excerpt from a theological statement of the Evangelical Covenant Church:

> Jesus … taught and practiced servant leadership and the empowerment of others. According to Jesus, *leadership is about servanthood, not authority* (italics mine). Passages in the Gospels such as Luke 22:24-30 and John 13:13-17 record Jesus' teaching on this subject and show that Jesus ushered in a paradigm that was counter to the existing culture of hierarchical systems and authority. The remainder of the New Testament continues this teaching of servant leadership, emphasizing that spiritual gifts are given to serve others and build the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11- 16; Philippians 2:3-11; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 5:2-3).[54]

Tim Laniak, who wrote a biblical theology of pastoral leadership, expresses concerns that this exclusive separation of servanthood and authority is a false and unbiblical dichotomy. Laniak illustrates his concern by citing a speaker he heard at a conference who admonished pastors to "get back to biblical principles of leadership" and to "put down the scepter and pick up the staff." In this declaration, the speaker called for pastors to set aside the "kingly" functions of exercising power and authority and focus exclusively upon the "serving" elements of pastoral leadership.[55] In response, Laniak argues that "one of the fundamental tensions in biblical leadership is the dynamic convergence of authority and service." He continues:

> The great leadership metaphors of the Bible—servant, steward, shepherd, and son—promote a sense of responsibility to care for God's people. This delegated responsibility necessarily involves the appropriate exercise of decision-making power. To lead a community—whether a church or family—requires love *and* discipline, compassion *and* justice, service *and* authority. While service

[54] Evangelical Covenant Church, "Called and Gifted: A Reaffirmation of the Biblical Basis for the Full Participation of Women in the Ministries of the Church" (April 2010), 7, accessed August 2, 2015, http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/04/Called-and-Gifted-booklet-2.10.pdf.

[55] Timothy S. Laniak, "Biblical Foundations for Leadership" (paper presented at conference of Center for the Development of Evangelical Leadership, September 10, 1998.

> can be expressed without titles and rank, authority requires clear lines of reporting and accountability.[56]

Laniak is not attempting to discard the concepts of servant leadership. He clarifies, "I'm thrilled to hear young Christian leaders aspire to be 'servant leaders.'" He is wary, however, "that the [servant leader] label does not exhaust for them the meaning of biblical leadership or somehow excuse them from the difficult, thankless work of exercising authority."[57]

Servant leadership is introduced here because its concepts are so frequently appealed to in matters of church conflict. The goal is not at all to dismiss it – it offers tremendous benefit and balance to those prone to authoritarian forms of leadership. Rather, the point is simply to identify a potential problem of relying on it too heavily in cases where a significant component of the problem has to do with congregants who are exceedingly resistant to a pastor's authority. In such cases, a pastor who is reasonably practicing SL principles and still experiencing difficulty will likely be frustrated and confused by further appeals to SL. The pastor would benefit from guidance in balancing servant leadership principles with the stewarding of authority. It may be that continuing to tie up resources with a disgruntled congregant takes away focus from others. It may also be that continually exploring one's own heart for signs of "lording it over" will exhaust and cripple a pastor's decision making capabilities. Furthermore, where servant leadership is a governing principle in conflict management, there is real risk that congregants who struggle with pastoral authority will co-opt the principles of servant leadership to use against the pastor. Congregants struggling to constructively engage pastoral authority could perhaps use more teaching about the responsibilities they have to

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[56] Timothy S. Laniak, "What is Servant Leadership?" (from "Shepherd 2 Shepherd" e-newsletter, July 19, 2012).

[57] Laniak, "What is Servant Leadership?"

respect and honor those in authority and less focus on notions that appear to minimize the valid authority held by those in leadership positions.

Literature on How to Be a Good Follower in the Church

The previous section showed some of the limitations of the literature that is often appealed to during conflict between pastors and congregants. Unfortunately, there is not much literature that teaches laity how to biblically and skillfully engage pastoral authority in a healthy manner. There is, however, some Christian and secular foundation upon which future thinking can be constructed.

Secular Followership Literature

Secular literature is far ahead of Christian literature in this regard, so it seems appropriate for the discussion to begin there. In 1992, Robert Kelley wrote *The Power of Followership* and launched a research movement that has come to be known as "Followership."[58] Kelly was concerned that historical and organizational literature has focused mainly on leaders. The "great man theory" that originated with Thomas Carlyle has created myths that no leader can fulfill. At the same time, it has greatly devalued followers.[59] When Kelley began his work, there were no scientifically validated instruments that measured followership – only leadership. His approach, therefore, was to ask people to identify who they thought were the most exemplary followers in their organizations. He then interviewed those people in order to identify common characteristics.[60]

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[58] Robert Earl Kelley, *The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow, and Followers Who Lead Themselves* (1st ed. New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1992).

[59] Kelley, *The Power of Followership*, 15-19, 35.

[60] Kelley, *The Power of Followership*, 92-94.

Kelley mapped out a model of followership that included paths to followership and followership styles. The path to followership referred in some sense to a follower's primary motivations for following. Four key factors shaped one's path to followership: a means to express self, a means to transform self, the relationship with the leader, and the advancement of personal goals. Depending on how these factors combined, Kelley identified the following paths: dreamer, apprentice, disciple, mentee, comrade, loyalist, or lifeway. Kelley appears to value the path of 'lifeway' over the others. This path is characterized by *enoughness* (i.e., these people are servants at heart and not interested in leadership positions). If they do become leaders, it is because others elevated them to that position. Kelley compares this to Greenleaf's servant leadership.[61]

Kelley identified five followership styles. His model is a square formed into four quadrants by a horizontal and vertical axis. The vertical axis maps the follower's thought process – independent, critical thinking on top; dependent, uncritical thinking at bottom. The horizontal axis maps engagement style and how willingly they accept responsibility – passive on the left; active on the right. This yields five followership styles: the four quadrants and the center. The *exemplary* style is the upper right quadrant representing independent thinking and active engagement. These followers are respectful, contributing, engaged, and courageous. This is Kelley's ideal for a follower. The *alienated* follower is the upper left quadrant representing independent thinking and low engagement. These followers are cynical and tend to rebel against authority. The *conformist* follower is in the lower right quadrant representing a lack of independent thinking but an active engagement. These followers tend to be fearful of too much

[61] Kelley, *The Power of Followership*, 51.

freedom. The *passive* follower is the lower left quadrant representing a lack of independent thinking and low engagement. These followers tend to be lazy and disengaged and only do what they are told when they are told. Finally, the *pragmatist* sits in the middle of the square and slides into whichever style seems most appropriate. Kelley describes this follower as a survivor – not necessarily a good thing.[62]

Kelley spends a good part of his book describing an exemplary follower. Exemplary followers are fully engaged whether they are in a following capacity or in a leadership capacity. This is important because Kelly point out that some people only engage their energy when leading. Ideal followers work cooperatively with the leader, rather than in an adversarial manner. They understand the goals of the leader. When they disagree with the leader, they do not posture in front of others, but rather discuss their concerns respectfully with the leader in private. They try to avoid disagreement with the leader at bad times (e.g., during a crisis or deadline). They make trust deposits with the leader by proving that the leader can trust them. They do not engage with the leader when potentially blinded by anger. The leader values their input, knowing they are willing to disagree with him but also yield if necessary.[63]

Melissa K. Carsten, Peter Harms, and Mary Uhl-Bien studied the images of followers as depicted in history. The images are generally negative, portraying followers as blindly obeying. They offer the examples of Feudal Japan, Nazi Germany, and the Jim Jones cult of the People's Temple.[64] They write that academic treatments of followership

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[62] Kelley, *The Power of Followership*, 96-97.

[63] Kelley, *The Power of Followership*, 160-64.

[64] Melissa K. Carsten, Peter Harms, and Mary Uhl-Bien, "Exploring historical Perspectives of Followership: The Need for an Expanded View of Followers and the Follower Role" in Laurent Lapierre

have fallen into three perspectives: evolutionary, sociological, and psychological. The *evolutionary perspective* suggests that people who are more intelligent, who take initiative, and who better solve problems tend to become leaders – all others remain followers. Carsten's concern is that this perspective frames the discussion around what leaders can do and what followers cannot do. The *sociological perspective* cast organizational hierarchy as a zero-sum game. Therefore, leaders and followers were necessarily set against one another. This overlooked the potential for leaders and followers to mutually benefit one another. The *psychological perspective* grew out of the Great Man theories of Thomas Carlyle and William James. The focus was on inherent leadership traits characteristic of leaders. This perspective tended to imply that followers had none of the important traits that the leaders had. Carsten offers a counter to these negative portrayals of followers by redefining following as "not a deficient characteristic, but rather a different kind of role, and one that is critical to the effective performance of leadership."

The term *role orientation* refers to the "beliefs one holds about the responsibilities, activities, and behaviors that are important to the role of followers, how broadly one perceives the role, and one's beliefs about what it takes to be effective while working with leaders."[65] Carsten identifies three follower role orientations. The first is the *passive follower*. This is the historical view that followers are passive, deferent, and obedient. Research has shown that many still hold this view. Followers holding this view do not necessarily like to be referred to as followers, since they believe the term has a

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and Melissa K. Carsten, *Followership: What is it and Why do People Follow?*, 1st ed. (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014), 5-8.

[65] Carsten et al., "Exploring historical Perspectives," 10-15.

negative connotation. Some leaders who prefer autocratic leadership styles, however, see this type of follower as "easy to work with." The second type is the *anti-authoritarian follower*. This type of follower sees the leader as an adversary and tends to passively resist the leader's authority. The third type is the *pro-active follower*. This is similar to Kelley's exemplary follower who sees his or her role as partnering with the leader to identify and solve problems for the good of the group. Though Carsten's team favors this model, they are concerned that there is insufficient research to determine whether this type of followership is the most beneficial type for leaders and for the group. They also say that being a pro-active and engaged follower is beneficial to the follower as well because it is the best way for the follower to learn from the leader.[66]

Deanna De Zilwa describes a form of followership she calls *authentic followership*. This is very much like Carsten's pro-active follower and Kelley's exemplary follower. She recognizes, however, that varying concepts of *power distance* in different cultures could impact the potential and preference for authentic followership. In cultures with high power distance, workers are less likely to enact authentic followership. The higher the level of the follower's education, however, the more likely the worker will pursue authentic followership.[67]

Micha Popper examines why followers follow leaders. He makes an important distinction between the dynamics involved in following leaders "at a distance" and those who are "close and every day." He identifies three dynamics that attract followers where the leader is distant. *Psychoanalytic* dynamic is where followers see a leader as a

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[66] Carsten et al., "Exploring historical Perspectives," 15-20.

[67] Deanna de Zilwa, "A New Conceptual Framework for Authentic Followership" in Laurent Lapierre and Melissa K. Carsten, *Followership: What is it and Why do People Follow?*, 1st ed. (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014), 67.

protective figure and are thus drawn to the leader because he or she engenders a sense of security. *Cognitive-psychological* dynamic is where the follower sees the leader as a simple explanation for the complex circumstances in which they find themselves. Finally, *social-psychological* dynamic is where the leader serves as a sort of figurehead that provides meaning for the follower's life. The dynamics change, however, when the leader is closer to the follower and exposed to him or her in everyday life. In these cases, the reasons followers follow has more to do with daily behavior and the kinds of results generated by their leadership. Popper is concerned that there is little research on the psychology of followership. He believes that further work here could help followers be more aware of the reasons they follow certain leaders and not others.[68]

Popper's observations could be helpful for understanding some dynamics regarding followership in the church. In certain cases, congregants might be more willing to embrace a distant, popular preacher, but less impressed by their close, more ordinary preacher. Perhaps, some people prefer to keep their pastors more distant. This may be because congregants desire to put pastors on a pedestal in order to see them as providers of the security they desire (*psychoanalytic)*. Or, perhaps congregants want their pastors to serve as mascots who embody their religious activity (*social-psychological)*. It may also yield insights about why the pastor, in some cases, can be blamed for things going wrong in the church (*cognitive-psychological).*

Kimberly S. Jaussi and Amy E. Randel emphasize the importance of organizations implementing training designed to develop followers. This training would help them strike the needed balance between engaged followers who are willing to

[68] Micha Popper, "Why Do People Follow?" in Laurent Lapierre and Melissa K. Carsten. *Followership: What is it and Why Do People Follow?* (1st ed. Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014), 109-120.

disagree constructively, while at the same time understanding that a certain degree of deference to the leader is critical for the leader's morale and the well-being of the firm.[69] Several skills and insights could equip followers to follow better. Susan D. Baker, Susan A. Stites-Doe, Christopher J. Mathis, and William E. Rosenbach describe the responsibility and benefit of followers learning to take initiative to build trust with leaders. When this happens, the relationship between leader and follower is strengthened. Followers take this initiative by being "reliable, discreet, and loyal."[70]

Laurent Lapierre uses a definition of followership as "deferring to the directives, decisions, or desires of another, thereby giving another higher status and legitimacy in determining the course of events." He also observes that the quality of a subordinate's followership is not merely a result of the leader's ability. Rather, Lapierre recognizes that the follower actually impacts the leader's motivation and capacity to lead well. These are important insights for followers to understand. In fact, Lapierre cites research that shows how healthy followership enhances a manager's confidence and ability to make difficult decisions or set inspiring goals, to make the best possible decisions (or at least avoid making costly ones), and actually engage with their subordinates for their benefit in ways characteristic of transformational leadership.[71] The parallels between these research findings and the truths of Hebrews 13:17 are striking.

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[69] Kimberly S. Jaussi and Amy E. Randel, "Leading to Develop Truly Effective Followers" in Laurent Lapierre and Melissa K. Carsten, *Followership: What is it and Why do People Follow?*, 1st ed. (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014) 143-44.

[70] Susan D. Baker, Susan A. Stites-Doe, Christopher J. Mathis, and William E. Rosenbach, "The Fluid Nature of Follower and Leader Roles" in Laurent Lapierre and Melissa K. Carsten, *Followership: What is it and Why do People Follow?*, 1st ed. (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014), 84.

[71] Laurent M. Lapierre, "Why and How Should Subordinates Follow Their Managers" in Laurent Lapierre and Melissa K. Carsten in *Followership: What is it and Why do People Follow?*, 1st ed. (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2014), 158-59.

Lapierre also identifies various situations in which different forms of passive and active followership might be preferable. Where the follower has significant expertise to offer regarding a decision, a pro-active followership style would benefit the leader. Where the follower's expertise is minimal, a more passive approach might avoid confusing the leader, since research shows that leaders are often influenced by trusted subordinates. In cases where the leader has considerable trust for the subordinate, a more pro-active followership style is preferred. Where there is little trust, a passive approach may be better. Where there is sufficient time for the leader to make a decision, a pro-active followership style is helpful. If the leader has little time to make the decision, a follower's pro-active engagement might harmfully distract the leader. Finally, where a decision has already been made with which a follower disagrees, the follower should determine how costly and possible it would be for the leader to reverse the decision. In cases where the cost of changing the decision is too high, a passive followership style might be better. A pro-active expression of concern about the decision may only discourage the leader, impinge upon her confidence, or even undermine trust in the follower for not having brought the concerns when there was still time to change course.[72] Solid followership training could help develop these skills.

Secular followership literature recognizes that if one is going to teach followers to engage well with authority, it is critical that those followers also have guidance on navigating circumstances when the authority appears to be doing something unethical. Several followership scholars have engaged this concern. Kelley calls for training materials to be developed that will help followers become what he calls "courageous

[72] Lapierre, "Why and How Should Subordinates Follow," 166.

followers." These are followers who "need to learn how to blow the whistle effectively, how to combat 'group think,' how to avoid the dispersion of responsibility so often found in groups, and how advance institutional integrity."[73]

Thomas Blass explores lessons from Milgram's experiments on obedience. One of the horrifying observations of these experiments was an apparent confirmation of what Hannah Arendt called "the banality of evil." This referred to the way evil was perpetrated by seemingly normal, moral people under what they perceived to be fairly normal circumstances. Milgram observed two basic internal changes in a follower that led them to cross moral boundaries and engage in what he called *destructive obedience*. The first was accepting the authority's definition of reality. It was, therefore, critical for the follower to maintain the ability to think independently. The second internal change was a shift in responsibility from the follower to the leader. When this happened, the follower felt absolved of responsibility. Blass identifies an important lesson from Milgram as to how much the specifics of an immediate circumstance can override a person's normal personality. Milgram observed hopefully, however, that the dynamic of groups had some additional characteristics. When even one peer resisted the authority calling them to engage in destructive obedience, the vast majority joined in the resistance.[74]

It is interesting to note that Milgram had a desire to investigate the possibility of using benevolent authority to engender *constructive obedience*. This would be when a

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[73] Robert Kelley, "Rethinking Followership" in Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 15.

[74] Thomas Blass, "What Can Milgrim's Obedience Experiments Contribute to Our Understanding of Followership?" in Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 199-204.

follower obeys an authority in doing something that is outside of their normal scope of activity, but that is nevertheless highly beneficial to others. Blass speculates that leaders that know they possess considerable authority can use that authority to call an organization on to things that will greatly benefit society.[75] Fred Alford, however, cautions that the nature of the contemporary workplace undermines individual morality. The result is that whistleblowers, assuming their cry is legitimate, tend to be ostracized and demonized. This creates very little incentive to act out of one's individual morality. Nevertheless, Alford refers to the willingness to be a whistleblower as "responsible followership."[76]

Christian Followership Literature

The researcher was only able to find a couple of training resources that help Christians become better followers. Thabiti Anyabwile's *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* offers ten marks of a healthy church member.[77] Several of these chapters instruct congregants how to follow well. Anyabwile writes that healthy church members are committed members of the church. They recognize that pastors are responsible for their spiritual well-being. They make themselves identifiable to pastors by formally joining the church. They do not leave the church for trivial reasons, but do everything they can to remain and work through times of difficulty. A healthy congregant is also a humble follower. Anyabwile writes:

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[75] Blass, "Milgrim's Obedience Experiments," 207-8.

[76] C. Fred Alford, "Whistleblowing as Responsible Followership" in Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 237.

[77] Thabiti Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), Kindle e-book.

> The health of a local church may ride exclusively on the membership's response to the church's leadership. How the congregation receives or rejects its leaders has a direct effect on the possibilities of faithful ministry and church health. Does a congregation appreciate and accept sound preaching? Will its members trust and follow a leader in difficult or unclear situations? Do they rally behind or tear apart the leadership when plans and ideas fail?

Anyabwile calls for congregants to "honor the elders" by caring for their physical and financial needs and protecting their reputations. Congregants should "show open-hearted love to the leaders" by displaying an intimate affection for them, rather than a distant and formal salute. And congregants should "be teachable." Teaching is one of the primary tasks of pastors. They are called to teach with patience and a gentle spirit. Anyabwile cautions congregants not to mistake this meekness for weakness and consequently take advantage of this instruction to pastors. Rather, citing Hebrews 13:17, Anyabwile asserts that the Bible clearly calls congregants to "obey and submit to her or his leaders" (Anyabwile's words). This is makes the leaders' work a joy and advances the welfare of the entire church.[78]

Diana DeWitt wrote a self-published Bible study aimed at helping congregants successfully engage with pastoral authority. The study is based upon her doctoral dissertation. Her dissertation project involved the administration of her study to 30 pastors and laity. These subjects were unanimous in finding that the study was helpful and important for helping congregants and pastors reflect on the issue of pastoral authority. The study begins by helping congregants better understand some of the stresses of pastoral ministry and how they can help to encourage pastors when pastors face unjustified criticism. It discusses the consequences of Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16 and divisiveness in Titus 3. Dewitt draws attention to the "clergy killer phenomenon"

[78] Anyabwile.

as something that is real but often denied in the church. She explains the nature of the call to ministry as validating a pastor's authority and also inspiring a sense of awe and responsibility among pastors. She walks through biblical teaching on authority in general, as found in Romans 13, and she cites Hebrews 13:17 to teach how helping pastors lead with joy is beneficial to the church. She describes the importance of church unity, conflict in the church, and argues for the need for strong leadership to help the church overcome the corporate wounds that lead to dysfunction and distraction from its mission. She encourages congregants to get outside of themselves and focus on others and points out that this refocusing will help them weather change more successfully. She also suggests ways in which to disagree respectfully with a pastor and also how the church should engage a pastor who needs to be disciplined. Congregants must also know when to oppose abusive authority: DeWitt cites the example of Meshach, Shadrach, Abednego, and Daniel who obeyed an oppressive leader, except when it obeying that leader would cause them to disobey the Lord. Finally, DeWitt offers some practical ways in which congregants can support their pastors.[79] DeWitt's unapologetic and comprehensive approach to exploring pastoral authority is a courageous step forward into these fairly uncharted waters.

Secular followership literature is far ahead of Christian followership studies, and there is much that Christians can learn from it. Nevertheless, it is important for the church to develop its own thread of followership thinking that is grounded in Scripture. Though there is an ethical component to secular followership literature, it is mainly pragmatic in nature and focused on consequences and results. This is understandable, as its moral

[79] Diana DeWitt, *The Authority of Love: Reclaiming Spiritual Authority in the Church Today* (Self Published Book, 2013).

foundations are not nearly as salient as what they are for a Christian perspective that grounds its theorizing ultimately in Scripture. The development of Christian followership literature must also include a theology of authority.

