
PARENTING AS PAUL'S PREFERRED STYLE OF LEADERSHIP: SOME INSIGHTS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IN FAITH COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Introducing the Journal of New Testament Studies of 2004 which carried a number of articles on early Christian families, MacDonald and Moxnes (2004:3-6) observed that, "The hope is that a direct focus on 'family matters' will shed new light on such diverse topics as rituals, leadership, asceticism, social location, community growth, and the lives of women, children and slaves in early Christianity." In this article I focus on how 'family matters,' specifically parenting, shed light on Paul's practice and understanding of leadership. In a world where poor leadership has led us into a number of problems (political, environmental, economic, ecclesiastical, etc), the subject of leadership becomes very important. In Christian circles, models of leadership with a biblical basis are likely to be more effective. In support of servant leadership, the article therefore uses Paul's imagery of parenting as a model that he preferred leaders to follow. Using the undisputed Pauline letters, the article analyses texts like 1 Cor. 3:2, 4:15,17, 2 Cor. 6:13, Philm 10, Phil. 2:22 and 1 Thess. 2:7,11 from a historical critical perspective to draw lessons on leadership for communities of faith.

Key Words: Paul; Christian Leadership; Servant Leadership; Parenting; New Testament; Christian Communities

Introduction

Research and writing on leadership seems to be limited to business, the social sciences and politics and governance (Northouse 2010). There are also few publications focused on the subject of leadership in Africa (e.g. van Zyl 2009). When it comes to Christian leadership, my University of Botswana and University of South Africa libraries and Google searches produced unexpectedly few results from African scholars.² Searches on Christian leadership and its influence on leadership in Africa in general produced very little results. This is indeed unfortunate considering that the African crisis can be summed up as a crisis of leadership. Despite its vast natural resources, Africa faces serious shortages and short-comings for its people. Political, environmental, economic, religious and many other pro-

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² Examples include David M Gitari (2005), Bujra and Buthelezi (2002) and Cameron (2014).

blems are often a result of lack of or poor leadership. In her assessment of leadership in the African context, Carol Dalglish (2009, 40-60) noted the various challenges that Africa faces concluding that the solution to these problems lies in good leadership. Even the Church in Africa has not been spared the leadership problems facing the continent.³ Charlatans masquerading as prophets, men of God or some other titles that they are known by, have put the name of the church into disrepute in some cases forcing governments to call the church to order. From calling people to eat grass and snakes to asking them to drink petrol, the list of the abuses of people by church 'leaders' is long. There is therefore need for African academics to spend some effort reflecting on the subject of leadership if Africa is to address most of her problems.

This article presents such a contribution specifically for Christian communities. Literature on Christian leadership has focused especially on Jesus as the model of all leaders (Haggi 1986; Ford 1991). This article focuses on Paul's practice and understanding of leadership. Andrew D Clarke (2008) has done significant work on the theology of Paul on church leadership. He discusses the theology of Paul on church leadership considering the titles of leaders, their status, their power, their tasks and the tools that were at their disposal. Paul remains the second most influential person after Jesus in early Christianity and it is important to establish his views on leadership for communities that are inspired by his writings. Following the influential work of AD Clarke (2008), this paper focuses on how 'family matters,' specifically parenting, shed light on Paul's practice and understanding of leadership. Although of late, New Testament scholars have expended energy on trying to understand early Christian families (Moxnes 1997, Grant 2000, Kalengyo 2011 and Togarasei 2014), little has been done to understand leadership using insights from family studies. Introducing the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* of 2004 which carried a number of articles on early Christian families, MacDonald and Moxnes (2004, 3-6) observed that, "The hope is that a direct focus on 'family matters' will shed new light on such diverse topics as rituals, leadership, asceticism, social location, community growth, and the lives of women, children and slaves in early Christianity (italics mine)." Although Clarke (2008) tried to provide an exhaustive study of the Pauline theology of leadership, he did not pay much attention to understanding leadership using insights from the subject of parenting. Clarke (2008), indeed addresses family matters such as brotherhood, slavery and the household in general but not parenting specifically. This article focuses on this understudied subject. It discusses Paul's view of a leader as a parent arguing that Paul preferred servant leadership. By so doing, the article presents servant leadership as the best model for leadership in contemporary Africa.

The article is divided into four sections. In the first section I discuss leadership in general highlighting definition/theories and styles/models of leadership that have been proposed by leadership scholars. This is meant to put the issues of leadership to be discussed with regard to Paul into the general theme of leadership in line with the article's assumption that lessons learnt from Paul can be applied in contemporary communities of faith that still value the Pauline writings. In section two I then discuss the debate by New Testament scholars on possible leadership models/style(s) in early Christianity with a particular focus on the Pauline Christian communities. Section three addresses the central theme of this paper: Paul's use of parental imagery to illustrate responsible Christian leadership. Using

³ In a foreword to the book, *Responsible Church Leadership* by D Gitari (2005, i), Jesse NK Mugambi observes, "It is ironical, that the Church as the social institution that claims to take its cue from Jesus, has become so conformed to the norms of this world that many of its leaders are often the masters rather than the servants of the members."

the undisputed Pauline letters, the article analyses texts like 1 Cor. 3:2, 4:15,17, 2 Cor. 6:13, Philm 10, Phil. 2:22, 1 Thess. 2:7,11 and other Pauline themes that imply parenting from a historical critical perspective to draw lessons on leadership. The last section discusses parenting as the right model for practicing servant leadership before a conclusion wraps up the article.