Theological and Philosophical Thinking about Authority

There has been some discussion of authority in the Christian realm. Bernard Ramm wrote *The Pattern of Authority* in which he defined authority as the "right or power to command action or compliance, or to determine belief or custom, expecting obedience from those under authority, and in turn giving responsible account for the claim to right or power." Ramm delineates six forms of authority. *Imperial authority* is power possessed by people based upon their holding a superior position, despite whether the position is obtained by inheritance, election, force, or custom. *Delegated authority* refers to the authority given a person by one who holds imperial authority. *Stipulated authority* is authority given by some type of social convention like a governing constitution or a set of by-laws. *Veracious authority* is authority that comes from possession of truth or that directs one toward truth. *Functional authority* is similar to veracious authority, but it is used provisionally until the one accepting the authority can truly recognize veracious authority. Ramm uses the example of a disciple placing himself under the authority of a teacher, even though it is not yet clear to the disciple that the teacher's directives are veracious. Finally, the *authority of custom* is authority derived from social conventions, the origin of which may or may not be known. [80] While Ramm's insights can be applied to the discussion of pastoral authority, his main objective is to use

[80] Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing, Co., 1957), 10-13.

this model of authority to justify the authority of the Bible, so there is little discussion of congregants and leaders in a local church.

Jackson Carroll offered a very developed theology of leadership authority in his work, *As One with Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry,* where he constructed an argument that led to what he labels *reflective leadership*. Carroll acknowledges that a lack of understanding and respect for pastoral authority is the source of much clergy stress and burnout.[81] While this book is aimed primarily at leaders thinking about their authority, it is helpful for laying out some key issues and models for the discussion of pastoral authority. First, Carroll makes a distinction between power and authority. Power involves the use of coercion or force that makes others act against their will. Authority is granted voluntarily by those under it, even though the one under authority might not agree with the authority.[82] Carroll makes a distinction between *ultimate* and *penultimate* bases of authority. The church's convictions about God and God's power is the ultimate base of any clergy authority. This implies that people in the church have shared convictions about God's existence and that His purposes can be known. Many people derive this shared conviction from the authority of an infallible Scripture (or an infallible teaching office). Carroll cautions, however, that these things are less accepted these days as completely authoritative. He goes further to say that the certainty of the Scripture's authority has been eroded by historical-critical scholarship and also by "our growing awareness of the historicity and relativity of all knowledge, including our knowledge of

[81] Jackson W. Carroll, *As One with Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 5-6.

[82] Carroll, *Authority*, 27.

God." This critical view of Scripture and consideration of post-modern epistemology impacts many of Carroll's conclusions.[83]

While ultimate sources of authority serve as foundation for all other forms of authority, penultimate forms are generally the most obvious bases to which people respond. The penultimate bases are *representing the sacred* and *knowledge* (or *expertise*). Representing the sacred has to do with some type of inherent respect for the sacred. The Catholic (or *priestly* version) has to do with the pastoral office itself and formal ordination to that office, as often represented by the collar that is worn by clerics. The Evangelical (or *pietistic* version) has to do with a pastor's perceived closeness to God, such as a calling from God or a sense that the pastor hears from God. Carroll clarifies that, in practice, both of these are often merged to some degree. The other penultimate base of knowledge has to do with special training and education the pastor has received.

These penultimate bases combine with two others, *authority of office* and *personal authority*, to form a matrix that describes four final shapes that the pastor's authority takes. Authority of office refers to the nature of the clergy's official role and authority as formally granted by the institution. Personal authority is based primarily on trust – that is, the idea that the clergy is worthy of being granted authority. The authority of pastors that are perceived as representing the sacred and holding an office with official authority takes a *sacramental* or *priestly* shape. The authority of those that are perceived as representing the sacred and having significant personal authority takes shape of a *personal piety* or *spirituality*. The authority of pastors that are perceived as having special expertise and holding an office with official authority takes the shape of having a

[83] Carroll, *Authority*, 33-35.

certified competence. The authority of those that are perceived as having special expertise and having significant personal authority takes shape of a *demonstrated competence*.[84]

Carroll writes that the official position a pastor is given by a certain form of polity matters less and less as the church moves into the modern era. He calls this the trend toward *de facto congregationalism* and *voluntarism*. Therefore, contemporary pastors must increasingly rely on the personal respect and trust that parishioners give them.[85] Furthermore, Carroll argues that symmetrical leadership is most biblical, based upon Jesus' example of servant leadership modeled in John 13:1-6 and Paul's organic image of the church as the body of Christ described in 1 Corinthians 12. He says, these Scriptures reflect a *non-hierarchical, symmetrical perspective*.[86] He nevertheless insists that symmetrical relationships are not incompatible with "strong leadership" but then warns against "dictatorial" or "paternalistic" leadership.[87] These terms are confusing, however, and leave the reader wondering when pastors have truly overstepped their bounds.

Carroll concludes that the pastor's role is to lead the congregation to discover the vision and direction that is right for their environment and group. He acknowledges that those with an "inerrantist" view of Scripture will not be comfortable with the uncertainty of such practice.[88] His argument culminates in his definition of reflective leadership as "the capacity, in the midst of the practice of ministry, to lead the church in reflecting and

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[84] Carroll, *Authority*, 36-50.

[85] Carroll, *Authority*, 51-52.

[86] Carroll, *Authority*, 70.

[87] Carroll, *Authority*, 87-90.

[88] Carroll, *Authority*, 123-25.

acting in ways that are both faithful to the gospel and also appropriate to the context and situation."[89]

While Carroll's helpful discussion emanates from a slightly more liberal philosophical and theological perspective, Greg Bolich writes from a decidedly conservative, evangelical point of view.[90] Bolich offers a theology of authority. While his main focus is a Christian perspective on authority in general, he does specifically discuss pastoral authority. Bolich argues that authority is grounded in Jesus who is the embodied Word of God and also in the Holy Scriptures which is the inspired Word of God. Thus, the Word encompasses Christ, the Scripture, and, by extension, the preaching of the Church.[91] As such, the Church and the Word are inextricably bound together. The church's authority is grounded in the Scripture. The church has no right to create new revelation that is unbound from the revelation of Scripture.[92] Therefore, the church is only obligated to listen to pastors when what they speak is consistent with the Word of God and the Gospel. For these reasons, Bolich cites Luther's understanding of *agape submission*. This is the idea that the exercise of authority and obeying any human authority must be begin with submission to the Word of God. The implication is that if clergy and congregation are all submitted to the Word, they will lead and follow in agape love.[93] This means that the sermon holds a key place in church government. The pastor must faithfully proclaim the Word of God. The people must also take responsibility for

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[89] Carroll, *Authority*, 118.

[90] Gregory G. Bolich, *Authority and the Church* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 6.

[91] Bolich, 12.

[92] Bolich, 33.

[93] Bolich, 106.

their role in proclamation by actively engaging the sermon. Therefore, they must first scrutinize the sermon (along with the other two forms of the Word, Jesus and the Scripture), then obey it and put it into practice.[94]

Bolich calls for *charismatic influence* as was practiced in the early church where people followed leaders because of the way they live their lives (e.g., Heb 13:7).[95] In fact, Bolich exclaims that distinctions among believers as a result of office holding is "false and damnable." Pastors are not more valuable in the eyes of God than laymen, rather they serve laity through their office.[96] All believers have received spiritual gifts that they are to use in the church. The spiritual gifts of being a pastor leads to the holding of the office and not the reverse.[97] Bolich concludes that Scripture calls the Christian leader in the church to give aid to the church according the gifts of leadership God has given him, to guide and equip people through the proclamation of the Word, to put persons above tasks, to lead out of submission to God and His Word, and to protect the church.[98] Bolich gives a greater place to Scripture than Carroll does. He appropriately calls for Scripture to be the ultimate appellate authority by which leadership instruction and directive are to be evaluated. Nevertheless, he seems to be reluctant to give very much authority to the office of pastor.

Milton Rudnick offers a theology of authority from a conservative Lutheran perspective. He is concerned that "some of the most difficult and controversial issues

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[94] Bolich, 123.

[95] Bolich, 122-23.

[96] Bolich, 102-3.

[97] Bolich, 126-27.

[98] Bolich, 129.

troubling many church bodies today are aspects of organizational authority."[99] These days, most people regard the ideas of "authority" and "obedience" as necessary evils at best that should be limited as much as possible. Rudnick asserts that the contemporary emphasis on self and autonomy and personal freedom tend to diminish appreciation for authority and obedience and actually "may be the antithesis of genuine authority and obedience." He qualifies that authority in the church has a slightly different definition than authority in general. In the church, authority is a privilege, a responsibility, and an honor. Authority should be respected because it is ultimately from God. Moreover, everyone who carries authority is worthy of some respect regardless of their own inadequacies and unworthiness, because God has structured this world and His eternal Kingdom such that some people have authority over others. God has done this not to allow those in authority to exploit those under them but rather so those in authority can "protect, provide, lead, and uplift those over whom they exercise authority."

According to the Bible, authority was created by God and should be understood as a blessing intended for people's well-being. Therefore, those with authority should be fearful stewards of the authority with which God has entrusted them. Obedience is a response to authority and has very positive connotations in the Scripture. Rudnick reminds his reader that the root meaning of the Greek and Hebrew biblical words for obedience is "to hear." Therefore, obedience is very much about one person listening to another. Thus, obedience is really responding to a person rather than merely a set of rules. The concept of freedom is essential to biblical obedience because the idea implies a voluntary following and submission that is motivated out of love, rather than the result of

[99] Milton L. Rudnick, *Authority and Obedience in the Church* (Lutheran Education Association, 1977), 78.

coercion. Obedience does not mean one destroys one's own will, but rather that one directs one's will to voluntarily comply with another person's will. Rudnick suggests that from the Christian perspective, "this is self-fulfillment to the highest order."[100]

Rudnick identifies four forms of authority in the church. *Evangelical authority* is "the privilege and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel." This is the basis for all other forms of authority. Obeying this form of authority involves respect for those who serve as spokesmen for the Gospel. Pastors have the authority to proclaim the Gospel but they do not have the authority to compel people to receive it. *Confessional authority* is the "privilege and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel over against current heresy or confusion." *Disciplinary authority* is the "privilege and responsibility to correct those who reject or stray from the truths of the Gospel." Finally, *organizational authority* is the "privilege and responsibility to organize people for the task of proclaiming the Gospel." This includes forming congregations and appointing leaders.[101] Christian individuals and groups are to comply with the directives and policies of their church leaders and governing bodies to the extent possible, the exceptions being where obedience would lead them to violate God's will.[102]

Paul Mansfield Harrison writes on authority from the free church perspective in *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition; a Social Case Study of the American Baptist Convention*.[103] Mansfield's main concern is the American Baptist denomination's

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[100] Rudnick, 3-6.

[101] Rudnick, 7-8.

[102] Rudnick, 87.

[103] Paul Mansfield Harrison, *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition; a Social Case Study of the American Baptist Convention* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959).

authority over the churches in its association and not primarily about authority structures within the local church. Nevertheless, he shares several insights that are germane to the discussions of pastoral authority. He expresses concern that the Baptist value of ecclesiastical liberty and independence has morphed into an unhealthy disrespect for any type of authority. Harrison argues that as early as the London Confession of 1646 the Baptist emphasis on liberty was not the liberty of the individual but the liberty of God. Originally, the desire for ecclesiastical independence was not motivated by individual autonomy but by a desire to steer free of magisterial authority that often was tied up with the church. By the time of 19th century America, this notion of independence had mutated into the idea of *soul competency* (i.e., the idea that each individual is thoroughly self-sufficient and has no need of the church). This belief emphasized that the individual's association with the church was entirely voluntary and considered the individual to be the most important unit.

As American convictions about representative democracy as an ideal political system found their way into the fabric of Baptist thought, a church polity that would ensure the rights of the individual above all things became paramount. While many Baptists decried this idea and sought to return to the original Baptist notions of a more collective liberty grounded in mutual dependence upon God, the cultural notions of individualism by that time dominated Baptist culture such that the freedom of the individual became the dominant theme.[104] Harrison suggests that the Baptist tradition has been one of the most radical in insisting that its churches and networks can function without relying on clear lines of authority. He warns that the no organization can function

[104] Harrison, 21-26.

without authority. Where authority does not exist, leaders seek other forms of power in order to carry out their responsibilities. Consequently, sometimes this power exceeds what a healthy authority could or should possess.[105]

David A. Steele's *Images of Leadership and Authority for the Church: Biblical Principles and Secular Models* suggests that the main objectives of the pastor are being an administrative authority and developing the shared communal authority of the congregation.[106] Steele offers four images of pastoring from which pastoral authority derives – *eldership, shepherding, teaching, and overseeing*. Eldership is the quality of being seen as an authority figure. *Shepherding* is when the congregants comes to view the pastor as one who truly cares about them. *Teaching* is when congregants consider the pastor to be one who can teach them how to minister in the name of Christ. Finally, *overseeing* is being able to exercise effective oversight over the congregation and make decisions. The authority that comes from each image is contingent upon the previous. Therefore, before exercising effective oversight, the pastor must first teach people how to minister in the name of Christ. Before the laity will open themselves up to be taught, however, the pastor will need to be seen as a shepherd who cares. Finally, before congregants are willing to entrust anyone with their needs and hurts, the church leader will have to be regarded as an elder. Some churches need one of these roles more than others and the leader is unable to focus on the higher role in such cases. Ideally, Steele thinks that the leader should primarily play the role of overseer.[107] In the overseer role,

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[105] Harrison, 207-8.

[106] David A. Steele, *Images of Leadership and Authority for the Church: Biblical Principles and Secular Models* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).

[107] Steele, 78.

leaders should regard laity as co-leaders and use their authority to guide them in a process of consensus building.[108] Steele does not say much about role authority, however. Therefore, leaders and follower are left without much guidance in circumstances of decision impasse.

Dale Rosenberger wrote *Who Are You to Say? Establishing Pastoral Authority in Matters of Faith* primarily to pastors to instruct them on exercising their authority.[109] He argues that pastor's authority should come from a grounding in the word of God and His truth. Rosenberger distinguishes power from authority. Power is coercive and therefore necessarily implemented by abuse or manipulations. Authority is something that is earned and does not require the exercise of power.[110] Rosenberger warns that if pastors feel they must exercise the authority of the position, they have already lost their spiritual authority. At the same time, he acknowledges that even the most benevolent pastors cannot lead those who will not be led. He reminds the reader that even Jesus was driven from the synagogues.[111] He acknowledges that some people refuse to come under authority, recalling a minister of Christian education who refused to be supervised by him. She claimed that "no person should have to answer to or be 'under' another and that any hint of hierarchy on earth below or in heaven above was inherently oppressive and unchristian." Rosenberger does not say much about the authority of the pastoral office,

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[108] Steele, 161.

[109] Dale Rosenberger, *Who are You to Say?: Establishing Pastoral Authority in Matters of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005).

[110] Rosenberger, 91.

[111] Rosenberger, 84.

preferring a personal authority model. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the challenges for pastors where personal authority does not exist.

In thinking about theology of authority, one must also consider the work done in the secular world. Much has been written about authority and power, but Max Weber's *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* is nearly always cited as foundational.[112] Weber defines *power* as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be able to carry out his will despite resistance, regardless of the basis upon which this probability rests." *Imperative control* is "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." *Discipline* is "the probability that by virtue of habituation a command will receive prompt and automatic obedience in stereotyped forms, on the part of a given group of persons." Weber is concerned that the concept of power is too broad to be of much use in specific human interactions. He prefers, therefore, the idea of imperative control to more precisely describe the probability that a specific command will be obeyed. Drawing on the definition, Weber relates power to authority by calling *authority* the legitimate exercise of imperative control.[113] Weber writes that any relation of actors that involves imperative control necessarily also involves a degree of voluntary submission and self-interest of the one being controlled.

When the actors involved on any side of the exercise of imperative control seek to legitimize this exercise of power, they appeal to one (or more) of three bases of authority. For *traditional grounds,* authority "rests on an established belief in the sanctity of

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[112] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, Talcott Parsons, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1947).

[113] Weber, 152-53.

immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them." For *charismatic grounds,* authority "rests on the devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by the authority." For *rational-legal grounds,* authority "rests on a belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules."[114] Thus, Weber's forms of authority may provide a rationale for obedience to either the leader or the follower.

Bertram Raven's work is probably the most widely cited source on power bases. He identified six power bases upon which those under authority are influenced to comply with one in authority: *informational, reward, coercive, referent, legitimate,* and *expert*. When informational power is exercised, the subordinate is convinced by the superior about the merits of a new or different idea. Raven notes that from that point forward, the superior's direct influence is unnecessary regarding that issue because the subordinate has changed his thinking. When reward power is exercised, the subordinate obeys the superior because she believes her obedience will result in the superior rewarding her in some way. When coercive power is applied, the subordinate is motivated to obey out of the fear that the superior will punish him in some way should he choose not to obey. Reward and coercive power can include the approval or disapproval of the superior. Raven notes that for the exercise of reward and coercive authority, *surveillance* is necessary since the subordinate only complies if he thinks the supervisor will check work. Furthermore, coercive power is likely to breed resentment, while reward power could breed the expectation of favor in exchange for compliance. Legitimate power is

[114] Weber, 324-29.

exercised when the subordinate believes he should follow the leader because of the leader's rank or role. Expert power is where the subordinate thinks the leader has understanding that she does not have. The difference between expert and informational power is that the follower must *understand* the reason for compliance in order for informational power to be effective. Whereas, expert power does not have that requirement. Referent power is used when the subordinate identifies in some positive way with a group or an individual such that it gives the subordinate satisfaction to behave or believe as the superior does. Raven writes that legitimate, expert, and referent power require the influence of the supervisor but not her surveillance.[115]

Glenn Heinrichs applies Raven's six power bases to ministry, arguing that pastors can be most effective in utilizing all six of the power bases at various times. Heinrichs argues that each power base can be abused or used beneficially.[116] Raven applies these power bases to religion, a little more skeptically. He speculates that rulers developed concepts of an omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient deity in order to control people. This deity's omnipotence would enable coercive power and its omniscience and omnipresence would enable unlimited surveillance. In response to this concern, he writes that "followers of some modern religious movements, while encouraging independence of thought and action, have rejected the conception of a God who relies on coercive power, reward power, unquestioned expert power, and guilt-induced legitimate power, yet continue to feel a need for a Deity." Raven suggests that the only valid power base for

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[115] Bertram H. Raven, "The Bases of Power and the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence" in *Analyses of Social Issues & Public Policy* 8, no. 1 (Dec. 1, 2008), 1-9.

[116] Glenn A. Heinrichs, "Power and the Pulpit: A Look into the Diversity of Ministerial Power," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 21, no. 2 (1993), 149-57.

a deity is informational power, where the worshipper is convinced of the rationale of following the deity.[117]

In *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power,* Andy Crouch departs from Raven, arguing that power is a gift from God that should be used to create an environment where people can flourish.[118] Many definitions of power carry an inherently negative connotation. Crouch cites C. Wright Mill's assertion that "the ultimate kind of power is violence."[119] Crouch's objection is that this type of understanding of power carries an implicit, negative value judgment. Crouch acknowledges that power can be and has been abused. Nevertheless, he decries thinking that tries to deny it, dismiss it, or vilify it. The answer is to redeem it by considering the Scriptures more carefully. He would prefer to alter Mill's definition to say that "violence is the ultimate distortion of power." Crouch argues that the Bible calls for the use of coercive power when necessary to protect the church from a church member who is abusing his or her power. When exercised properly, church discipline is a form of coercive power that prevents the abuse of another form of power.[120]

Images, Ideas, and Impressions about Pastoral Authority

The researcher has found little research dealing directly with assessing lay impressions of pastoral authority. Nevertheless, there is a diversity of influences that reflect and potentially contribute to various images, ideas, and impressions of pastoral

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[117] Bertram H. Raven, "Influence, Power, Religion, and the Mechanisms of Social Control." *Journal of Social Issues* 55, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 170-186.

[118] Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013).

[119] Crouch, 133-36.

[120] Crouch, 142.

authority. Consideration of these resources is important to form theories about possible images, ideas, and impressions of pastoral authority among laity. These theories would be helpful for question formation and analysis during the field research phase.

A starting place could be identifying various images of pastors in general. William Willimon identifies several different images commonly ascribed to pastors in the twenty-first century: media mogul, political negotiator, therapist, manager, resident activist, preacher, and servant.[121] Leland Ryken, Philip Graham Ryken, and Todd A. Wilson survey the pastoral image in classic literature. Literature frequently reflects or inspires the sentiments of some members of society and they find a variety of images – some favorable, some negative, and some decidedly nuanced. For example, the novel *Elmer Gantry* portrays the pastor as an anti-intellectual charlatan who is not to be trusted or taken seriously. In *The Power and the Glory*, Graham Greene creates a nuanced portrayal of a flawed, but ultimately sacrificial priest. *Pride and Prejudice* describes a pastor who is something of a sanctimonious and self-centered buffoon. Yet *The Diary of a Young Country Priest* and *The Hammer of God* cast pastors in a more favorable light. The former depicts a young, inexperienced priest doing his best despite the thankless challenges of small town pastoral life. The latter is a great defense of the power of the true Gospel in the hands of several faithful pastors. *Les Miserables* presents a courageous and admirable priest who plays a transformative role in the life of the story's hero.[122] Melvin Williams is quite pessimistic about the image of pastor in modern literature,

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[121] William Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 56-69.

[122] Leland Ryken, Philip Graham Ryken, and Todd A. Wilson, *Pastors in the Classics: Timeless Lessons on Life and Ministry from World Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 39, 44, 63, 71, 78, 148.

observing that contemporary literary trends portray pastors negatively as "groping, fallible, doubting men of the 20th century … whose problems are those of an age of secularism and science that seeks a new Reformation on its own terms."[123] It is difficult to know how much such literature influences congregants' perceptions of pastors. To the extent that they have any influence at all, these negative images are likely to undermine the credibility that would contribute to a pastor's authority. If nothing else, these images might stimulate questions to be asked of congregants in attempting to assess their impressions of pastoral authority.

Just as modern literature can reflect or influence social ideas, discussions among theologians and other church leaders can have the same effect. Thus, it can be useful to study varying opinions regarding pastoral authority. Conversations concerning the nature and degree of pastoral authority invariably involve questions of perceived pastoral role and personal credibility. For example, if a pastor makes a decision to ask small groups to all do the same four-week study, that pastor is exercising his authority in a fairly obvious way. In this case, not only do congregants have to consider whether they like or dislike the decision but they will also ask whether the pastor's role gives the pastor the responsibility to make that decision. When a pastor visits a congregant in the hospital, however, there is little obvious exercise of authority as might be involved in decision making. Perhaps, in such cases, the issue has more to do with credibility: Is the pastor honest, qualified, called, skilled, likeable, spiritual, and so on? Thus, perceptions about pastoral role and credibility have some impact on perceptions of pastoral authority. There are a wide variety of views.

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[123] Melvin G. Williams, "Images of the Pastor in Modern Literature," *Christianity Today* 10, no. 6 (Dec. 17, 1965), 4.

Some hold that the pastoral role carries responsibilities in which pastors must be faithful stewards of authority for the well-being of the church. Tim Laniak considers the shepherding metaphor to be most suited to describe the pastoral role. He lived with near-Eastern shepherds for many years in the field. This experience is supplemented by an exhaustive study of the shepherding metaphor as observed in the Bible and in other ancient near-Eastern literature. The result is a balanced and rich understanding of the role of pastors. Laniak concludes that shepherding the church "calls for the benevolent use of authority." He lists three general components of a biblical shepherd's responsibilities. The first is *provision* – providing the church with a diet of spiritual food that will be helpful for the people in the church. Second is *protection* – keeping a watchful eye out for the congregation against internal or external threats to its health and effectiveness. The third is *guidance* – discerning when the church has become stuck in unhealthy or unfruitful ruts and being able to see the best path forward for the church. All of this is driven by a deep and sacrificial love for the people that God has entrusted to pastors.[124]

Willimon takes a very high view of the role of pastor in his pastoral theology. He writes that pastors are gifts to church, and he rejects the Quaker idea that questions the necessity of pastors. Rather, pastors are called to preach truth with authority, according to the Scriptures, and even be prophetic when necessary.[125] Appealing to traditional and classical pastoral theologies, Andrew Purves argues that more than anyone else in the church, pastors have a responsibility to be theologians. At one time, pastors were respected and expected to execute this responsibility. He posits that a comfortable

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[124] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 246-251.

[125] Willimon, 34, 49, 97.

synthesis has developed between pastoral theology and modern secular psychology such that pastoral practice is more concerned with questions of meaning rather than truth, acceptable functioning rather than discipleship, and self-actualization and self-realization rather than salvation. He implies that the authority of the pastor has consequently diminished, as the pastor is viewed more as an optional therapist rather than an essential protector of God's people by the faithful stewardship of truth.[126]

Christopher Beeley examines pastoral leadership in the early church. He argues that, even before one considers the servant quality of biblical leadership, one must "appreciate the real power that leaders carry in their actual communities and in the lives of individual people." He argues that church fathers such as Ignatius of Antioch, Gregory Nazianzen, and Chrysostom, while acknowledging that pastoral service is to be executed with great humility and concern, nevertheless asserted that pastoral authority should be respected. Where it is not, the health of the church is in harmed. He identifies two misunderstandings about pastoral authority. The first is that it does not exist. Those who hold this view believe the church is best served by weak pastors. The idea is that a strong laity is only possible where there is weak pastoral authority. Beeley rejects this idea, however, insisting that the leadership of the laity actually thrives best under strong pastoral guidance. The second type of misunderstanding about pastoral authority that it consists of "bossing people around and seeking one's own prestige." In response, Beeley recites Gregory the Great's warning that pastors who abuse their authority have "joined the ranks of the hypocrites." Rather, pastors should strive to boldly provide spiritual guidance and never see the people entrusted to them as pawns for their own benefit.

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[126] Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*. Louisville (KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 89-90.

Nevertheless, Beeley is clear that "the abuse of authority does not undermine the importance or legitimacy of strong pastoral authority, any more than an abusive doctor discredits all medical personnel."[127]

Thomas Oden argues that pastors have a responsibility to watch over the church in a similar way that the Old Testament prophets did as "watchmen on the wall." Pastors must warn the church about dangers, even before the church sees them coming. This gives pastors distinct responsibilities and underscores the need for pastors to have authority to pursue the responsibilities for which they are accountable.[128]

The above sampling of writers ascribes a clear stewardship of authority to pastors. Certain other writers, however, are less comfortable with the idea that pastors hold authority. John Jansen utilizes the shepherding metaphor for the pastoral image, yet comes to a very different interpretation than Laniak. He sees the shepherding image as potentially positive, but recites Seward Hiltner's caution that it is "[dangerous] to portray the shepherd as knowing everything and especially what sheep ought to do." [129] From this starting point, Jansen argues for a fairly weak application of pastoral authority in which there is very little difference in role between pastors and congregants. Jansen focuses solely on the feeding responsibility of shepherds and dismisses any protective or guiding functions. This seems to reduce pastors to serving the congregants in a purely passive sense that calls for little exercise of authority. It is noteworthy that Willimon critiques

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[127] Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 8-12.

[128] Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1983), 69-71.

[129] John F. Jansen, "The Pastoral Image in the New Testament," *Austin Seminary Bulletin: Faculty Edition* 94, no. 8 (May 1979), 13. See also Seward Hiltner, Ferment in the Ministry (Nashville: Abindon, 1969), 98.

Hiltner's pastoral theology by expressing concern that Hiltner has corrupted the shepherd image by removing authority and making him a mere listening therapist.[130]

Alan Padgett seems uncomfortable with the term *authority* and prefers the term *mutual submission*. Padgett sees two types of submission in Scripture. Type one is applied more to military and political struggle. Type two is in the realm of personal relationships and has to do with voluntary submission to another person out of love. He argues that Jesus submitted to the church in the type two sense. Therefore, everyone in the church, including leaders, should follow his example of submission. Padgett writes that "true leadership in Christ means taking the role of a servant and not seeking a kind of leadership that is ruling over or holding authority over the other."[131] Much of Padgett's discussion serves as an important reminder that biblical leadership is to be sacrificial and generous. Nevertheless, he seems to consider authority a toxin to be eliminated rather than a potentially corrupted gift to be redeemed.

Frank Viola rejects the idea that Hebrews 13:17 implies the type of authority that congregants have a moral obligation to obey. He defines the term *peitho* as meaning "allow yourselves to be persuaded by your leaders." He also defines *hupeiko* as "yielding, retiring, or withdrawing." The researcher agrees with these definitions. Viola continues, however, by interpreting these statements in ways that cast authority in a very negative light. The alternative to the leadership of persuasion, according to Viola, is where leaders "coerce, force, or browbeat into submission." He also denies the validity of role authority

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[130] Willimon, 101.

[131] Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 51.

and leaves a congregant entirely dependent upon the pastor's personal authority. He writes:

> By virtue of [the leaders'] wisdom and spiritual maturity, [the leaders] are to be accorded with respect. Christians are encouraged to be uncommonly biased toward what they say. Not because of an external office they hold, but because of their godly character, spiritual stature, and sacrificial service to the people of God.

Viola acknowledges that Hebrews 13:17 says that leaders are accountable to God for the task of leading. Nevertheless, he insists:

> There's nothing in this text that warrants that [these leaders] have special authority over other Christians. Being accountable to God is not the equivalent of having authority. All believers are accountable to God. But this doesn't mean they have authority over others.

Refuting Viola's denial of role authority is not the point here (though the theological argument in the previous chapter certainly attempts to do so). Rather, it is important to recognize how role authority can be denied in ways that sound helpful and righteous, when in fact they leave followers with little practical instruction about engaging leadership as they encounter situations when a pastor's personal authority is eroded or is insufficient to enable that pastor to effectively shepherd the church.[132]

In reading literature about pastoral leadership and the church, it becomes clear that people can use language which makes it appear that they agree about perceived pastoral role or the nature or degree of pastoral authority when in fact they have very different ideas. For examples, theologian Larry Richard's thinking embodies the idea of a pastor who has little or no legitimate or coercive authority. Donald Price offers an insightful critique of Richards' position. He writes that Richards views the church as the body of Christ and Christ is her head. Few Protestants would disagree. Richards extracts

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[132] Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 297-98.

four corollaries from this premise that are more controversial, however. First, the church should be structured as an organism, not an organization. Second, Jesus is the only head of the church and the church's sole source of authority. Therefore, anyone who assumes a role where he or she exercises authority is usurping authority a role that belongs exclusively to Jesus. Third, every member of the church is a minister and called to serve as a minister. Fourth, the principle task of church leadership is not to exercise authority or control over it, but rather to equip the saints for the work of ministry.[133] Most Protestants would agree with corollary three and to some extent corollary four. Corollary one runs the risk of being so abstract that it provides little guidance to pastors or congregants about the exercise of authority. Corollary two is most controversial.

Gene Getz expresses concern with Richards' ideas about pastoral authority and church structure. Getz was a pastor of a large church and worries that Richard's ideas do not consider the practical realities of pastoral leadership. Getz believes that pastoral leadership should be humble and sacrificial, yet he argues that clear lines of authority are important for a well-functioning church. He suggests that Richards drains all authority away from pastors. Richards responds that he thinks pastors do have authority. What is notable for this discussion of images of pastoral authority is that Getz and Richards both speak about authority, but the concept clearly means something different to each in practice. A sample exchange between them illustrates the problem:

> GETZ: Larry, there has to be recognized leadership within the staff team. If you don't have it, you're going to have problems. You can be a servant and you can treat the others as equals, but the buck has to stop somewhere. If one person isn't authorized to take the final responsibility, chaos will result.

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[133] Donald E. Price, "A Critique of Larry Richards' View of Authority within His Theology of Servant Leadership" (MA Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1988), 26-27.

> RICHARDS: But that doesn't have to be "institutionalized" on charts or anything else – it's already there. Spiritual authority is self-validating. People follow ultimately because they recognize that here is a person through whom God is speaking.[134]

It would appear that Getz is arguing for the importance of legitimate authority (or role authority) in addition to personal authority. Richards, in contrast, would seems to suggest that the only valid authority is personal authority. Richards also assumes that the pastor will have sufficient personal authority to exercise the necessary coordination, while Getz is skeptical.

The researcher aligns more with the perspective that pastors are called to steward and exercise authority in a benevolent and sacrificial manner. Nevertheless, the point of calling attention to these varying perspectives is not so much to argue a position but to illustrate differing connotations of the concept of authority. David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo Brekke's comprehensive study of 47 American denominations affirms the pattern of varying perceptions of pastoral authority observed in the above examples. Among evangelical denominations, the free church traditions placed a greater importance on *shared leadership* than did more hierarchical polities and non-denominational churches. This was also a significant area of disconnect between clergy and laity. Across all denominations, laity consistently ascribed more importance to shared leadership that did clergy. This data suggests that pastors and laity, as well as various denominations, have different perspectives about pastoral responsibilities and the nature and degree of pastoral authority.[135]

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[134] Larry Richards and Gene A. Getz. "Biblical Style of Leadership?" *Leadership* (April, 1981).

[135] David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo Brekke, *Ministry in America: A Report and Analysis, Based on an in-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada, with Interpretation by 18 Experts*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 214-15.

While discussions of authority often focus on a pastor's perceived role and the degree of legitimate authority one believes he should have, a pastor's personal authority is significantly bound up in his credibility. Kirk A. Kennedy, Bonita N. Eckhardt, and W. Mack Goldsmith's research on church members' expectations of clergy personalities discovered a clear relationship between a pastor's credibility and the laity's perceptions about how well that pastor executed the pastoral role. They discovered that a majority of church attenders expected a pastor's sermon to have a significant impact on their lives. Interestingly, there was a clear correlation between what the church attenders thought of the pastor and whether the attenders thought that the sermon had a positive impact on their lives. If attenders did not like or respect the pastor for some reason, they were likely to criticize the pastor's message as "not having heard from God" or "not properly interpreting the Scriptures."[136]

Several things influence a pastor's credibility in the eyes of congregants: calling, expertise, integrity, and the general impression of the office of pastor. E. Brooks Holifield traced the development of pastoral authority in America from colonial times. He noted that at most times in history, pastors faced a mix of respect and disrepute. Referring to Weber's forms of authority, Holifield identified several ways in which laity perceived pastoral authority. *Charisma of office* is where a religious office itself bears certain status and confers certain powers. This form of authority is particularly recognized by Catholic and Orthodox laity. The *charisma of person* has to do with either a divinely appointed gifting or calling or an especially godly way of life or spiritual depth that engenders respect among the religious community. This form of authority is

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[136] Kirk. A. Kennedy, Bonita N. Eckhardt, and W. Mack Goldsmith, "Church Members' Expectations of Clergy Personality," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* (March 1984), 9-10.

especially required by laity in more conservative Protestant churches. Finally, *rational authority* refers to laity's perception that the pastor has the knowledge, skill, and general expertise required to achieve the mission of the church. Holifield found that laity of more liberal Protestant denominations base a pastor's credibility upon this type of quality.[137]

American Christianity developed a kind of schizophrenia about the call and educational qualifications of pastors. Just as some people expected pastors to demonstrate a high level of education, others were suspicious of "too much education." Nathan Hatch describes the rise of anti-clerical sentiment among some segments of Christianity. Many of these congregants felt that education actually distanced clergy from the people they pastored. Rather, the main thing that gave a pastor credibility was an inner call from God.[138] Quentin Kinnison reflects on this contradictory sentiment in lamenting, "I know of no other profession in the world where a person can be as highly trained as a pastoral leader and be maligned by her or his clients for being so well trained."[139]

James Kouzes and Barry Posner, studying secular organizations, found that what people believe engenders trust in a leader has been consistent across cultures, nationalities, age, gender, functional discipline, and organizational level. People trust leaders who are first and foremost "honest." This quality was followed by the qualities of being "forward looking," "inspiring," and "competent."[140] James Hanna investigated trust

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[137] E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, Pulpit and Pew Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 346-47.

[138] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 44-45.

[139] Quentin P. Kinnison, "The Pastor as Expert and the Challenge of being a Saltwater Fish in a Freshwater Tank," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 13, no. 1 (March, 2014), 2.

[140] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose it, Why People Demand It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 7.

in local churches and found it to be an essential component of a pastor's ability to lead. He was surprised, however, to discover how fragile it was and how easily a pastor could lose it. He observed that that most of the laity he studied believed that trust must be earned, rather than granted. This puts pastors in a precarious situation. [141] Kouzes and Posner wrote that their research revealed a tension in maintaining trust in that leaders must occasionally make decisions that people will not like. This, they observed, can compromise their credibility in the eyes of their subordinates. [142] Hanna's observations show how easily a pastor's credibility can change in the perception of a congregant.

As stated at the outset of this chapter, there is a dearth of literature dealing with laity's conceptualization and engagement with pastoral authority. The review above has attempted to establish the credibility of this claim while also providing an introduction to literature that could be relevant to discussions of pastoral authority. There is considerable material describing the existence of church conflict. Some of this conflict is clearly between clergy and congregation. The role that pastoral authority plays in these conflicts is suggested, but unverified. Furthermore, the current church conflict literature is insufficient to provide laity with constructive ways to engage with pastoral authority, though the secular world has established some groundwork upon which Christian endeavors into this subject can build. The secular and Christian literature exploring the concepts of authority and power were useful in formulating a practical theology of pastoral authority, but field research was needed to begin to understand how laity perceive and engage with pastoral authority.

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[141] James G. Hanna, "A Case Study of the Impact of Trust on the Effectiveness of Church Leadership" (DMin diss., Bethel Theological Seminary, 2009), 63, 74, 96, 115.

[142] Kouzes and Posner, 176-87.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

In order to explore how laity conceptualizes and engages with pastoral authority, the researcher set out to conduct and analyze interviews with congregants from a variety of churches in the DMV. The initial research goal was to identify five churches of varying polities and ethnic compositions. The pastor of each church would identify three congregants. Each of these congregants would, in the pastor's judgment, have different degrees of respect for the pastor's authority. This deliberate diversity of interviewees was intended in part to compensate for the targeted sample size. The researcher intended to employ the methods of grounded theory to analyze much of the data. Grounded theory recommends sampling to the point of saturation, which can require more than fifteen samples. Smaller sample sizes can be accommodated, however, using *discriminant sampling*, where people of varying profiles are interviewed in order to note whether observations are consistent across profiles.[1] Pastors and congregants were interviewed and the data was then transcribed and analyzed using a modified grounded theory method.

Church Identification and Participant Process

The researcher identified eight evangelical churches (five white churches and three black churches) in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. All churches had less than 400 attenders. The researcher knew or had at least met the pastors of these churches.

[1] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 89-90.

The researcher contacted each pastor with an invitation to participate. An overview of the project and the commitment that would be expected from each pastor and congregant was provided. The researcher had hoped to have at least two white and two black churches for the study. Four white churches and one black church agreed to participate. One of the initially solicited white churches declined because the pastor did not feel he had congregants who met the required criteria. One of the black churches declined due to time constraints and the other was non-responsive. In order to identify another black church, the researcher engaged the help of a friend who is pastor of a black church. This pastor facilitated a warm introduction to another black church. The pastor of that church initially agreed to participate and then withdrew for unknown reasons. The researcher solicited several other black churches with whom he had no previous relation. None of these churches responded to his request. The researcher also attempted to locate a highly congregational church, as none of the other participating churches met that criteria. The researcher contacted a friend who attempted to arrange warm introductions to two strongly congregational churches, one white and the other black. The pastor of the white church declined to participate for unknown reasons. The pastor of the black church declined to participate because the church was in the midst of a reconciliation proceeding and he was concerned that the project might damage that process. Finally, the researcher contacted another friend who pastored a fairly congregational white church, and he agreed to participate.

The researcher conducted fifteen-minute phone interviews with each pastor in order to determine the suitability of each church for the study. None of the churches was currently experiencing major controversy. Two of the churches fell toward the pastor-led

end of the polity spectrum, one fell toward the congregational end, and three fell in the middle having polities that used some type of leadership board to govern. The researcher had hoped to include at least two black churches but was ultimately only able to include one black church.

During this interview with the pastors, the researcher further explained the desired profile of each of the three congregants the pastor would be asked to identify. One congregant would be a healthy follower who shared opinions – even disagreements – with the pastor. Nevertheless, the pastor was confident that this congregant respected his authority and would ultimately yield to his judgment. The second congregant was to be one that the pastor considered to have very little respect for his authority and who was difficult to lead. The final congregant was to be either a fairly passive person who did not seem to resist or engage the pastor or someone who seemed to uncritically obey the pastor's authority. At this phase in the project, the pastors did not tell the researcher which congregant belonged to which category, though this was discussed after the initial analysis.

The process of identifying the congregant participants was revealing. Two of the white churches and the black church provided three congregants each who agreed to participate. In fact, one of the white churches had an additional congregant who volunteered for the study. Each of these three churches included a congregant who appeared to clash with the pastor's authority in some way. Recruiting authority-resistant congregants in the other churches proved challenging. The pastor of the highly congregational church was not comfortable identifying a congregant who was significantly resistant to his authority. In this case, two people were identified who the

pastor considered to be relatively healthy followers. The pastors of the other two churches attempted to find an authority-resistant congregant, but none were willing to participate. After several attempts, the researcher decided to continue the project with only three of the five authority-resistant followers originally targeted. Thus, the study ultimately included six churches, six pastors, and sixteen congregants. The grounded theory method of *snowballing* (i.e., having one interviewee recommend another who recommends another, etc.) would likely have been a good way to identify a disgruntled sampling of people, in order to get two additional authority-resistant congregants. This method was not pursued, however, due to a perceived discomfort with the process on the part of the pastors involved in the study.

Interview Process

The researcher developed interview questions he believed would yield insights into the way congregants conceptualized, processed, and engaged pastoral authority. Some of the questions were intended to reveal relevant qualities of the congregants that might have some bearing on their interaction with pastoral authority. Grounded theory was used to analyze the participant responses to questions. In order to develop theories to which certain interview questions might provide insight, however, the researcher appealed to Swedberg's encouragement to use abduction for theory generation. Abduction is the mental process of creating theories based upon the researcher's creativity, knowledge, and experience. While acknowledging the value of theory building by induction, as is the approach of grounded theory, Swedberg argues that creative theory building can emerge from a process of abduction, even before any data is collected. Furthermore, Swedberg also argues that research does not have to be limited to the

justification of existing theories.[2] Because this research addresses an undeveloped niche, there are no existing theories.

The abduction theory formation was based upon the researcher's personal experience and literature review. For example, the researcher theorized that a person's perception of a pastor – that is, whether the image is more passive or more authoritative – might correlate to how much authority he or she thought was appropriate for a pastor to have. Therefore, the researcher asked questions about the images that came to the congregant's mind when thinking of a pastor. The abduction process was necessary in order generate a list of standardized questions that could be used for each interview. This is something of a constriction on the more open ended and free-flowing interviews typical of some grounded theory analysis.

Kathy Charmaz prefers *intensive interviews* where a small number of questions are preconceived in order to stimulate conversation. Nevertheless, the interviewer's goal is to incent the interviewee to speak freely and in detail about the topic.[3] Similarly, Paul Leedy recommends limiting each interview to five or seven questions constructed in advance of the interview. These would then be supplemented by spontaneous follow up questions. If more questions are required, Leedy recommends additional interviews.[4] The researcher believed, however, that the nature of the topic required a large number of standardized questions in a single interview for several reasons.

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[2] Richard Swedberg, "Theorizing in Sociology and Social Science: Turning to the Context of Discovery," *Theory and Society* 41, no. 1 (Nov. 2012), 4.

[3] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Limited, 2014), 55-66.

[4] Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design,* 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 2005), 147.

Because the topic of authority and submission is likely to offend or cause some discomfort in some people, particularly those who seem to be authority-resistant, the interviewees were not told the specific topic of the study prior to the interview. They were simply told that the research was exploring the relationship between pastors and congregants. Glaser argues that the process of grounded theory is not helped by sharing the results with the subjects, for they may not understand, or even like, the theory.[5] Therefore, the researcher attempted to construct questions that would broach the topic indirectly. The word "submission" was never used in a question, and the word "authority" was only used in one question. Because the researcher is a pastor who has certain convictions about pastoral authority, he did not want to risk betraying these convictions or leading the interviewees toward any particular response. The risk of this would be reduced with a fixed set of questions, as opposed to a free-flowing interview. In fact, Charmaz qualifies that standardized questions are more appropriate than intensive interviewing under circumstances like those surrounding this project.[6]

The researcher developed a set of 47 questions that fell into the following general categories:

> General Background questions, such as years attending church, definition of the Gospel, definition of a church, and the role the Bible should play in church.
>
> General impressions about pastors and sources of those impressions
>
> Perceptions about the role of a pastor (duties, responsibilities, time allocations)
>
> The congregant's understanding of a pastor's world and experience

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[5] Barney Glaser, "Conceptualization: On Theory and Theorizing Using Grounded Theory," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1, no. 3, art. 3 (2002), http://www.ualberta.ca (accessed Nov. 2015), 5.

[6] Charmaz, 55.

What gives a pastor credibility or discredits him in the congregant's eyes

How the congregant processes a pastor's decisions, directives, or policies

The biblical understanding of pastor-congregant relations

How the congregant thinks about the office of pastor (as opposed to an individual person who is a pastor)

The types and degrees of authority the congregant believes is appropriate for pastors to exercise

Some of these questions sought a direct answer to the issue raised by the question. Others, however, were intended to elicit a response that could be mined for observations that might not be directly related to the question. The questions were ordered from the more open-ended to the more specific. The most controversial questions were placed near the end of the interview.[7]

The researcher contacted each interviewee and set up a mutually convenient time and location for the interview. Twelve interviews were conducted in person and four by phone. All of the interviews were recorded. Each of the participants was asked to sign a modified version of the Bethel Seminary Consent Form for Human Research.[8] The interviewees were offered a $10 Target gift card along with a brief note of appreciation; three declined to accept the card. Each interview lasted an average of fifty minutes. After the first few interviews, the researcher found he needed to slightly modify or further explain a couple of the questions because the interviewees appeared to misinterpret them. The majority of questions, however, appeared to yield meaningful responses. After each interview, the researcher noted general impressions according to the grounded theory

[7] Leedy, 187.

[8] Leedy, 101.

recommendations.[9] In order to limit the scope of the project, the researcher did not deliberately pursue saturation for the interviews. A goal of the study was to ask a wide variety of questions with the hope of identifying specific questions that appeared to yield the most insights into how laity conceptualizes and engages with pastoral authority. Charmaz writes that fewer interviews may suffice when the goal of the research is the identification of common themes rather than theory construction.[10]

Interview Analysis

The researcher transcribed each of the interviews. Interview ranged from 1272 to 7257 words, for a total of 66,503 words between all sixteen interviews. The transcriptions were then imported into the Dedoose software for qualitative analysis. The researcher began the coding process, according to grounded theory methods. The researcher believed that Charmaz's constructivist approach would be more conducive to analyzing the data than would the more rigid systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin. Charmaz employs systematic coding, but she argues that the researcher must interject his own experience and perspectives into the analysis process. She is also more open to considering the feelings and opinions of those interviewed.[11]

Therefore, the first step was to go through the transcripts with an open coding process.[12] Charmaz favors an initial coding of every line in order to capture the emotions and other nuances that should be observable in detailed transcripts. Charmaz is concerned

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[9] Juliet Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008), 159-65.

[10] Charmaz, 107.

[11] Creswell, 87-88.

[12] Creswell, 89.

that the objectivist coding methods recommended by Barney Glaser considers interviews in sections that are too large to note this type of subtly. She disagrees with Glaser's recommendation that interviewers not record and transcribe interviews but rather simply take general notes during the interview. Glaser believes this will help the interviewer avoid getting caught up in unnecessary minutia. Charmaz, however, argues that the details observable in an accurately transcribed interview are a critical component of the research.[13] The researcher agreed with Charmaz on this point and engaged each line of the transcript for potential insights.

Charmaz's approach yielded 787 excerpts from the transcriptions and 3208 open codes. During this phase, the researcher made spontaneous memos as appropriate, noting relationships between codes, patterns, and other interesting items.[14] The researcher also recorded information about each participant, such as age range, sex, years attending church, affiliation with a denomination, and executive leadership experience. From the interview notes, the researcher also categorized each participant as having a high, medium, or low biblical literacy level. This was a subjective judgment. These personal characteristics were entered into Dedoose for correlation analysis.

The coding process then proceeded into axial coding where the open codes were placed into fifty-two categories. Using the constant comparison method, the codes in each of these categories were then examined for the existence of patterns and themes that could form subcategories. Where appropriate, the original codes were consolidated under

[13] Charmaz, 91.

[14] Charmaz, 164.

these subcategories. As the researcher worked with these consolidations, he made memos of notable observations.[15]

At this point in the coding process, the researcher held follow-up phone interviews with each of the pastors to ask about the reasons the congregants were recommended. Each pastor was asked questions about how the congregant engaged with his authority, whether the pastor felt the congregant would ultimately yield to a decision he made, whether shepherding the congregant felt like a joy or a burden, and any relevant questions for clarification. These interviews were recorded and analyzed. Based upon the interview analysis, the researcher identified several authority engagement patterns that he added in Dedoose to the profile of the congregants interviewed. Surprisingly, the researcher found that only one of the authority-resistant congregants was obvious from the interviews and analysis.

The next step was to analyze the coding categories for correlations or other notable observations. The Dedoose analysis tool, supplemented by Excel spreadsheets, was used for the analysis. During this process, the researcher observed several areas where he believed additional data would be helpful. The first was to ask the pastors to describe the qualities they desired to see in a good follower and what most grieved them as a pastor. These responses were then compared to the congregants' answers to similar questions. Additionally, the researcher contacted three of the congregants for clarification about notable responses they offered to certain questions.

The final step in the analysis was to organize the coding and analysis categories under the broader questions that they appeared to address. These questions then formed

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[15] Strauss and Corbin, 244.

the basis for the presentation of the data in chapter six. The researcher was not attempting to document the data using a model or diagram as Strauss and Corbin recommend. Rather, the researcher employed an approach more in line with Charmaz where ideas are allowed to develop and themes to emerge through the documentation process.[16]

[16] Creswell, 230-32.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The researcher conducted field research to explore the ways that congregants conceptualized and engaged with pastoral authority. Six churches, six pastors, and sixteen congregants were involved. Pastors and congregants were interviewed and interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Dedoose qualitative analysis software. The results of that analysis is presented here.

Participant Profiles

The researcher interviewed sixteen congregants. This sample was diverse along many parameters (Table 1), though it lacked congregants who are relatively new to church. The researcher assigned two subjective parameters to each congregant. The first was biblical literacy. This was rated low, medium, or high, based upon the researcher's subjective judgment. The assigned rating was derived from the interview and input from the pastors. A high rating indicated that the congregant would freely and frequently cite specific biblical passages (though not necessarily by chapter and verse), rightly interpret them, and use them in a way that was relevant to the conversation. A low rating indicated the congregant's inability to connect his responses with Scripture and a general discomfort and unfamiliarity with specific applications of Scripture. A medium rating was assigned when the congregant was clearly attempting to refer to Scripture, though still not with the facility of one who was given a high rating.

Table 1 – General Congregant Profiles:

Ethnicity	11 white; 4 black; 1 other
Years attending church	Ranged from 16 to 65 years (the mean and average were both approximately 30 years)
Sex	9 male; 7 female
Age	2 in 20s; 4 in 30s; 4 in 40s; 4 in 50s; 2 more than 60 years
Biblical literacy	8 high; 4 medium; 4 low

The second subjective parameter was the follower style. The researcher identified these styles based upon the ways in which the pastors described each of the congregants' interaction with their authority. The researcher identified five follower styles that applied to the congregants in the study: active, passive, resistant (low respect), resistant (unreflective), resistant (low ecclesiology).

An active follower constructively shared ideas and concerns with the pastor. Nevertheless, the pastor felt that the congregant would ultimately yield to his decision, even if he disagreed. The pastor was refreshed when dealing with this congregant.

A passive follower rarely interacted with the pastor regarding leadership decisions. Nevertheless, the pastor had no reason to feel that the follower disrespected his authority.

The congregants who the pastors felt were resistant to their authority were more challenging to categorize, because each pastor gave somewhat different reasons about why he categorized the congregant as resistant. Three variants of resistant followers emerged from the analysis.

Resistant (low respect) was a follower who appears to have little respect and even some degree of disdain for the office of pastor in general. This person appeared to believe

that a pastor should play a passive role in the church and limit his duties to those that do not require the exercise of authority.

Resistant (unreflective) was a person who seemed to have respect for the office of pastor. The authority concerns described by the pastor, however, appear to stem primarily from character issues of which the congregant did not appear to be aware.

The third resistant variant was resistant (low ecclesiology). It appeared that the concerns pastors had with this follower style stem from the follower's low view of the church. While such followers might claim to have considerable respect and admiration for pastors, the concern seemed to come from an underdeveloped view of what the church is and how congregants and pastors are to relate to one another in that context. These congregants found it easy to disregard a pastor's leadership or beliefs when they disagreed with their own views. Because of their strongly voluntarist understanding of the nature of the church, these followers were more willing to find another church that better suits their beliefs, rather than vigorously try to work through issues. The net result was that the pastor had the sense that his opinion or directive held weight only insofar as it lined up with the opinion and will of the congregant. The distribution of follower styles is show in Table 2.

Table 2 – Follower Styles

Following style	**# of congregants**
Active follower	10
Passive follower	2
Resist - low respect	1
Resist – unreflective	1
Resist - low Eccles	2

Factors Impacting Personal Authority

The axial coding process identified several sets of responses that provide insight into a pastor's personal authority. Personal authority is distinct from role authority in that it is intrinsically tied to the person who holds the role of pastor. The analysis suggests that congregants tend to rely heavily on personal authority. Furthermore, there are a wide variety of factors that create, erode, and shape personal authority.

Pastoral Qualifications and Credibility

Interview excerpts were tagged with codes which reflected what congregants considered to be the things that qualified pastors for pastoral ministry and gave them credibility as pastors. The researcher consolidated fifty-eight codes down to thirty-seven codes. These thirty-seven codes were assigned to six subcategories: character, skill, spirit, practice, demeanor, and doctrine. Table 3 shows a summary of those qualities, the number of participants citing them, and the broader subcategory to which they belong. The most commonly cited items are in bold print. There are a wide variety of ideas about what gives a pastor credibility, yet there are no apparent correlations with congregant profiles. All of these categories are determiners of personal authority.

Table 3 – Factors Influencing Pastoral Qualification and Credibility

CHARACTER		**SKILL**		**SPIRIT**	
Submitted to God/Bible	**7**	**Biblical expertise**	**5**	**Call from God**	**6**
Genuine love for people	**5**	**Leadership skills**	**5**	**Holy Spirit is alive in Him**	**6**
Genuineness/ authenticity	**5**	Good communication skills	2	Spiritual maturity/fruit	3
Passion about God/Bible/calling	**5**	Application of Word	1	Sent from God to this church	2
NOT a dictator	3	Familiarity with local culture	1	Has the spiritual gift of pastoring	2
Compassion	2	Intelligence	1	Is close to God	1
Courage	2	Wisdom for counseling	1		
Generosity	2				
Integrity/Honesty/trustworthiness	2				
Sacrificial	2				
Humility	1				
Continued self-development	1				
Strength	1				

PRACTICE		**DEMEANOR**		**DOCTRINE**	
Available and Present	**4**	**Approachability**	**4**	Shares my doctrine	1
Prays regularly	**4**	Friendliness	**2**		
Values contributions of others	**4**	Gentleness	**1**		
Prays for people by name	2	Meekness (Confidence with humility)	**1**		
Values people over programs	1	Warm and caring	**1**		

Characteristics of Poor Leadership

Interview excerpts were tagged with the codes listed in Table 4. These codes reflected what congregants considered to be characteristics of a poor pastoral leader.

Table 4 – Characteristics of Poor Pastoral Leadership

Characteristics of poor leadership
Unaware that families have missed church
Apathetic about what they do
Put on a facade/disingenuous
A dictator
A hypocrite
Puts themselves before others
Makes unbiblical decisions
Let success go to their heads
Does not really care about people
Obsesses over theological issues and turf wars
Isolated - difficult to have access to him
Handles criticism poorly
Poorly prepared in preaching
Preaches legalism over heart change
Not led by the Spirit and the Word
Nobody follows them willingly and enthusiastically

The list shows a wide variety of ideas among the congregants, with no obvious subcategories. Most codes were cited by only one congregant. The only exceptions were "does not really care about people," "puts on a façade/disingenuous," and "a dictator," Each of these was cited by two congregants. It may be notable that the resistant (low respect) congregant and one of the passive followers were the only ones to say "a dictator." What qualifies as a dictator could be very subjective. The wide variety of ideas about poor leadership further demonstrates the diversity among congregants about what gives and destroys a pastor's personal credibility.

The Definition of Humility

Interview excerpts were tagged with codes which reflected congregants' ideas about the definition of humility in a pastor. Among Christians, humility is generally regarded as a desirable quality and thus contributes to personal authority. The codes representing congregants' concept of humility are listed in Table 5, along with the number of congregants citing each code. The researcher consolidated the codes from fifteen original codes down to nine subcategories. These were further divided into two subcategories – those qualities that are external (i.e., behavior) and those that are internal (i.e., heart). These codes and their corresponding subcategories, along with the number of congregants citing each, are presented in Table 5. The subcategory, "avoids mystique," refers to a pastor who does not attempt to present himself as super spiritual and aloof, but rather is transparent and admits to imperfection. There were no clear correlations with congregant profiles. It is notable, however, that the majority of code occurrences had to do with external behavior.

Table 5- Definition of Humility

Definition of Humility	
Behavior - Avoids mystique	7
Behavior - Shares authority	5
Behavior - Serves others	4
Heart - Not motivated by recognition or success	4
Heart - Giving all credit/glory to God for blessings/ability	3
Behavior - Gentle	2
Heart - One in whom God is clearly working	1
Heart - One who shows great deference to God's Word	1
Heart - Unaware of his abilities - almost naive to them	1

Factors Determining Trust

Trust is a significant factor in the development of personal authority.[1] Several dimensions of trust were explored. First, congregants were asked whether they tended to grant trust to pastors or whether they believed that a pastor must earn their trust. Eleven congregants would grant trust to pastors while four said trust must be earned. There were no clear correlations with congregant profiles and some of the active followers believed that trust must be earned.

Congregants were also asked what creates or destroy trusts, and also why they would tend to trust or not trust a pastor. There were no clear correlations with congregant profiles regarding these trust questions. Tables 6 and 7 present these trust codes and the number of congregants citing them. Table 6 shows a wide variety of factors that create or destroy trust. Table 7 suggests that there is a variety of reasons that congregants grant or do not grant trust.

[1] Carroll, *Authority*, 36-50

Table 6 – Things that Create and Destroy Trust

Things that create trust		**Things that destroy trust**	
Doing what you say	4	Lying	4
Seeing a consistent positive example over time	3	Using the pulpit to manipulate	2
Demonstrating a high view of the Scripture	2	A low view of Scripture	1
Honesty	2	A negative gut feeling	1
Transparency	2	Acting different in church and out of church	1
A person's solid character	1	Acting self-righteous and "holier than thou"	1
A positive gut feeling	1	Disclosing what I said in confidence	1
Acting morally consistent with Bible	1	Doing the opposite of what you say	1
Demonstrating knowledge of the church	1	Focusing on building their own kingdom	1
Feeling like I won't be judged	1	Seeing the pastorate as just a job	1
Longevity of relationship	1	Contradicting the Bible	1
Putting the Kingdom before one's own ministry	1	Making a bad decision	1
Seeing God's presence in their lives - authentic	1		

Table 7 – Reasons Congregants Trust or Do Not Trust

Reasons to trust or not to trust	
I ask God to give me discernment about trusting	2
I try to give the benefit of the doubt	2
Most pastors are pastors for the right reasons	2
I have had some bad experiences with pastors	2
I try to think the best of everyone if I can	2
If he has a church and people seem to trust him	1
I do not tend to trust anyone at first	1
If God calls the pastor, then I should trust him	1

Things Congregants Feel They Need from a Pastor

Congregants were asked what they felt they needed most from a pastor. Codes were consolidated from twenty down to six codes. Codes and the number of congregants citing them are presented in Table 8. There were no clear correlations with congregant

profiles. The categories of guidance, attention, and discipleship clearly require the personal attention of the pastor. Only three congregants gave responses that did not require the personal attention of the pastor.

Table 8 – Things Needed from a Pastor

Things needed from a pastor	
Guidance - counsel when needed	10
Attention - personal care	7
Teaching - training in the Bible	3
Administration - create environment of thriving	2
Discipleship - serious tutoring	2
Spirituality - proof the pastor is close to God	1

The Perception that a Pastor Cares

Congregants were asked what made them feel like a pastor cares about them. Codes were consolidated from twenty-one down to thirteen. Codes and the number of congregants citing them are presented in Table 9. There were no clear correlations with congregant profiles. The code "he thinks about me" refers to a pastor remembering life events that are occurring with the congregant and letting the congregant know he is considering these things during the week. Twelve out of sixteen congregants cited at least one of the top three most frequently cited categories.

Table 9 – How Congregants Know a Pastor Cares

How I know a pastor cares			
He thinks about me	6	Committed to biblical truth	1
Time/presence/availability	6	His interaction with my children	1
He acknowledges me	4	Interested/open to my ideas	1
Appreciating me	2	Passionate preaching	1
Genuineness/authenticity	2	Physical affection	1
Praying for me	2	Speaking truth in love to me	1
Caring for his own family	1		

The Presence of Role Authority

Congregants were asked questions designed to elicit insights into their conceptualization of role authority and how they are likely to interact with it.

Images of Pastors

One of the first questions asked of congregants was to describe the image that came to mind when they thought of a pastor. Responses to this question were coded along with any other pastoral images mentioned during the course of the interview. Twenty-six original codes were consolidated into twenty-two themes. Each theme was also categorized according to the degree of authority the image held, based upon the researcher's subjective opinion about the congregant's description of the image. Those images categorized under the heading "authority" appeared to imply some expectation that the pastor's authority should be obeyed because of the role he holds. Those categorized under the heading "neutral" appeared to more heavily appeal to personal authority. Those images categorized as "passive" did not appear to carry any sense of authority. These image codes and the number of congregants citing them are presented in Table 10. One person, an active authority follower, shared the image of pastor as a wolf in sheep's clothing (not included in the chart).

Table 10 – Images of Pastors

Authority		**Neutral**		**Passive**	
*Leader	7	*Mentor/coach/guide	5	Caregiver	3
*Shepherd	3	*Shepherd	5	Friend	3
*Mentor/coach/guide	2	Flawed Human	4	Counselor	2
Mini - Jesus	2	*Leader	2	*Mentor/coach/guide	2
Father	1	One called by God	2	Servant	2
*Holy Man	1	*Preacher/teacher	1	Brother in Christ	1
*Preacher/teacher	1			*Holy Man	1
				*Shepherd	1

There were no clear correlation between the images used (and the headings to which they were assigned) and the congregant profiles. Most congregants used images from several headings. Four congregants did not use images that fell under the authority heading. Two of these were active and two were resistant. The most common images were shepherd, leader, and mentor/coach/guide, each with nine congregant citations. It is notable that several images were used in ways that implied varying degrees and types of authority for the same stated image (these are indicated in Table 10 with an asterisk).

The Role of Pastor

Congregants were asked to state what they regarded to be the most important responsibilities a pastor has. The researcher identified and coded excerpts from this question and other questions that described a congregant's understanding of a pastor's role and most important responsibilities. Codes were consolidated from thirty-six down to fifteen subcategories reflecting various roles and responsibilities. These subcategories were further assigned to sub-subcategories that indicated the degree and type of authority required to successfully execute the role. The researcher based this categorization on the congregant's discussion of the role. The heading "authority implied" indicates instances where the pastor would need role authority to effectively carry out the responsibility. The heading "authority helps but unclear" indicates that role authority would be helpful in executing the responsibility, but it was unclear whether the congregant thought that role authority was required. The heading "passive" indicates that the congregant does not appear to believe that authority is required to execute the responsibility. The results are presented in Table 11. The numbers in the chart represent the number of congregants who used the image.

Table 11 – The Roles and Responsibilities of a Pastor

Authority Implied		**Authority helps but unclear**		**Passive**	
*Guide	5	*Guide	8	Nurture	5
Administer	3	*Provision	8	*Provision	5
*Protection	3	*Protection	5	Self-care	4
		*Evangelize	1	*Evangelize	2
				Guide	2
				Inspire	2
				Pray	2
				Model	1

There was no clear correlation between roles and responsibilities (and the headings to which they were assigned) and the congregant profiles. Most congregants used roles and responsibilities from several headings. The most common roles and responsibilities were "guiding" and "provision," each with thirteen congregant citations. "Protection" was a distant third with eight congregant citations. It is notable that several roles and responsibilities were used in ways that implied varying degrees and types of authority for the same stated image (indicated in Table 12 with an asterisk). Only three congregants cited roles and responsibilities that were categorized as "authority implied-administer." The codes assigned to this category were: "organizing the church," "being in charge/carrying authority," and "managing the church business functions."

The Office of Pastor

Congregants were asked about the degree to which they felt they were obligated to obey a pastor because of the office he holds, even if they did not respect him as a person. Responses were divided into three subcategories: those who indicated a clear respect for the office of pastor, those who indicated that they would respond to personal authority only, and those who indicated that they would either obey the pastor's role or

leave the church. There was a clear correlation between responses and congregant following style. All four resistant congregants (and one of the passive) indicated that they would rely solely on personal authority. The other congregants expressed a sense of obligation to obey the office of pastor. Three of these indicated they would have to leave the church if they concluded that they could not trust the pastor. They were clear, however, that this trust violation would have to be egregious. As long as they were at the church, they believed were obligated to obey the pastor because of his role. All three of these congregants appeared to have a robust ecclesiology by other indicators and thus were not likely to leave a church over trivial matters. One active follower stated that he would obey the office of pastor for a church matter but not for a personal matter. This may suggest that personal authority is highly critical for personal matters, even if a person is willing to obey decisions about church matters solely based upon office.

Lack of Consensus

Congregants were asked what a pastor should do in a case where the congregation was divided over an issue. Several congregants had difficulties processing the question. The initial response of most of the congregants was to suggest that the pastor should try to help the congregation reach consensus. Three suggested the pastor should do nothing if consensus could not be reached. In most cases, the researcher felt it necessary to clarify the scenario as one in which consensus could not be reached and where doing nothing was not an option. When options were narrowed in this way, most congregants agreed that the pastor should make a "cautious decision." A cautious decision would involve consulting the Holy Spirit or consulting the leadership team. Two of the congregants seemed to imply that the pastor should make a decision by himself. At the end of the

conversation surrounding the question, one of the resistant congregants refused to respond to the scenario, simply insisting that the pastor should do nothing. Another of the resistant congregants, however, seemed to have little problem with the pastor making a decision.

Engaging Authority

Congregants were asked a series of questions designed to elicit insights into how they engaged with a pastor's authority. Scenarios included the introduction of new ideas, decisions the congregant did not understand, and the justification for obeying decisions with which the congregant disagreed or disobeying decisions the pastor made.

Embrace of New Ideas

Congregants were asked how they would respond if a pastor asked the church to try something new. Response codes were consolidated into four subcategories: enthusiastic embrace, qualified embrace, reluctant yielding, and resistant. There were no obvious correlations with follower profiles. Twelve congregants said they would embrace the decision, either enthusiastically or with some qualifications. These included active and resistant congregants. Those who would reluctantly yield or resist included both active and resistant congregants. One of the active followers who said he would reluctantly yield commented that embracing the new idea would be easier if he understood the reason the pastor asked the church to embrace the new idea.

Engagement with a Pastor's Ideas

Congregants were asked a series of follow up questions inquiring about how they would respond if they did not understand a decision and what they would do if a pastor made a decision with which they disagreed. There were no clear correlations with

follower profiles. The responses and the number of congregants citing each response are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 – Congregant Response to a Pastor's Decisions

Congregant response			
Critically engage	12	Just go along without questioning	2
Try to yield	8	Independent thinking	2
Trust pastor's character, expertise, etc.	7	Take action to yield	2
Examine my own heart/pray	3	No blind faith	1
Pray for pastor's wisdom	3	See benefit of obeying	1

Several congregants had notable responses. Twelve indicated that they would critically engage the decision and discuss it with the pastor. Eight would ultimately try to yield. Two mentioned that they would take deliberate action to help prepare themselves to yield, such as asking someone else to help them understand the decision. Three responded that they would pray for the pastor to make good decisions. One recognized that obeying the pastor might actually benefit the congregant. Seven specifically recognized the expert authority and integrity of the pastor.

Justification for Accepting or Resisting a Pastor's Decision

Congregants were asked how they would justify disobeying a pastor's decision or obeying a pastor's decision with which they disagreed. Responses were categorized under headings having to do with the parameters within which a person should obey a pastor and headings that describe the form of authority to which the congregant appealed to justify yielding to the pastor's decision. The justification to yield codes were based loosely on Raven's bases of power paradigm.[2] Response codes and the number of congregants citing them are presented in Table 13.

[2] Raven, "Bases of Power."

Table 13 – Justification to Resist or Obey a Pastor's Decision

Justification to yield		**Parameters to disobey**	
Role	9	If it goes against the Bible	9
Referent	5	If it's an egregious issue	5
Expert	1	Not in line with church mission	3
Informational	1	If against my core beliefs	3
		If against my morality	3
		If against my reason	2
		I cannot justify disobeying	2
		Not congregation or board approved	1
		If decision does not yield fruit	1
		If people will get hurt	1
		If doesn't prevent worship of Jesus	1

It is noteworthy that only nine of the congregants mentioned the Bible as a key determiner of whether to obey a pastor. Nine of the congregants appealed to role authority. Of those nine, only one congregant said that pastors were accountable to God. Only one congregant appealed to expert or informational authority and one to referent authority. The resistant followers tended to appeal to their own standards (e.g., "my morality," "my standards," "my reason"), rather than to an objective standard.

The Sophistication and Presence of Submission to Authority

Because the idea of submission to authority is controversial and can engender negative responses, the researcher did not ask questions that clearly dealt with submission to authority. Rather, several of the questions were designed to elicit responses that might consider submission to authority. The researcher coded any excerpts throughout the interview that provided insights into how congregants thought about the concept of submission.

Seven congregants used the term *authority* favorably. None of these were resistant. Only four congregants used the term *submission*. All were active followers.

Three of these congregants stated that submission to a pastor is ultimately submission to God. One said that congregants should submit to pastors because the pastor is accountable to God. One congregant indicated that people will be held accountable by God for disrespecting the pastor.

During the coding process, the researcher observed that several congregants indicated that in situations of disagreement with pastors, feeling offended by a pastor, or feeling some resentment toward a pastor, they would first examine their own hearts to see if the fault lay with them. Nine of these followers indicated this willingness to self-reflect. Two of the resistant followers did not indicate any willingness to self-reflect and two did. Three of the active followers did not indicate any willingness to self-reflect. This does not mean these congregants would not self-reflect, but it did not come up in the interview. Five of the active followers indicated a willingness to self-reflect multiple times during the interview.

Also, several congregants indicated some degree of self-awareness. Three of the resistant congregants confessed that they can be defiant or resentful. Seven of the active followers likewise expressed some self-awareness, such as a tendency to be stubborn, not liking change, and a past tendency to dispute over small things.

Biblical Literacy Regarding Authority, Submission, and Related topics

Congregants were asked if they could cite any scriptures that described the relationship between pastors and congregants. The researcher made clear that it was not necessary to cite book, chapter, and verse, but that even a general description of the passage would be helpful. The researcher coded responses to this direct question, as well as any other Scripture references that occurred during the interviews. The results are

displayed in Table 14. The “code” column reflects the code assigned to the congregant’s comment. The “Scripture reference” column lists either the Scripture citation (if obvious), indicates a general theme, or expresses that the congregant’s comment was not sufficiently clear to associate with a specific verse. The “authority implied” column refers to whether the congregant believed that the cited Scripture implied pastoral authority of some type. The “topic column” indicates whether the Scripture reference is specifically about pastor-congregant relations or is a more general reference to the church as a whole.

Table 14 – Congregant Citations of the Scriptures

Code	**Scripture Reference**	**Authority Implied?**	**Topic**
God gives the pastor the vision and the church carries it out	Eph. 4:12	Yes	Pastors
Submitting to one another	Eph. 5:21	Unknown	Church
Body with Christ as head and pastor just another minister (though a leader)	1 Cor. 12	Unknown	Pastors
Pastor, Evangelist, Apostle, etc.	Eph. 4:11	Unknown	Pastors
Pastors are servants	John 13	Unknown	Pastors
Search the Scriptures as the Bereans did	Acts 17:11	No	Church
The church must be unified	Eph. 4:1-3	No	Church
Congregants need to come to church and not forsake the gathering of ourselves	Heb. 10:24-25	No	Church
Respect those of weaker faith	Romans 14	No	Church
Do not argue over disputable matters	Romans 14:1	No	Church
Pastors should not lord it over congregants	1 Peter 5:3	No	Pastors
Pastors should be materially cared for	1 Tim 5:17-18	No	Pastors
Images of Jesus and church; pastor as mini version of Jesus	General	Yes	Pastors
Pastors use rod/staff to protect/correct	General	Yes	Pastors
Jesus' interactions with His disciples	General	Yes	Pastors
Moses leading a rebellious people yet still sought the Lord, remained humble, did not Lord it over	General	Unknown	Pastors
Shepherd the flock	General	Unknown	Pastors
General call to treat one another well	General	No	Church
General conflict resolution scriptures	General	No	Church
Pastors should love other people	General	No	Pastors
Body with pastor as head	Unclear	Yes	Pastors
The role of pastor should be respected	Unclear	Yes	Pastors
Function of pastors/elders/deacons	Unclear	Unknown	Pastors
Encourage your pastor	Unclear	No	Pastors

Several observations are noteworthy. There was only a single Scripture quoted that clearly indicated authority (i.e., Eph. 4:12), and this Scripture was somewhat

misinterpreted. Eight people made general references to biblical themes that imply some pastoral authority. Only one of the four resistant followers cited a Scripture or theme that implied pastoral authority. The resistant (low respect) congregant said only that pastors are servants and should love other people, which are very non-threatening descriptions. Only one of the active followers clearly stated that a pastor's role should be respected, though the reference was too vague to be clearly associated with Hebrews 13:17. None of the congregants clearly referenced Hebrews 13:17 or even the similar passage 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

Congregants were also asked about the sources of their impressions of pastors. Eleven congregants said their ideas about pastors were influenced by pastors they knew. Only six cited the Scriptures as a source, and only one cited teaching they received in the church. Three congregants cited books, three cited movies, and two cited public media.

General Respect for Pastors

Congregants were asked several questions designed to elicit a sense of how highly they esteemed the office of pastor, the challenges of the office, and the skills required for successful execution of responsibilities. Several categories are discussed.

Church Compared to Secular

Several of the interview questions attempted assess the degree to which the congregant understood the experience of pastors. Congregants were asked how easy or difficult they thought it was to be a pastor compared to secular jobs. There was a clear correlation. The resistant (low respect) congregant said that a pastor's job was relatively easy. All other congregants said it was very difficult to be a pastor.

Congregants were asked whether they thought that ideas were easier to communicate in a church context or in a secular office context. Eleven thought communication was easier in a secular office context. Five thought communication was easier in a church context. Of this five, two were resistant (i.e., low respect and unreflective) and three were active.

Congregants were asked whether they thought that pastors had specialized skills compared to other jobs. There was a clear correlation here. The resistant (low respect) and resistant (unreflective) thought that pastors did not have specialized skills. All other congregants thought that pastors do have specialized skills.

Congregants were asked how easy or difficult they thought it would be for a layperson to transition into the office of pastor and perform well. Ten thought this would be a difficult transition. Four people thought it would depend upon the discipleship process of the church or the person who is transitioning. Only two people said this process would be easy – one of these was resistant (low respect), the other was an active follower with a low biblical literacy.

Challenges Pastors Face

Congregants were asked about what they think are the most significant challenges pastors face and what they believe most discourages pastors. For comparison, the pastors of the churches studied were also asked what most discourages and frustrates them.

Responses to the challenges pastors face was consolidated from thirty-six down to twenty codes. The results are presented in Table 15 along with the number of congregants citing each code. There were no clear correlations with congregant profiles.

Congregants were also asked to list the things they thought most discouraged pastors. The results are presented in Table 16, along with the pastors citing each code. The pastors were asked the same question and the results are presented in Table 17. It is notable that only three congregants cited "congregational apathy" and "lack of commitment" as this was the number one concern of the pastors. Ironically, two of these were resistant followers. The congregants' most cited category (i.e., "congregational conflict") however, could plausibly be compared to the next three areas of the pastors' responses (i.e., "suspicion of leaders' motives," "critical,", and "desiring control"). The pastors' responses divide into those that represent congregational apathy and those representing a lack of respect for pastors.

Table 15 – Challenges Pastors Face

Challenges Pastors Face	
Burden of shepherding responsibilities/accountability	7
Wearing many different hats	7
Always on call	6
Obligation to practice transformational leadership	6
Voluntarism - pressure of knowing people can leave	6
Living in a fishbowl/reputation	5
Not able to please everyone	5
Physical/emotional drain dealing with people's emotions	5
Strain on family life	4
Dealing with criticism	2
People who think they know more than pastor	2
Staying focused on church mission in midst of many needs	2
A lack of concrete sense of accomplishment	1
Bad news or strife right before preaching	1
Caring for the church building	1
Less money than most jobs	1
Ministering in a world increasingly hostile to Christianity	1
More spiritual attack than others experience	1
Preparing a sermon every week	1
Pressure of having to numerically grow the church	1

Table 16 – What Congregants Think Discourages Pastors

What congregants think discourages pastors	
Congregational conflict	8
Personal Challenges	7
Lack of church growth	5
Congregational apathy/lack of commitment	3
Feeling of fighting a losing battle	2

Table 17 – What Pastors Say Discourages Them

What pastors say discourages them (6 total)	
Apathy - lukewarm, shallow, consumerist, self-centered Christians, uncommitted	4
Respect - suspicion of leaders' motives	3
Respect - critical and bitter and harboring a grudge	2
Respect - desiring control without accountability	2
Apathy - lack of love for others	1
Respect - lack of appreciation	1

Miscellaneous Indicators

During the coding process, the researcher noted excerpts that indicated the following: negative or positive feelings toward pastors, the nature of a lack of respect for pastors, and notable insights into a pastor's experience.

Only the resistant (low respect) and resistant (unreflective) congregants made statements identified as having negative feelings toward pastors. Some of the negative feelings expressed included: the current pastor falls short compared to a previous pastor, the pastor is too young and inexperienced, pastors are weak, and pastors would be unable to compete in the secular world.

All participants had deep insights or at least some insights into a pastor's experience. The only exception was the resistant (low respect). Six of the participants

exhibited a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding of a pastor's experiences. Even one of the most insightful active followers had an instance of lack of understanding.

Ideas about Following

Congregants were asked several questions designed to elicit their ideas about what makes a good follower in the church and what they think a pastor might need from them. Thirty-seven codes were consolidated into thirty-one. These codes were assigned to one of three subcategories. The "pastor" subcategory reflected the congregant's interaction with the pastor. The "church" subcategory reflected the congregant's interaction with the church. The "personal" subcategory reflected how the congregant conducts his or her personal life. The results and the number of congregants citing each code are presented in Table 18. There were no obvious correlations with congregant profiles.

Table 18 – Congregants' Ideas about What Makes a Good Follower

Pastor		**Church**		**Personal**	
Critical yielding	9	Participates in church	5	Engages Scripture	3
Supports pastor	8	Serves in church	3	Pursues growth	3
Enthusiastically teachable	5	Tithes to church	3	Spiritual discipline	2
Prays for pastor	5	Considers others	2	Lives their Faith	1
Respects pastor	5	Focused on the important	2	Can share testimony	1
Encourages pastor	4	Committed to church	1	Prays	1
Friend to pastor	3	Engaged in body life	1	Willing to stretch	1
Challenges pastor	2	Outreach oriented	1		
Loyal to pastor	2	Reliable	1		
Acknowledges leadership	1	Sets example for younger people	1		
Trusts pastor	1	Teaches others to follow	1		
Understands the pastor	1				

The pastors involved in the study were also asked what they believed constituted a good follower. Their responses and the number of pastors who cited each code are presented in Table 19.

Table 19 – Pastors' Ideas about What Makes a Good Follower

Pastors' conception of a good follower (6 total)	
Committed/sacrificial/service oriented	4
Respects pastoral authority	4
Affection for God	3
Affection for people	2
Solid doctrinal understanding	2
A person who prays	1

The most common congregant responses had to do with interactions with the pastor. "Critical yielding," the top congregant quality, means engaging thoughtfully with the pastor's leadership, but ultimately yielding to his authority if required. The second most common quality was "general support." Both of these categories seem to plausibly correspond to one of the pastors' top qualities, "respecting pastoral authority." The qualities of "enthusiastically teachable," "respects pastor," "loyal to pastor," "acknowledges leadership," and "trusts pastor" might also correspond to the pastors' category of "respect for pastoral authority." Together these amount to thirty-two citations.

The other top quality in the pastors' list (i.e., "committed/sacrificial/service oriented") was slightly less represented in the congregants' responses. If all qualities in the congregants' church column are counted, they total twenty-one citations.

One of the active followers displayed substantive insight into the benefit of following:

> Sometimes people say that following is easy. But no – following is hard if you do it the right way. And I guess another thing for a follower is that you have to have trust in your leader to not want to take the reins from him, whether [that leader is] God or your own pastor. You have to say, "he's got our best interest at heart and I'm going to follow him and we're going to see where it goes. And if it goes in a southward direction then we'll all be in the same place together but we'll figure it out." That's followership to me.

Pressing the Margins

Congregants were asked questions designed to elicit responses concerning more extreme situations, since often respect for pastoral authority is tested in times of church stress. The researcher speculated that congregants thinking about these questions might also elicit insightful responses.

Authoritarian Pastors

Congregants were asked to describe an authoritarian pastor. Response codes were consolidated from seventeen codes down to six. Results and the number of congregants citing the code are listed in figure twenty. There were no obvious correlations with congregant profiles.

Table 20 – Congregant Perceptions of an Authoritarian Pastor

Characteristics of an authoritarian pastor	
Putting his own needs before the church	7
Dictatorial	4
Exploits power	3
Legalism not Gospel	2
Not accountable to anyone	2
Unapproachable	2

The Use of Coercive Power

Congregants were asked if they could envision a scenario where a pastor should have access to some type of coercive power. This was described as "power to force

someone to comply with a directive against his or her will, such as removing a privilege, removing someone from a position of responsibility, removing someone from the church, or raising his voice forcefully." The results and the number of congregants citing them are presented in Table 21.

Most congregants were not comfortable with this question and struggled to respond. Those who more decisively affirmed the need for pastors to have some degree of coercive power could cite specific examples from actual experiences where this type of power was necessary or would have been helpful. It is notable that several congregants thought that coercive authority should only be utilized through the process of church discipline and with the involvement of a leadership team. The resistant (low respect) congregant avoided answering the question.

Table 21 – Pastors and Coercive Power

Should pastors have access to some type of coercive power	
He should be able to remove from positions	8
There is never a need to raise his voice	4
Yes - but better done after much prayer and with leadership team	3
Probably - if his goal is restorative	2
Yes - but within the constraints of the bylaws	2
I think so, but I'm not sure what this would look like	1
It could really limit him and frustrate him if he didn't have some coercive power	1
Not comfortable with pastor having coercive power	1
Raising his voice may be necessary	1
This is best left up to church discipline	1
Yes - as long as there are checks on his authority such that it cannot be abused or exploited	1
Yes - but better that leadership group does the disciplining	1
Yes - but should be done after consulting leadership team	1
Yes - under certain circumstances - but hard for pastor to get it right	1

Protection

Congregants were asked whether they thought it important for pastors to protect the church. Results and the number of congregants citing each code are presented in Table 22. There were no obvious correlations with congregant profiles. Just over half of the congregants said that this was important, though several had caveats. Some felt strongly that this was a function that pastors should not perform by themselves. Some of these seemed to assume a well-functioning system of church discipline. One believed that the pastor should simply leave protection for the church or for himself in God's hands.

Table 22 – Are Pastor's Responsible to Protect the Church?

Are pastors responsible for protecting the church?	
It's important for the pastor to protect the church	9
Pastor should NOT do protection alone	6
The best way to protect is to teach the church to protect itself	2
Congregation as a whole is responsible	1
Pastors should leave protection in God's hands	1
Protection is somewhat important	1

Controversy

Congregants were asked to consider a scenario where there was a controversy involving a pastor and a congregant. They were asked whether they would give the benefit of the doubt to either party. Most congregants were somewhat uncomfortable with the question. None were quick to say that the pastor should be given the benefit of the doubt. The initial response of most was that both should be given the benefit of the doubt. When the scenario was qualified as being one in which a group of leaders had investigated the controversy and exonerated the pastor – but rumors were still circulating – some congregant responses changed. Responses were coded and placed into

subcategories, which are presented in Table 23 along with the number of congregants responding according to each subcategory.

Table 23 – Should Pastors Receive the Benefit of the Doubt?

Benefit of doubt should go to…	
To pastor	8
To both	6
Evaded question	2
To congregant	0

Half of the congregants felt the benefit of the doubt should go to the pastor. None felt the benefit of the doubt should go to the congregant. Several expressed that the review board would have to be impartial and not unduly influenced by the pastor. The researcher followed up with one of the most mature active followers. This congregant acknowledged that it would be challenging to assess whether the review board was impartial. None of the congregants indicated that it might be necessary to trust God to hold the review board accountable for the outcome.

Miscellaneous Observations

Participant Responses

From the post-interview notes and the coding process, the researcher assigned codes that provided some insights into the nature of each congregant's response as they engaged the questions. The number of code applications for each response type for each follower profile are presented in Table 24. Three of the resistant congregants appeared to have hidden concerns that they did not mention specifically. Only one active follower appeared to have a hidden concern. The resistant (low respect) indicated several negative reactions. Only two people did not indicate at least one of the following codes: "never experienced that," "that's a difficult/good/interesting question," and "uncertain." The

presence of at least one of these codes suggests that the congregant had not thought deeply about a certain question and appeared uncertain about the answer or seemed caught off guard. Table 25 presents the questions about which people were uncertain and the number of congregants uncertain about each question.

Table 24 – Congregant Responses

	Uncertain	Thinks it is a good/interesting question	Never experienced that situation	Hidden concern	Strong emotion	That's a difficult question	Laughs	Well thought through	Comparing current pastors with former pastors	Cynicism	Evasive	That rarely happens	Timely question
Active	1	1				1							
Active			1					1					
Active	1					1							
Active	1	1				1							
Active			1										
Active		1						1					
Active													
Active		1		1			1						
Active	1		1		1		1						
Active			1										1
Passive		1	1										
Passive	1	1											
Resistant (low eccles)	1			1									
Resistant (low eccles)	1	1	1		1	1						1	
Resistant (low respect)				1	1		1		1	1	1		
Resistant (low self-aware)	1			1	1								
TOTAL	8	7	6	4	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1

Table 25 – Questions Creating Uncertainty

Question about which congregants were uncertain	
Grant or earn trust?	4
What is an authoritarian pastor?	3
Scriptures about relationship with pastor	3
How unique/specialized are pastor skills	3
Controversy	3
Coercive power	2
Respect for office of pastor	2
What should a pastor know about church attenders?	2
What discourages pastors	2
How should decisions be made in the church	2
Is it possible for people to disrespect a pastor's authority?	2
Communication in church vs. secular	1
What to do if I disagree with a pastor	1
Should pastors protect church?	1
Definition of humility	1
Consensus not possible	1
Can pastor organize church as he sees best?	1
What to do if a pastor offended me?	1
How to justify NOT following a pastor's decision	1
How should a pastor introduce a decision	1
What creates trust?	1

What Pastors Should Know about Congregants

As a final question, congregants were asked if there was anything they thought pastors should know about the perspective of congregants. The purpose for the question was to provide an opportunity for congregants to express any frustration they might have with pastors in general. Responses are listed in Table 26. This question seemed to have yielded some insight to three of the resistant congregants whose responses reflected issues with which their pastors expressed concern.

Table 26 – What Congregants Would Like Pastor to Know

What congregants would like pastors to know
Congregant's will sometimes disagree with you
People see the work they do and appreciate them though pastors might not realize it
People are busy and so cannot always participate
Congregants can support the pastor also - doesn't have to be one way
Congregants are not perfect and are at different levels of maturity
This history of the church and any sensitive issues in the congregation
Never get complacent - people will judge every sermon
Pastors should not get their sense of self-worth from congregants it's bad for pastors and a turn off to congregants
Congregants are at different places so need a system of discipleship that moves people through
Teach people to be missionaries where they are because they have access pastors don't have
It's important to understand the strengths, gifts, and weaknesses of congregants
It's more important to preach offensive truth than to tickle ears - so stay focused on that
Pastors should watch their demeanor - because they can seem like they are lording it over - even if they are unaware of this
Pastors probably know more about congregants than vice versa
That some congregants need time before they trust the pastor and become transparent with him
Congregants want more guidance than just a Sunday sermon - pastors should be involved with them at other times too

Noteworthy Congregant Insights

Charmaz encourages researchers to highlight particularly insightful or articulate observations that may be applicable to a broader population.[3] The researcher noted several interesting ideas expressed by the congregants that did not fit well in the above sections.

One of the active followers described a process of change that she had undergone over the last year. Prior to the change, she described herself as a fairly cantankerous follower who did not engage well with authority. This was surprising to the researcher, as

[3] Charmaz, 90.

the researcher felt that she was one of the more self-aware and insightful followers. She attributed the change to several bible studies in which she had participated. She identified several major drivers that changed her heart. The first, was an enhanced view of the church where she came to understand the importance the church's mission and unity. She realized that she had erroneously viewed the church more as a club to serve her, rather than the bride of Christ. She also grew in her submission to Jesus. These things combined to revolutionize her approach to pastoral leadership.

Another active follower expressed concern that many men do not want to submit to another man's authority. This can become problematic in churches since most pastors are men. He suggested that men, in particular, need a developed theology of submission where they learn to understand submission as a voluntary act of love that honors God and blesses others.

Several of the congregants interviewed emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit. Some expressed a reliance on the Holy Spirit as they made decisions about whether to obey a leader, whether to leave a church, whether they held a correct judgement about an issue, whether they could trust a pastor, or whether they had a heart problem that was causing them to resist a pastor's authority. In a few cases, congregants based the legitimacy of a pastor's decision upon whether they felt he had consulted the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

Summary

The field research highlighted several potential challenges and patterns to congregants' successful interaction with pastoral authority. Drawing on the research observations, the implications of the Hebrews 13 texts, and insights from the relevant literature, the researcher offers several practical suggestions. These steps are designed to help congregants conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority in a manner that honors God and brings mutual blessing to them and their pastors.

Observations

Analysis of the data revealed several general observations. First, the congregants interviewed were heavily dependent upon personal authority as their incentive to follow pastoral leadership. Second, congregants demonstrated varying degrees of an underdeveloped concept of role authority and submission. These factors present risk during periods of stress. Additionally, the analysis suggested that a general respect for pastors significantly impacts a congregant's ability to follow his or her current pastor.

Reliance on Personal Authority

The data suggests that congregants' respect for pastors is heavily dependent upon personal authority. While personal authority is preferred, exclusive dependence upon it presents risks to churches. This is especially true during times of stress, when a pastor's personal authority is likely to be eroded. Also, the factors creating and eroding personal

authority differ among congregants. This augments the probability that pastors will find it challenging to create and maintain personal authority.

Pastoral Qualifications are Wide Ranging, Diverse, and Subjective

The data suggests that there are a wide variety of things that congregants believe give pastors credibility and qualify them for pastoral ministry. All of the qualities cited in Table 3 that give pastors credibility had to do with personal authority. None of the congregants said that a pastor's office or ordination established that pastor's credibility (qualities that would be more associated with role authority). Furthermore, it would seem nearly impossible for pastors to be credible to all congregants. A quick read through the wide range of qualities listed in Table 3 makes one wonder how a pastor could possibly embody each of these qualities to every congregant's standard.

Even the idea of humility, only cited once by name in Table 3, is highly interpretable and problematic. The vast majority of qualities that congregants believe embody a humble pastor had to do with external behavior (Table 5). Some of these external behaviors can be easily feigned by a pastor. Also, some of these qualities are highly subject to a congregant's interpretation. For example, what one congregant might consider to be gentle, another congregant might deem to be lacking passion. It is also possible that congregants who describe a humble pastor as one who shares authority could be people who are uncomfortable with a pastor having authority over them. Therefore, any exercise of authority on the pastor's part could be interpreted as not being gentle or refusing to share authority.

Some congregants did equate humility with a pastor's internal qualities. The researcher would agree that humility is an internal quality. This creates a problem,

however, for congregants attempting to determine whether they believe a pastor is truly humble. A congregant cannot know for sure what is really going on in a pastor's heart. Thus, if congregants tie a pastor's personal authority to their observation of humility in him, they will likely set the pastor up for failure and themselves for disillusionment. Ultimately, congregants would be better off trusting God to police a pastor's heart.

Credibility is Easily Eroded

There are many things that destroy credibility. For example, Table 4 shows a wide variety of what people consider to be indicative of a poor leader. Presumably, such leaders would have little personal authority. Many of these credibility destroyers can be subjective. Consider a congregant who continually attempts to impose misguided, self-serving ideas on the church. The pastor rejects these ideas for the well-being of the church. The congregant might, therefore, accuse the pastor of being a dictator who will not consider ideas other than the pastor's own ideas. In this case, however, the pastor is simply protecting the church against the self-serving interests of a single congregant.

Trust is a tremendously significant factor in the development of personal authority. Table 6 shows a wide variety of things that create and destroy trust among a fairly small sampling of congregants. Thus, in a church, it is likely that a pastor will do something to destroy trust or fail to do enough to establish it, at least among some of the congregants. Where a prolonged period of time is required for trust development, there is likely to be a substantial period of distrust before congregants are willing to grant trust to the pastor. It is noteworthy that even some of the active congregants are not inclined to trust a pastor until the pastor earns it. This could be troublesome for a church experiencing conflict where accusations are levelled against the pastor. If a potentially

healthy new congregant visits and hears the unjustified indictment of the pastor, she would be unlikely to remain in the church.

Also, it is noteworthy that only one of the congregants interviewed based trust of a pastor on trust in God. Trust in God is an important foundation for trust in an authority. For example, a congregant may not have access to certain facts about a situation, a pastor's true motivations, or the pastor's spiritual condition. Furthermore, the congregant may not have any control over the outcome of a decision or any guarantee that a pastor's decision is the best decision. Ultimately, the congregant must trust God for these things that are beyond his access or control. Therefore, if trust is to be granted before it is earned, a congregant may have to ground that initial granting of trust to the pastor on the congregant's trust in God. If congregants do not make this connection, granting trust will likely be more difficult in times of stress. The fact that only one congregant made this association suggests that this connection is not an obvious tool that congregants naturally employ when deciding when and how to grant trust to a pastor.

Congregants Have Potentially Unrealistic Expectations

Table 8 shows that only three congregants gave responses that did not require the personal attention of the pastor. Some wanted counsel when they needed it and others wanted the pastor's "attention," which is more difficult to define. The codes under the "attention" category included things like "being available" or "friendship." These activities require substantive time to fulfill. Other attention category codes almost require the pastor to read a congregant's mind (e.g., "notice me," "make me feel welcome," "to intuitively sense when something is wrong with me," or "to remember to ask me how I'm doing when going through a trial"). Table 9 displays things that make congregants feel

that a pastor cares for them. The most common items were: “thinking about me,” “time/presence/availability,” and “acknowledging me.” Twelve out of the sixteen congregants cited at least one of these.

From a leadership perspective, all of these are important services for pastors to pursue to the best of their ability. Nevertheless, it is important for congregants to recognize that there are other factors potentially making it difficult for pastors to meet such expectations. For example, many pastors are stressed and distracted by the weight of preaching on Sunday mornings. Perhaps they have just been told some tragic news about a church member or have just endured an unpleasant criticism. Consequently, pastors may appear aloof or distracted. If congregants are able to consider these factors and grant a pastor grace, then they may enjoy a blessing when the pastor is able to give them the kind of attention they desire. It could be problematic, however, if the congregant needs this attention from the pastor in a specific way in order to be satisfied.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that many want things from a pastor that are only possible in a one-on-one setting with him. The researcher’s own philosophy of ministry emphasizes and values this kind of one-on-one setting. Nevertheless, this type of personal pastoral attention becomes increasingly difficult as the church grows. This may be especially problematic where a congregant first participates in the church when it is small. All churches in this study were fairly small. Congregants that come to a very large church may not have the same expectations for personal attention from certain pastors. Therefore, congregants in a small but growing church may find themselves feeling disappointed with the attention they receive from the pastor. If the church is committed to the increase of the Kingdom, it is likely that the church will grow. It is, therefore,

important for the congregant to engage this reality by finding new ways to interact with the pastor and get her needs met that are commensurate with the changing ministry environment.

Implications

The researcher's preferred leadership style is one of persuasion, rather than command. This assumes, however, that congregants will be persuaded. If congregants will only be persuaded by leaders to whom they grant personal authority, they may find it difficult to follow well. Most pastors do not have the credentials of a public hero or celebrity. Such people often have enormous personal authority and can accomplish much through persuasion alone.

The research showed that personal authority is tenuous. There are a wide variety of factors contributing to the development of personal authority, and it is easily eroded. It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that any pastor will be able to fulfil all the requirements that would establish personal authority in the eyes of all congregants. It is also unlikely that a pastor will be able to avoid the things that would erode that pastor's personal authority. Therefore, an exclusive reliance on personal authority puts churches at great risk and sets up pastors for failure and congregants for frustration.

Underdeveloped Concept of Role Authority and Submission

Analysis of the data suggests that a significant number of congregants have an underdeveloped sense of role authority and submission. In some cases this appeared to be due to a shortcoming in the congregant's character (e.g., such as a lack of respect for pastors in general, a resistance to authority, or self-centeredness). In most cases, however,

this seemed to be the result of a lack of a developed theology or methodology that would have better equipped congregants to conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority.

Office of Pastor

One indicator of the presence of role authority is a congregant's concept of the respect owed to the pastoral office. Analysis of the interviews showed that the resistant congregants relied solely on personal authority and had no sense of role authority. The active followers, however, did have some concept of role authority as evidenced by some sense of respect for the office a pastor holds. Nevertheless, other indicators suggested that many of these active followers' concept of role authority was underdeveloped.

Image and Role of Pastors

When asked to provide images that came to mind when thinking about pastors, congregants provided a wide variety, as seen in Table 10. In some cases, the way the congregants used these images did imply some degree of authority (e.g., "leader"). In other cases, the image was fairly passive (e.g., "caregiver"). It seems plausible that congregants who do not like to imagine a pastor as an authority-holding role would tend to conjure up more neutral or passive images of pastors. This was true for two of the four resistant congregants.

The Pastoral Role

The role that a pastor plays carries implications about degrees and forms of authority. Congregants displayed a wide variety of ideas about the pastoral role. Table 11 shows various pastoral roles divided into three categories. Only eight out of fifty-eight code citations described roles that were clearly imbued with authority. Only three congregants named the pastor as an administrator who clearly had authority over the

activities of the church. It would seem that a significant number of congregants do not tend to think of pastors in clearly authoritative roles.

It is also noteworthy that various congregants ascribed differing levels of authority to the same image or role. For example, the image of "shepherd" was one of the most commonly cited pastoral images. Some congregants imbued the shepherd image with clear authority. Other congregants used the term in a way that implied little or no authority. Likewise, the role of a "guide" was the most commonly cited pastoral role, yet various congregants imbued the role with varying levels of authority. This suggests the difficulty of using images to describe the pastoral role. It also implies that clearer definition about the nature and degree of pastoral authority would be helpful to congregants learning to be better followers.

Considering a Decision Impasse

This lack of a developed concept of role authority would seem to be further reinforced by the general difficulty answering questions about a pastor's role in resolving a decision impasse among the congregation. Most congregants were uncomfortable with the question and initially suggested that the pastor should help the congregation reach consensus. It was hard for many to imagine a scenario where a church is divided and consensus cannot be reached. Therefore, it should not be surprising that congregants with that perspective would not understand the value of the exercise of pastoral authority in such a scenario. However, this lack of understanding brings risk to the church. The responsible exercise of pastoral authority to usher the church through a decision impasse might be seen by those with an underdeveloped understanding of role authority as the pastor lording it over the church.

Engaging Authority

Analysis of the data revealed that congregants had varying personal preferences regarding the embrace of new ideas. Some are naturally excited about new ideas and others cautious. Nevertheless, many indicated a fairly healthy engagement with pastoral decision making. The majority of these congregants were active followers and many of those were mature Christians. Therefore, it is encouraging that most congregants interviewed believed they would critically engage a pastor's decision and that roughly half would do their best to yield to that decision. A significant number of congregants said they would yield based on the pastor's expert authority or out of respect for the pastoral office. This type of critical yielding exemplifies healthy followers and should be developed. It is somewhat concerning, however, that only nine congregants cited inconsistency with the Scripture as the basis for disobeying a pastor's decision. The researcher would have expected this figure to be higher. It is notable that the resistant followers tended to appeal to their own standards (e.g., "my morality," "my standards," "my reason"), rather than to an objective standard.

Submission and Biblical Literacy

The data suggests that the concept of role authority does exist to some extent with many of the congregants, albeit in a somewhat underdeveloped state. The concept of submitting to authority, however, seems much more significantly underdeveloped. Only four congregants used the term *submission* in the course of the interview – all were active followers. These four impressively understood that submission to a pastor is ultimately submission to God, that pastors are accountable to God, and that people will be held accountable by God for disrespecting the pastor. Nevertheless, this understanding of

submission represents only a quarter of the congregants interviewed. Further amplifying this concern is the fact that none of the congregants cited Scriptures that spoke of pastoral authority or the obligation to submit to it. This suggests the possibility that even the congregants that had some degree of understanding of submission to authority did not have a clear biblical grounding for their belief. Without such a grounding, it would seem more likely that even one of these healthy followers with a degree of understanding of the concept of submission to pastoral authority could be more easily derailed in a stress condition.

Implications

An underdeveloped concept of role authority and submission to that authority can place a church at risk. It is important for congregants to have clarity that pastors are endowed with authority that ought to be respected. Those who insist that the only proper leadership is that of persuasion seem to deny that congregants have a moral obligation to submit to role authority. Rather, they submit only if they consider the leader to be worthy of their submission at any given time in any given instance. There is nothing about the role the leader holds that obligates the person to submit. Even if those who deny the legitimacy of role authority think it wise to submit or are even willing to say people should submit, they are unwilling to use the word *authority* which implies an obligation to submit. Should and ought are very different ideas. Saying one should submit leaves the door wide open for a sole reliance on personal authority, which is likely to be eroded in certain circumstances of stress. These are the occasions, however, when role authority is perhaps most necessary to exercise. Therefore, a robust concept of role authority among the congregation is important for church health and stability.

A General Respect for Pastors is a Significant Factor

The data strongly suggests that congregants' estimation of pastors in general has a considerable impact on the way they follow. This estimation correlates strongly with congregants' understanding of the pastoral experience. For example, the resistant (low respect) congregant said that a pastor's job was easy relative to secular jobs. All other congregants said it was very difficult to be a pastor. The resistant (low respect) and the resistant (unreflective) congregants did not think that pastors have specialized skills. All other congregants thought pastors do have specialized skills. This suggests that people with a low level of respect for pastors do not think pastors are able to endure or pursue significant challenges such as would be found in the secular world. Such a perspective is likely to have a negative effect on a pastor's personal and role authority.

Furthermore, the data suggests that even the most mature active followers have a limited understanding of certain key aspects of pastoral ministry such as the difficulties of communication of new ideas. Writers like John Kotter have identified the challenges of communicating new ideas in a secular environment.[1] The researcher has worked in secular and church environments. He has found that communicating in a church environment has some unique challenges and is far more difficult than communicating in a secular office environment. For example, managers have fairly consistent exposure to employees in an office environment and they are more easily able to use the formal authority of their role to compel employees to pay attention. While eleven active followers said that communication in a church environment was more difficult, three thought communication in secular environments was more challenging. It is noteworthy

[1] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

that the resistant (low respect) and the resistant (unreflective) congregants thought that communication was easier in a church environment. This seems consistent with their general sentiment that being a pastor is relatively easy.

The majority of congregants interviewed seemed to be unaware that there are times in which normal means of reconciliation are not sufficient to resolve conflicts, such as getting a church past a decision impasse where consensus seems difficult. Furthermore, most congregants interviewed were uncomfortable with the use of coercive force in certain scenarios. The few that acknowledged its necessity seemed to have experienced scenarios where the use of coercive force had been important for the benefit of the church. Even some of the most mature and biblically literate congregants interviewed insisted that coercive force should only be exercised through formal church discipline. While the researcher strongly agrees that a process of church discipline is the preferable way to deal with incorrigible people, several studies have shown that a startling number of churches do not have the maturity as a body to practice it effectively.[2] This can expose a church to risk. In such scenarios, it is arguable that the exercise of pastoral authority is necessary to help a church move forward by dealing with an incorrigible congregant or a divided church.

This exercise of pastoral authority, however, might appear to other congregants as harsh or domineering, if they do not have a keen understanding of the necessity of such an exercise of authority in certain circumstances. This would be ironic because a significant number of congregants cited congregational conflict as the number one challenge they believe pastors face. Moreover, a significant number of congregants also

[2] Crowell, 67-69.

felt that an important quality of a good follower is the ability and willingness to critically engage a pastor's ideas yet ultimately yield to the pastor's decision (i.e., critical yielding). This suggests that perhaps even the most mature and respectful congregants are unaware of the nature of some types of church conflict and the measures required deal with it.

The data showed a clear lack of congregant understanding of one of the major things their pastors said grieved them – namely congregational apathy. Only three congregants cited congregational apathy and lack of commitment as something that grieved pastors. Ironically, two of these were resistant followers. It seems clear that even a majority of healthy followers are unaware of the significance of this source of pastoral frustration.

In summary, a congregant's general esteem for pastors is likely to be a significant factor in the amount of authority the congregant grants to a pastor and how she engages with that authority. There seems to be a correlation between general esteem for pastors and the level of understanding of the unique challenges of pastoral ministry. Therefore, it follows that churches would benefit from mechanisms that help increase congregational awareness of those challenges.

Recommendations

The data showed that the interview process stimulated many congregants to think through questions they had not previously addressed. Even some of the healthiest, most biblically literate congregants encountered questions about which they were uncertain. Furthermore, several made comments that the very process of stepping through these questions encouraged them to think deeply about the topic and even helped to transform

their thinking. This is consistent with DeWitt's findings.[3] One congregant spoke of how an enhanced understanding of the church, her own heart, and the pastoral role changed her from a fairly cantankerous and cynical church attender to a humble, engaged, and healthy follower. This suggests that equipping people with the right tools can help them become better followers. Using the Hebrews 13 texts as a framework, several practical tools are suggested that can help congregants engage more harmoniously with pastoral authority.

Understand the Anatomy and Nature of Authority

The more profoundly congregants understand the nature of authority, the easier it should be for them to engage and understand it. The concepts of *authority flow* and the *building blocks of authority* can provide insight.

The Concept of Authority Flow

Followers are not passive objects upon which authority is exercised. They must play an active role in the development of and engagement with authority. Authority flows two ways. When authority flows from the follower to the leader, this is the *granting* of authority. When it flows from the leader to the follower, this is the *exercise* of authority. This granting and exercising is different for personal and role authority.

A congregant grants personal authority when he deliberately develops a personal regard for the leader. Sometimes this granting is easy and feels natural and other times it is difficult and must be deliberately developed. A pastor exercises personal authority when that pastor makes recommendations or attempts to persuade the follower. A leader

[3] DeWitt, 92-100.

can only exercise personal authority if the follower has granted it. The more personal authority the follower grants the leader, the easier it is for the follower to be persuaded.

A congregant grants role authority when she recognizes her moral obligation to respect the role a pastor holds. The pastor exercises role authority when that pastor pulls rank and asserts the authority claims that the pastor perceives are attached to the pastoral role. Unlike personal authority, role authority exists even if the congregant does not grant it to the pastor.

Building Blocks of Authority

Hebrews 13:7 is an appeal to follow the leaders' example while 13:17 is more of a command to resistant people. The injunctions "be persuaded" and "yield" likewise suggest varying forms of engaging a pastor's authority. A congregant can deliberately engage a pastor with the intention of trying to understand and endorse an idea (i.e., to be persuaded). If the congregant is ultimately not persuaded, he would then willingly yield to that pastor, if a decision fell within a certain set of parameters. Thus, it seems plausible to observe a progression in the way that a congregant can process his engagement with authority. The researcher suggests a practical progression that congregants can use to better understand the exercise of authority.

Weber and Raven describe bases of power. While, these models offer helpful insights, the researcher would modify their models for applicability in a church context. One of the first modifications is to change the idea of power to that of authority. Weber uses the term "power" to describe a probability that a follower will obey a leader.[4] The higher the probability a leader will be obeyed, the more power the leader has. Raven

[4] Weber, 152-53.

adopts the term "power" in his paradigm for similar reasons.[5] This may well be a helpful paradigm in a secular world where there is no appeal to a moral obligation to follow a leader. It does not apply to a church community, however, where all parties of an authority transaction have a biblically prescribed moral obligation. Therefore, the researcher prefers to reserve the term "power" only for specific instances where some type of force is required. Instead, the term "authority" will generally be used, according to the researcher's definition: "A quality one person has that motivates another to listen to, be influenced by, or perhaps even obey him or her. This quality can be granted to a leader by a follower, and/or assumed and exercised by the one possessing it."

With this qualification, the researcher suggests a model based upon a revised version of Raven's bases of power, Carrol's insights about personal authority and authority of office, and Heinrichs' observations about how an effective pastor will utilize various power bases for various exigencies. Raven suggests six bases of power: informational, reward, coercive, referent, legitimate, and expert.[6] The researcher would modify this taxonomy in the following ways.

First, bases of power are renamed "bases of authority," with two exceptions. Coercive power remains a base of power. Informational power is simply called "information." This is because the term refers to a follower understanding and agreeing with something in a manner in which she voluntarily decides to pursue it. The terms "authority" and "power" are not applicable, since the follower would pursue the course irrespective of the authority or power a leader has exercised.

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[5] Raven, "The Bases of Power," 1.

[6] Raven, "The Bases of Power," 1-9.

Second, reward and referent authority are set aside because they are inconsistent with Christian teaching as ultimate motivations for following a leader. If a congregant requires some type of reward (e.g., favor or praise), he will be tempted to follow only if he believes he will be rewarded for following. This encourages the congregant to self-centeredness and making an idol out of the approval of others. Referent authority is renamed "affection" for clarity of application. This type of authority is also set aside because it is an unstable and inconsistent reason to follow. Congregant's may not have a natural affection for or attraction to a pastor. Even where this exists, it is likely to be inconstant. Moreover, relying too heavily on personal charisma is likely to elevate a pastor to an ontological status that is inconsistent with the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers.[7] Rather, it is better to view reward and affection as blessings, not requisite conditions for following. For example, it is certainly a blessing to be acknowledged for faithful service. Likewise, it is easier to follow a leader for whom one feels a degree of affection. Therefore, it makes sense for a congregant to take deliberate steps to develop his or her affection for the pastor.

Third, the researcher substitutes "role authority" for Raven's "legitimate power."

Fourth, Raven's "coercive power" is slightly redefined to reflect the ability of a leader to compel a follower to comply with a directive against his or her will. While this does not imply the use of physical force, it may involve some force of personality. It may also involve Raven's idea of legitimate power, such as an officially recognized right to remove a person from a position or insist that a course of action be taken. It could further include the exercise of an effective process of church discipline.

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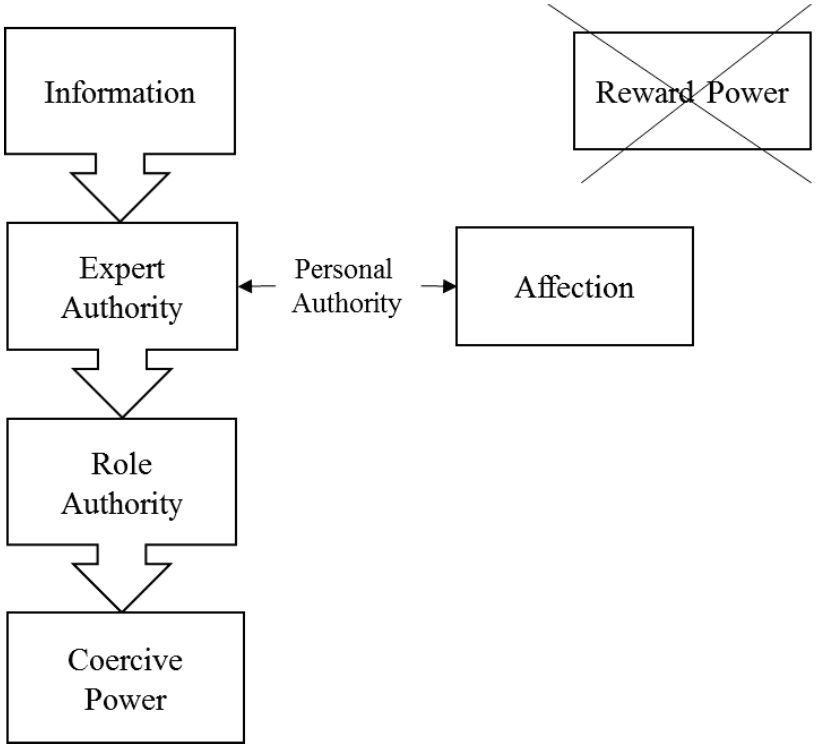
[7]Richard Quebedeaux, *By what Authority: The Rise of Personality Cults in American Christianity*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 110-118.

The final modification is to arrange these bases in a hierarchical form, as presented in figure 1.

Figure 1 – The Building Blocks of Authority



Heinrich suggested that leaders employ various bases in varying situations.[8] This model, however, focuses on how followers can employ each base. The hierarchy reflects a preferred order as to when the follower invokes a base. Preference runs from top to bottom, from most preferred to least preferred. The insufficiency of any level requires an appeal to the next level down. As Carrol has pointed out, expert and referent authority are forms of personal authority (though in this model referent authority is removed from the appellate hierarchy).[9] Thus, the appeal moves from information to personal authority to

[8] Heinrichs, 150-51.

[9] Carroll, *As One with Authority*, 45-49.

role authority and finally to coercive power. There are unique dynamics of engagement for leaders and followers at each level.

The top base is information. This is preferred because congregants willingly comply with suggestions or directives when they believe it makes sense to do so. The motivation is entirely internal and involves no essential interaction with a leader. This should encourage leaders to educate congregants about the purpose and importance of a suggestion or directive. More importantly for this study, however, the information base highlights the importance of congregants to diligently engage a pastor's efforts to provide information about a suggestion or decision. A congregant might even proactively ask a pastor to direct him to some sources for further study about the issue. Where a congregant is not persuaded by information, however, he must appeal to the next base below – expert authority.

When expert authority is invoked, the congregant is able trust that the pastor has certain expertise, experience, gifting, or information that enables the pastor to make a judgment that is worthy of being followed, even if the congregant does not understand the rationale for that judgment. For congregants, this suggests developing a sense of humility when evaluating a pastor's abilities. This should involve carefully acknowledging the pastor's training, experience, and spiritual gifting, as well as the information to which the pastor might have access. Where the congregant remains unconvinced by the pastor's expert authority, she must appeal to the next base below – role authority.

When role authority is invoked, the congregant recognizes his moral obligation to yield to a pastor's decision by virtue of the role, responsibility, and accountability the

pastor has. When a congregant is unable to appeal to role authority, he must recognize that he is making a clear decision to resist the pastor's authority. Therefore, the congregant must be convinced that his reasons for resisting pastoral authority trump his moral obligation to yield. He must also recognize that his decision forces pastors to appeal to the next base below, coercive power.

A congregant is an active participant with all of the bases except coercive power where she is passive. When coercive power is invoked, actions are taken that attempt to force the congregant to comply with a directive against her will. It is important to note that an appeal to coercive power often results in significant collateral damage. Even if a pastor is justified in invoking coercive power, the result can be disenchantment among other congregants that is often difficult to reverse. The pastor then faces the dilemma of allowing the congregant to disregard a directive (which may harm the church) or exercise coercive power and risk a Pyrrhic victory. This is why a robust concept of role authority is so important. When role authority is able to serve as the final appeal, the invocation of coercive force can be avoided.

Deliberately Develop and Protect Personal Authority

The Hebrews 13:17 injunction to "be persuaded" represents a voluntary desire to want to give weight to what a pastor is saying. It is easier for congregants to be persuaded when a pastor's personal authority is high. Therefore, it is important that congregants deliberately develop and preserve a pastor's personal authority. There are several steps congregants can take.

Develop Esteem for Pastors in General

The research suggested that a high esteem for pastors in general impacts the likelihood that a specific pastor will have personal authority. Therefore, a first step a congregant should take is to examine himself to evaluate the level of esteem he holds for pastors in general. If esteem for pastors in general is low, an enhancement of the following things can increase that esteem:

Develop a robust understanding of the pastoral role. A detailed pastoral theology is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the researcher recommends the adoption of an expanded understanding of a pastor as one called by God to exercise authority in the church for the benefit of the church by protecting, guiding, and nourishing the church.

Develop an appreciation for the challenges pastors face. Pastors are accountable to God for the way they exercise authority in shepherding the church. They also face considerable challenges unique to pastoral ministry. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, however, some of these challenges are mentioned in the Appendix. This accountability to God and the challenges of pastoral leadership create a considerable burden that pastors bear.

Develop a high ecclesiology. A detailed ecclesiology is beyond the scope of this paper, but the data suggests that a more sublime concept of the church and its importance in salvation history is likely to enhance a congregant's esteem for pastors. If a congregant holds a low view of the church as a sort of social club, a pastor is likely to be judged based upon the way in which that pastor fulfills the desires of its members. The higher a congregant's concept of the church, however, the more likely the congregant will understand the importance of church unity and peace, the criticality of church mission,

and the fearsome responsibility with which pastors are charged. Also, the congregant will be less likely to leave the church for trivial reasons.

Develop the Personal Authority of the Current Pastor

The congregant's next step is to carefully examine the amount of personal authority the current pastor has in the congregant's mind. If the pastor's personal authority is low, the congregant should take deliberate action to increase it. First, the congregant should acknowledge that authority and trust must be granted. He cannot be passive in this process and assume these things will develop; he must be actively engaged.

Next, the congregant can pursue measures that will help him get to know and appreciate the pastor to the degree possible in that particular church environment. This may mean reading the pastor's biography, attending "meet the pastor" engagements, participating in an activity the pastor leads, visiting the pastor during office hours, or inviting the pastor's family to dinner. The congregant can do her best to develop affection (i.e., referent authority) by observing qualities in the pastor that are laudable and appealing. She can develop expert authority by deliberately identifying and acknowledging the pastor's skills, gifting, and experience. Taking the time to thank God for the pastor as a gift to the church will also increase a pastor's personal authority.

Understand the Things that Erode Personal Authority

Even if one is inclined to grant authority to pastors, there are still things that can erode it. Therefore, the practice of grace-giving is critical. Giving grace to a pastor is like giving grace to anyone. It is putting into practice texts like Colossians 3:12-14:

> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

That those in authority need grace is not always obvious to those under their authority. This could be because congregants put those in authority on a pedestal and idealize them as almost superhuman. Conversely, congregants might worry about power making authorities prideful. They may see those in authority as so heavily armored that it would require numerous blows in order for the authorities to feel a sufficient number to keep them humble. It is important to remember, however, that Scripture's grace-giving directives apply to everyone in the church – including pastors. There are several instances where grace-giving is essential to avoiding the erosion of a pastor's personal authority.

Differing Congregant Expectations. The research clearly showed the diversity of congregant expectation that create personal authority. Some of these expectations are mutually exclusive. For example, some congregants are attracted to a pastor who demonstrates decisiveness and strength. Others are put off by such a display and would prefer a pastor to be outwardly gentle and more passive. Therefore, it is important for a congregant to give grace to a pastor, recognizing that the things that appeal to her about a pastor might be off-putting to other congregants.

Growing Pastors. Congregants can easily forget that pastors are God's works in progress, just as all congregants are. Pastors may be young and less experienced in life than they will be when they are older. They are mortal and will make mistakes. They are sinners and will allow sin to draw out their character flaws on occasion. They are under stress from the challenges of pastoral ministry and the intensity of spiritual warfare that

most pastors experience, so they will succumb to those pressures from time to time. As much as they would like to feel a constant connection to God, they sometimes feel far from Him or as if He is not speaking to them.

None of these things are excuses for poor shepherding. Thus, pastors should be trained in leadership and held accountable for egregious behavior. Nevertheless, congregants should recognize that God is working in pastors' lives also. Therefore, congregants should show grace whenever possible when a pastor's outward behavior erodes that pastor's personal authority. If reconciliation is needed, the congregant should graciously attempt to work through an offense with the pastor, rather than allow the erosion of the pastor's personal authority. Congregants should also avoid trying to discern the motivations of a pastor's heart. It is exceedingly difficult for a congregant to truly know if a pastor is being prideful, unspiritual, greedy, lustful, and so on. Therefore, it is better that the congregant avoid trying to police a pastor's heart and leave that to God who is certainly working to conform the pastor to the image of Christ.

Pastoral Leadership Challenges. There are certain complexities to pastoral leadership that may not be obvious to congregants (Appendix). Sometimes, these complexities take the form of no-win decisions a pastor must make where the pastor must choose between two unappealing alternatives. Other times, the pastor must engage with a congregant who is intransigent and unhealthy. It is not uncommon that the pastor is the only person who experiences the congregant's dysfunction. Thus, the pastor's engagement with the congregant could be viewed by others as unwarranted or inappropriate. The more one understands these leadership challenges, the more one

develops empathy for the pastor and it becomes easier to give grace and preserve the pastor's personal authority.

Learn How and When to Yield to Authority

When information and personal authority are insufficient to persuade a congregant to follow a leader, role authority must be invoked. In those circumstances, several practical steps can help the congregant yield to authority.

Develop Role Authority

The congregant can use the Hebrews 13:17 text to recognize and acknowledge that he has a moral obligation before God to submit to pastoral authority within certain parameters. Therefore, the congregant must understand the processes that install and remove those leaders who hold pastoral authority. During the time those leaders are in that role, the congregant is obliged to submit to their authority, as long as that submission would not cause him to violate Scripture.

Actively Engage

The following steps will help the congregant actively engage a pastor's idea or decision:

Engage with all education and communication efforts regarding a decision. Communicating complex ideas in a church environment is challenging. Therefore, it is critical that congregants actively engage any efforts that leadership designs to help congregants understand the rationale for an idea or decision. Where questions remain, congregants should ask clarifying questions. This will increase the information base and make yielding easier.

Express concerns respectfully. If a congregant sees something that leaders have not considered, the leaders and the church could benefit greatly from the insight. Congregants should consider, however, that the leadership has devoted their experience, information, time, and focus to the initiative. Therefore, they may have already evaluated the congregant's suggestion or concern. For this reason, it is important that congregants present ideas with humility and no expectation that those ideas will be accepted.

Try to see the pastor's perspective. The pastor has probably given considerable thought to an initiative. If the initiative is particularly controversial, the pastor has probably suffered a good bit of agony over it. While the pastor has likely worked hard to consider the perspectives of various people in the church, it is virtually impossible to consider all of them. It is much easier for congregants to consider the pastor's perspective. Things look different from the perspective of leadership. The more a congregant understands this perspective, the easier it will be to yield to a decision.

Assess the Legitimacy of Directive

Any injunction to submit to the authority of another human being must include some form of appellate authority. This is because people must have a reference point they can use to determine whether obeying the human authority is wise and required. If one demands adherence to pastoral authority, then one must be able to appeal to a greater authority in order to obey – particularly when he does not want to obey. Without an appellate authority, too strong a demand to "obey leaders" is likely to lead to blind and damaging obedience. Conversely, attempts to avoid blind obedience by discrediting or invalidating the concept of authority will lead to people simply deciding that they can pick and choose when to obey, according to their own caprice.

It is argued here that Scripture must be the ultimate appellate authority. While reason and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit serve to illuminate one's understanding of Scripture, congregants should be cautious about relying on them apart from Scripture. It is too easy to appeal to "common sense" or the "leading of the Holy Spirit" when deciding whether to follow a pastoral directive or teaching. This does not mean that human reason or divine guidance are invalid where Scripture is truly silent. Nevertheless, congregants should consider the potential for self-serving motivations when rejecting pastoral decisions that cannot be clearly refuted by Scripture. Rather, congregants should do their best to test all things by their best understanding of Scripture. This does not guarantee that all people will interpret Scripture in the same way, but it should mean that all parties are doing their best to aim at the same target. Hopefully, this common appellate authority will increase the potential for understanding.

Therefore, when leadership moves ahead with a decision despite the congregant's concerns, the congregant must first assess the legitimacy of directive against the appellate authority of Scripture. In light of the experience of some cults, the first question the congregant should ask is whether the decision will bring physical harm to anyone. Any pastoral directive that would cause physical harm would contradict Scripture – period! Such a decision should be unhesitatingly disobeyed for the safety of all affected by it. A courageous follower who disobeys a harmful injunction might also save the greater group of followers from harm.[10]

Next, the congregant should do her best to determine whether the decision contradicts Scripture in any other way. For example, if a pastor forbids a congregant from

[10] Blass, 199-204.

ever sharing the Gospel with other people, this would clearly violate Scripture and should be disobeyed. If, however, the decision does not contradict Scripture, the congregant should consider it to have passed the legitimacy of directive.

There will be occasions where assessing the legitimacy of a directive involves a pastor's teaching, rather than an administrative decision. The congregant might believe she has a doctrinal disagreement with the pastor. In such cases, the congregant should engage the pastor's perspective carefully and humbly. With greater understanding, she may decide that the issue is not significant enough to pursue further. If she decides that the doctrinal issue is of major concern, she should first consider whether she is responsible for policing doctrine. This will depend upon the polity of the church. If policing doctrine is her responsibility, she should pursue the appropriate procedures. If policing doctrine is not her responsibility, then she should leave the church in peace. This parting will be no surprise to the pastor if respectful dialogue has occurred prior to her departure. If the congregant decides that the doctrinal issue does not rise to the level where she must leave the church, she should determine to support the doctrine – though she might still hold her own nuances of interpretation. It would be unacceptable at this point, however, for her to remain at the church and lobby for doctrinal change.

Employ the Yielding Process

When a congregant disagrees with a leadership decision that passes the legitimacy of directive criteria, there are several possible reasons for the disagreement. Yielding can be facilitated by considering the following possibilities for the disagreement:

The congregant might have a rebellious heart. Therefore, it is critical that the congregant engage in serious self-reflection. The research showed a connection between

healthy followership and a willingness to self-reflect. Sin can affect people with a tendency toward self-interest, resisting authority, and a blindness toward those pathologies.[11] Therefore, part of this self-reflection might involve consulting with others who will speak Gospel truth to the congregant when necessary.

The congregant might not have sufficient information. It is possible that if the congregant had the same experience base, information, or perspective the leaders had, the congregant would make the same decision. A better understanding of the complexities of pastoral ministry can help the congregant appreciate this possibility (Appendix).

The pastor might have made a bad decision. Pastors are fallible and certainly capable of making bad decisions. It is possible that the bad decision is a result of pride, ego, or inexperience. It is also possible that even the most experienced and self-aware leaders would have struggled to choose between several undesirable options. The congregant should realize that it would be immodest for him to assume that he would have made a better decision than the pastor. In order for the congregant to more easily accept the possibility that the leader made a bad decision, the congregant must place ultimate trust in God. God will correct a pastor's heart if necessary and will ensure that the ultimate outcome of the decision works for the good of the church. Thus, it is all the more critical for the congregant to pray for the pastor's wisdom and spiritual growth.

There will be occasions when a decision cannot be clearly shown to fail the legitimacy of directive but where a congregant believes the decision will be disastrous. In such situations, the congregant should consider the following possibility: if those who are accountable for the decision decide to move forward, the congregant might experience

[11] Moroney, 90-97.

great blessing from such a leap of faith if he decides to go along with the decision. That notwithstanding, if the congregant simply cannot move forward with the decision, then he clearly does not trust the leadership and should not remain in that church. In such a case, the congregant must be prepared to give an account to God for his decision to disobey a directive that cannot be shown to be clearly unbiblical. Congregants can set themselves up to better weather this type of stress scenario by choosing a church wisely. They should determine up front whether they can support the church's doctrine and whether they believe they can trust the church's form of governance and those who govern. They can then more easily leave significant decisions that pass the legitimacy of directive in God's hands.

Understand and Acknowledge the Benefits of Being Persuaded and Yielding

Hebrews 13:17 clearly states that pastors watch over the souls in the congregation. Whether this refers to salvation, blessing in this life, or spiritual reward in the next, it is clearly an awesome responsibility. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that the way congregants follow pastors has an impact on pastors' joy and grief. This, in turn, significantly impacts a pastor's ability to discharge his responsibility to watch over souls. In other words, congregants play an important role in helping pastors lead in ways that benefit congregants. The following three practical steps will help congregants to help leaders lead them well.

Acknowledge that Respecting Pastors is Beneficial to the Church

Respecting pastors is beneficial to the church. Conversely, disrespecting pastors is harmful to the church. While this may seem obvious, people tend to pursue what they can clearly articulate. The research showed that these connections were not clear even to the

healthiest followers. Therefore, it is important that congregants deliberately reflect on this biblical teaching.

Avoid Spiritual Apathy

The pastors in the study reported that disrespect for their authority was a major source of grievance. They also revealed that another significant source of grief was congregants' spiritual apathy. This is consistent with some interpretations of Hebrew 13:17 which hold that a source of leaders' grievance is giving an account to Jesus about apathetic congregants. Congregants would greatly bless their pastors if they would actively seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. This spiritual maturity will bless the congregant, the pastor, and the church.

Increase Understanding of How Followers Impact Leaders

The more a congregant understands the dynamics of the church and the unique challenges of pastoral ministry, the more real the connection between following and leading will be. When people understand why something is important, they are more likely to do it. Therefore, congregants should pursue opportunities to better understand phenomena like the traps described in Appendix.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Project

Strengths

The research provided insights about how healthy followers conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority. It is tempting to think that only rebellious congregants are in need of instruction on pastoral authority. The analysis suggested, however, that a robust, biblical approach to following is important to even the healthiest followers.

The data also suggested that negative feelings toward pastors are likely to be observable by an interviewer if the proper questions are asked. The resistant (low respect) and resistant (unreflective) congregants made statements implying negative feelings toward pastors. This underscores the importance of the role that an interviewer can play in helping to determine whether negative feelings toward pastors are present. This is crucial considering that people often tend to give answers that are more socially acceptable (e.g., positive toward pastors), even when they believe something different. In some cases, this inconsistency is a deliberate attempt to deceive another person, but in other cases the cause is deception of self. Questions specifically designed to help draw a congregant's true feelings about pastors to the surface must be included and congregant responses noted. Accepting facile responses at face value will likely overlook critical insights.

Thus, the project appears to have yielded some useful insights upon which future research can be based.

Weaknesses

The researcher is a pastor, so he suspected that some of those interviewed may have skewed or filtered their responses to some degree in order to avoid overly offending him. Charmaz suggests that sometimes one who is perceived as an outsider is able to elicit more honest responses that one who is perceived as an insider. She writes of a Somali researcher who thought his status as a Somali would help him gain unique access to Somali culture. He found, however, that other Somalis tended to give him glib responses because they were uncomfortable saying anything negative about their culture

to a fellow Somali.[12] While the researcher believes that much useful information was collected during the interviews, he also suspects that a similar process was at work. Therefore, a researcher who is perceived as more culturally neutral, as opposed to a pastor who is deeply invested in the research question, might elicit more honest congregant responses.

A second weakness of the project is that none of the churches participating in the study were under significant stress. Therefore, it remains unknown how some of those categorized as healthy followers would respond in conditions of substantive ecclesial strain. Under stress, hidden issues are more likely to rise to the surface. There was evidence of hidden concerns among some of those interviewed that provided some helpful data. Nevertheless, these types of subterranean issues might have been more obvious and abundant in churches enduring considerable stress.

A third weakness is that the researcher was unable to interact with a sufficient number of unhealthy and disgruntled congregants. Analysis proceeded with an awareness of a lack of saturation for this data set. Thus, it was difficult to confidently identify characteristics and patterns that would enable clear categorization of different types of resistant followers (e.g., passive aggressive vs. outwardly aggressive).

Finally, the study would have benefitted from further exploration of congregants' ecclesiology, conception of the Gospel, and ability to self-reflect. The data suggests that these things might significantly impact how congregants conceptualize and engage pastoral authority. Because each interview was designed for a single setting, it was not realistic to explore these issues to the extent that would have been preferable.

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[12] Charmaz, 61,

Consistencies and Departures from Expected Results

Consistencies

The researcher suspected that many congregants would demonstrate a lack of a developed conception of pastoral authority and how to engage with it. The data analysis confirmed that these could be further enhanced, even among those congregants considered by their pastors to be healthy followers.

Also, the researcher anticipated that there would be a wide variety, even contradictory qualities that contributed to a pastor's personal authority. The data analysis confirmed this to be the case.

Finally, the researcher suspected that a low esteem for pastors in general would significantly impact a congregant's conception and engagement with the authority of his or her current pastor. While more samples would have been preferable to establish this relationship more clearly, the data did suggest a correlation.

Departures

The researcher thought there would be somewhat more biblical literacy among congregants, particularly regarding the relationship between pastors and congregants. It is important to clarify that the interview process was not structured to comprehensively assess a congregant's biblical literacy. Nevertheless, it was fairly apparent that some congregants showed a familiarity with the Scripture and appealed to it in some way for some of their responses. It was surprising, therefore, that none of the congregants made a clear appeal to any of the most salient pastoral authority texts.

The researcher also thought that more resistant followers would view the research project as an opportunity to vent their concerns about pastoral authority. In fact, the

resistant followers were far more likely to decline an invitation to participate in the study than were active followers. It is difficult to know why this was the case. Perhaps the resistant congregants were not comfortable that the researcher is a pastor. Whatever the reason, the researcher was surprised and disappointed that including these congregants in the study proved to be so elusive.

Finally, it was surprising that churches under stress were reluctant to participate in the study. The researcher would have expected that pastors of such churches would welcome an opportunity to gain some insight into the cause of the tension with their congregation. It is difficult to draw any clear conclusions from the relatively small number of churches who were invited to participate. Nevertheless, the researcher's experience on a micro level seems consistent with larger scale research, such as Leas who found that vast majority of the churches in crisis that he solicited refused to participate in his research.[13]

[13] For example, Leas, 8-11.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

Personal Reflections and Growth

At the end of the project, the researcher is more convinced than ever that this topic is important for the church. It is also clear to him that he approaches the topic not as a passion, but as an obligation. Few in Christendom appear to want to engage this topic directly and frankly. This project has helped the researcher understand that his real passion is for the church as a whole – not the topic of authority per se. The church is to reflect the glory of God on earth. When it is dysfunctional, this glory is obscured or even non-existent. Conflict between pastors and congregants is a significant contributor church dysfunction. Congregants' conceptualization and ability to successfully engage pastoral authority is significant source of this conflict. The researcher believes that he has some insights about the topic and a willingness to explore it. He is hopeful that more people will engage the topic honestly.

Because the researcher is no longer in a church where his authority is disrespected, he has lost some interest in the topic, and his sense of urgency is gone. This is troubling to the researcher because it supports some anecdotal evidence that pastors facing serious disrespect for their authority are often ignored, unsupported, and even suspected of bringing it on themselves. The researcher knows better than this, as he has experienced severe pain in a previous church caused by an egregious lack of respect for pastoral authority on the part of some congregants. The researcher is aware of many of his leadership mistakes and can relate them to some of the consequences he faced. He

remains convinced, however, that a significant part of his experience was the church's lack of robust understanding of pastoral authority.

What disquiets the researcher, however, is how quickly he has lost focus on the problem now that his ministry environment has changed. On several recent occasions, the researcher has heard other pastors speak of the lack of respect for their authority in the church. The researcher has observed feelings stirring in him of not wanting to be bothered by the drama or even wondering what the pastor is doing wrong such that the people the pastor leads have little respect for that pastor's authority. These feelings are quickly checked by what the researcher understands about the reality of the lack of respect for pastoral authority. He therefore engages these pastors with empathy and an offer of help. Nevertheless, these initial internal reactions within someone who has directly experienced and researched the issue underscores the difficulty of getting the church to focus sympathetically on the subject.

Furthermore, this project has emphasized the importance of instructing healthy churches about the topic. The researcher is more convinced than ever that many congregants who think they have high regard for pastoral authority can become confused and disillusioned during times of church stress. If a church is not experiencing stress, it may not be aware of how dysfunctional it could become under pressure. Therefore, it may in actuality be a powder keg wrapped in ribbons and bows. The process of deeply engaging with the subject has helped the researcher to articulate a concept that he had previously sensed at a more intuitive level and to be better able to convey that concept to others in the Kingdom.

While absolutely convinced of the importance of this work, the researcher must admit to some fear that his work will be used to empower truly abusive pastors to lord it over the people they are to serve. This is certainly not his goal. The researcher believes that those who write on pastoral leadership should continue to help produce secure, generous, sacrificial pastors who know how to equip the church for works of ministry. Leaders should not use followership literature to manipulate followers any more than followers should use leadership literature to manipulate leaders. Both of these disciplines have their proper place.

This project has reinforced for the researcher that he is a pastor, not a researcher. The researcher prefers to engage people as a pastor, not examine them with a poker face and proper distance as a researcher must. Thus, the interview process required considerable self-discipline for the researcher to resist responding as a pastor to the various topics discussed with the interviewees. Moreover, the researcher discovered that he is not especially enthusiastic about the research process. He does, however, enjoy the results of research. The researcher's real passion is taking scholarly work and applying it to those in the church. This might involve taking academic work and helping lay people apply it to their lives. It might also consist of incorporating academic work into church leadership. The researcher enjoys teaching the church through writing, preaching, and counseling. At this time in his life, he has little interest in writing for academia, though he has great respect for academic efforts. The researcher does enjoy thinking through difficult problems and theorizing. Therefore, he highly values academic research that reinforces or corrects this theorizing. The researcher is just not the one to do the research.

Nevertheless, the researcher would enjoy teaching pastors and laity about the practical skills involved in engaging pastoral authority and its importance to the church.

Finally, the field research process showed the researcher how limited research can be and how difficult it is to apply its results universally – even when conducted by experienced research teams with significant resources and time. The researcher was struck by how little research he could accomplish as a single researcher, even though he invested an enormous amount of time. These observations combined with the reluctance to engage the topic make the researcher concerned about the likelihood that significant research will be done on the topic this project addresses. Nevertheless, the researcher intends to write a popular work that will include many of the arguments, observations, and recommendations advanced in this project. It will be an offering to the church that he hopes will be helpful.

Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher sees at least three areas where the study of pastoral authority can benefit the church: evaluating churches, training congregants, and conceptualization.

Evaluating and Predicting

There are many things that affect a church's health. This study argues that the nature of congregant conception and engagement with pastoral authority is a significant factor. This issue is more significant during times of stress. Therefore, a topic for further research would be the creation of an instrument that could assess the condition of a congregation vis-a-vis pastoral authority. Such an instrument would show where healthy followers might benefit from an enhanced understanding of pastoral authority. It would

also help to identify the presence of unhealthy followers. This information could be predictive of how well a church is likely to weather a time of stress.

To create such an instrument, more data would need to be collected from churches under stress and particularly from resistant congregants. A neutral researcher is likely to have better access to these sources than a pastor doing research. This instrument should also be designed to better evaluate the nature and depth of congregants' ecclesiology, ability to self-reflect, and concept of the Gospel.

Training Congregants

The research suggested that congregants benefitted to some degree from simply answering the interview questions. The researcher also made recommendations he believes would help congregants better conceptualize and engage with pastoral authority. Thus, another area for further study would be to assemble a curriculum that leverages some of the findings of this project and administers that training to a test group. The effectiveness of the curriculum would then be evaluated using an appropriate instrument.

Conceptualizing

The idea of authority and submission between pastors and congregants has not received extensive treatment in Christian circles. Other than a few more robust explorations, it is generally referenced only in a cursory manner in the context of a broader discussion. It would be helpful, however, to have several more careful engagements with the topic at a conceptualizing level. Such engagements might further plumb the nature of biblical authority relationships between congregants and pastors, exploring whether they are egalitarian, paternalistic, hierarchical, symmetric, asymmetric,

and so on. Further definition of these terms and their application and implication in the church would be helpful.

It would also be instructive to evaluate the profile of those holding to various concepts of authority and submission. Is there a difference among denominations? Is there a relationship to theological disposition (e.g. liberal, evangelical, fundamentalist, etc.)? How does epistemology affect one's view? Do pastors who put these concepts into practice hold different perspectives than those who have not been a pastor? Do senior pastors and associate pastors have any differences in viewpoint?

It would also be a great blessing to the church to have a more comprehensive theology that delineated the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers in the church. Perhaps, this type of discussion would draw out the mutually beneficial qualities of godly relationships between pastors and congregants, rather than focusing on leadership and followership as separate disciplines. It would seem that either topic is somewhat lacking without the backdrop of the other, just as pastors and congregants are enriched by their relationship to one another. The researcher suspects there is great beauty and blessing to be discovered in deeply reflecting on God's intentions for authority and submission.

APPENDIX: COMMON PASTORAL LEADERSHIP TRAPS

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Followers can be tempted to criticize a leader's decision. This is often because the follower believes that the right decision is obvious and is frustrated that the leader did not pursue it. The concept of a leadership trap helps followers understand the complexity of the environment in which leaders must operate. Traps show that often there are opposing alternatives between which leaders must choose. Every leadership environment has its own traps. Some of the traps common to church environments are listed below. An enhanced understanding of these traps should help congregants better empathize with pastors. Congregants can acknowledge that navigating these traps is hard enough for pastors even without congregants being critical or apathetic. While some of these traps seem obvious, the important thing for the congregant is to state and acknowledge them clearly. This articulation can provide clear recourse to a congregant when he finds it difficult to give grace or esteem to a pastor.

Familiarity vs. Distance Trap

Sometimes people follow leaders who relate to them from considerable socio-psychological distance. Popper argued that followers can easily idealize these leaders.[1] Thus, their personal authority is extremely strong. They are also sufficiently distant such that followers are unable to see things in them that might erode personal authority. Bruce ties this phenomenon to the church. He suggests that the Hebrews 13:7 leaders were

[1] Popper, 109-120.

distant because they had died or retired. Therefore, it was easy for the Hebrews to idealize them. The 13:17 leaders, however, were currently leading the church. Because the church was probably fairly small, there was little distance between them and the congregants. Therefore, the congregants would see the flaws and even the mundane in their current leaders.[2] These things can erode personal authority.

In churches, many congregants value the opportunity to be close to their pastors. They also value pastors who they consider to be authentic and transparent, rather than distant and mysterious. The challenge is that pastors who pursue authenticity and transparency risk the contempt that familiarity breeds. If they are more distant, they may be idealized. In this case, however, they may also be accused of not being accessible, approachable, or authentic.

This has implications for church size. Pastors in larger churches will often have the personal authority that comes from distance (though, in the researcher's view, this is a hollow form of personal authority). Pastors in smaller churches tend not to have that advantage. Likewise, pastors and other leaders who write books or publish podcasts, as well as visiting preachers, all have the personal authority that comes from distance. This principle could also apply to pastors from a congregant's past who have become idealized and enshrined in the congregant's memory. Thus, these leaders can have more personal authority than the church's own pastor.

Therefore, it is important for congregants to recognize that if they want a pastor to be accessible, transparent, and authentic, they must not swoon over other leaders who possess sufficient distance that they can be easily idealized. Rather, congregants must

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[2] Bruce, 385-86.

remind themselves that it is their own pastor who stands watch tirelessly over their spiritual condition and who will be held accountable by God.

Humility vs. Toughness Trap

Some congregants base their respect on whether they perceive that a pastor is sufficiently tough. They may be accustomed to operating in an environment where respect is garnered by the assertion of ego and personal force. If they do not observe this quality in a pastor, therefore, they may not believe that pastor could survive in the non-ecclesial "real world." This can be a problem for pastors who are doing their best to follow the injunctions to lead with humility, gentleness, and not be quarrelsome. If the pastor engages in chest-puffing in order to gain the respect of some, that pastor may alienate others who would consider such a display to be inconsistent with the qualities of humility.

Therefore, it is important that congregants not assume that a pastor is weak or soft just because that pastor does not exhibit swagger. On the other hand, when pastors do assert themselves with confidence or even some force of personality, congregants must not assume that such a display is inconsistent with humility. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

Expertise Trap

One of the important functions of the church is to make disciples. This means that pastors have a responsibility to teach congregants how to teach other congregants. Pastors will therefore encourage congregants to develop their spiritual leadership and engage in ministry. It is important for congregants to participate in this process with humility. If they are not careful, they can become sophomoric as they grow. For example, a

congregant may have read a book, listened to a podcast, or heard a talk show dealing with a certain topic. He can then be tempted to criticize a pastor's doctrinal understanding or ministry methods. If he perceives the pastor as unresponsive to his concerns, he may accuse the pastor of not being as obsessed with the issue or approach as he is.

Pastors cannot resort to trying to keep congregants consciously ignorant in order to prevent them from spreading their wings. This may be a temptation for pastors when dealing with sophomoric congregants, but it flies in the face of the pastoral mission to equip the saints for ministry. Therefore, it is all the more important that congregants respect and acknowledge the pastor's expertise, experience, and gifting. Pastors do not have all the answers and should always be learning. They are never beyond scrutiny. It is very possible, however, that the pastor has given an issue considerable thought. Congregants should consider that possibility and approach the pastor with sense of humility and respect for that pastor's expertise.

Age and Experience Trap

Some congregants will only grant personal authority to pastors who are older and more experienced than they are. If personal authority is dependent upon age and experience, however, then older people face a dilemma. Pastors retire and congregants grow old. Therefore, it is likely that a congregant will eventually face a situation where her pastor is younger than she is. The project research showed that some older people were able to recognize that younger pastors could minister to them. Therefore, it is important that older congregants trust that God has called and equipped younger pastors to minister to older people through the Word, spiritual gifts, and compassion. This principle would similarly apply in a situation where a certain congregant had significant

theological training (e.g., if the congregant were a seminary professor). Perhaps, the congregant is even a retired pastor with many more years of experience than the current pastor. If such congregants are unable to grant personal authority to younger, less experienced pastors, they will find themselves unable to thrive as a member of the church. They will also grieve the pastor who desires to be a blessing to them in some way.

Controversy Trap

Pastors are charged with speaking the sometimes difficult truths of Scripture, protecting the church, and leading a voluntarist organization that some people think of more as a club. These duties inevitably invite controversy on occasion. This controversy is further aggravated by the fact that some congregants do not express their concerns openly and respectfully with the pastor. Rather, these people express their dissatisfaction with the pastor from places of hiding. Thus, some scandal will likely be perceived by others in the church. Pastors can attempt to avoid controversy by ignoring difficult teachings, overlooking unacceptable behavior, or never making difficult decisions. This would not benefit the church or the Kingdom of God, however.

Therefore, it is important for congregants to give the benefit of doubt to the pastor wherever possible. When accusations appear to be serious and justified, congregants should trust the church mechanisms that hold the pastor accountable. If the pastor is exonerated, congregants should ensure that the pastor is also exonerated in their own consciences. This is essential to restoring his personal authority. Congregants should realize that if the pastor is exercising pastoral duties faithfully, there will be other occasions of controversy which will threaten the pastor's personal authority.

Church Growth Trap

Churches are tasked with making disciples of as many people as they can. Therefore, a healthy church will likely grow numerically. At the same time, the amount and quality of attention a pastor is able to give to congregants can impact the pastor's personal authority. As a church grows, the pastor's ability to provide the same amount of personal attention wanes.

It is therefore especially important for congregants to take advantage of all forms of discipleship, such as small groups and special classes. This will likely reduce a congregant's dependence on the pastor's personal attention. Additionally, congregants desiring the pastor's attention should try to attend periodic gatherings the pastor leads personally (e.g., seminars, introductory meetings, or information sessions). This will help the pastor give attention to more people at the same time and may again alleviate some need for the pastor's personal attention. Finally, when personal attention is truly needed, the congregant will help the pastor maximize the number of people to whom the pastor can attend if the congregant will accommodate the pastor's schedule as much as possible (e.g., setting appointments at his office during his regular office hours). Scattered meetings at multiple locations require much more time than consecutive meetings at the same location. Pastors tend to think of themselves as servants. This makes them inclined to want to accommodate people as much as possible. Too much accommodation, however, reduces the total amount of individual attention pastors can provide to the congregation. Thus, the more congregants can help the pastor serve them in this way, the more satisfied they will likely be.

Communication Trap

It is far easier for people to endorse something when they understand it. It is understandable, therefore, that people want to be informed about ideas, initiatives, or decisions pastors present. When congregants do not feel that something has been adequately explained and justified, they can perceive that leaders are being arbitrary or authoritarian. The problem is that communication is much more difficult in churches than in most secular office settings. Therefore, it is unrealistic for congregants to have the same expectations for communication as they experience in their workplace.

In church, there is no captive audience as there is in many other organizational environments. Church attendance is generally once per week, and it is exceedingly inconsistent these days. Few congregants actually read church bulletins or e-mails with scrutiny. Informational meetings are often sparsely attended and they add clutter to congregants' already busy lives. Frequently, the people with the greatest objections to an initiative do not come to informational meetings, as they have already determined to be against it. They only show up if they believe they can influence the process in their favor.

Furthermore, it is difficult to capture all of the information and leadership experience that inform an initiative in something short enough that people will actually read or understand. Often, decisions are complex. Sometimes they are based solely on a leader's best judgment formed over years of training and experience. It is difficult to encapsulate this in a clear and comprehensive manner.

This is not an excuse for pastors not to try their best to communicate. Rather, it is a call to congregants to recognize the immense difficulty of communicating in a church. Therefore, congregants should pay close attention to the mechanisms church leaders

employ to communicate. These may include position statements, newsletters, bulletin announcements, preaching series, or informational meetings. Understanding what the leadership is attempting to communicate will likely take some work. Congregants must actively engage the process with humility and diligence.

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