Leadership: Definition, Styles and Theories

No institution or society can function effectively without a leader. Thus leadership is such an important subject that has received a lot of attention. In the foreword to the book, *Faith in Leadership* (Banks 1999), Max de Pree (1999:vii) says, "Leadership is a hot word these days." Being a 'hot word', defining the term leadership has been difficult for scholars. Leading leadership scholar, Peter G Northouse (2009:1), notes that there are more than 100 definitions of leadership in leadership literature. Thus instead of providing a definition, Northouse lists concepts that characterise leadership. He thinks these concepts better capture what leadership is than providing a simple definition of the term. The concepts he identifies (in the American context) are leadership as a trait, leadership as an ability, leadership as a skill, leadership as a behaviour and leadership as a relationship (Northouse 2009:2-3). However, for purposes of this discussion, I find a simplified definition of leadership given by S Shonhiwa helpful. For Shonhiwa (2006:16) leadership can be defined as the ability to influence people and resources in a manner that will result in the achievement of identified/set goals.⁴

When it comes to styles of leadership, three styles have been identified by leadership scholars (Northouse 2009:40-49). The three are authoritarian leadership style (where leader exercises authority over followers), democratic leadership style (where leader considers subordinates to be fully capable of making right decisions and so consults them) and *laissez-faire* style of leadership (where leader provides no leadership at all giving no direction or influence to the subordinates).⁵

Of great interest to this article are theories that have been proposed on leadership. Leadership literature reveals a number of theories that have been proposed. They vary from theories focusing on the leader and his qualities to theories focusing on the relationship between the leader and the subordinates/followers (Dalglish 2009:4-6). The oldest theory of leadership is the Great Man theory. This theory argues that leaders are born not made. Related to it is the Big Five model. This model falls under trait theories of leadership which see leaders as possessing certain personality traits that are not found among followers. Traits such as dominance and extraversion, sociability and warmth, achievement orientation, organisational ability and self-acceptance and self-control are identified as the big five (Deary 1996). Of late all adjectives describing some virtuous human attributes are considered traits of leadership. Personality traits theories also consider the role of charisma in the making of a leader. Charisma is often attributed to leaders who are considered to be divinely inspired. Other leadership theories, however, do not focus on the traits or qualities of the leader but on the leader's relationship with the followers. Among these theories are contingency, transactional and transformational theories. Contingency theories argue that effective leadership is contingent on the situation, that is, what matters for a leader is fitting

⁴ This definition is also given by PG Northouse (2010:3).

⁵ Bolden, R, Gosling, J, Marturano, A and Dennison, P (2003:10), however, identify four styles which they call autocratic, persuasive, consultative and democratic. These styles are similar to the three mentioned by Northouse.

the situation of the subordinates rather than his/her personal charisma, for example. Transactional theories on one hand focus on the leader and follower as being in a relationship of exchange. On the other hand transformational leadership theories focus on leadership that transforms both the leader and the followers. It is the type of leadership that is close to servant leadership which is the focus of this article and will therefore receive considerable attention here.

Servant leadership is increasingly becoming the most preferred style of leadership as it resonates with the ideas of democracy. Although it was initially popular in not-for-profit organisations, it appears to be of increasing interest even in the business sector (Dalglish 2009, 5). Considering its success where it has been used, perhaps it is the style that also needs to be used in politics and governance in Africa. Although the concept of servant leadership goes as far back as the 6th and the 5th centuries BCE – as found in the writings of some Chinese philosophers – the concept was clearly articulated from the early 1970s. The term ‘servant leadership’ was coined by Robert K Greenleaf, after whom the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, was named. In three major essays, Greenleaf articulated servant leadership as it is known today. Servant leadership can be most likely associated with the participative or democratic leadership style we discussed above. The servant leader is driven by the need to serve others rather than to be served. In the words of Robert K Greenleaf (1970:7), “The servant-leader *is* servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...” Servant leaders consider themselves only as first among equals. They therefore work closely with their subordinates encouraging, supporting and enabling them to reach their potential. Different scholars have come up with different but related characteristics of servant leadership.⁶ Some of the common characteristics include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, trustworthiness, self-awareness, humility. A servant leader is caring, visionary, empowering, relational and competent, a good steward and a community builder.

On close analysis, servant leadership is basically a Christian leadership style derived from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Efrain Agosto (2005) finds it in Jesus and Paul and the communities founded after them. From his incarnation to his life and teaching, Jesus embodied the message of servant leadership. He taught his followers:

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for all (Mark 10:42-45, par.).

In action, Jesus served his followers to the extent of washing his disciples’ feet. Although he had authority, power and dominion from above (Ephesians 1:21), he stooped down to serve his followers. The same is true of Paul as we shall discuss in the sections below. Following Greenleaf’s definition of a servant leader cited above, we can note that Paul was compelled by a missionary zeal, the zeal to take the Christian gospel to the Gentiles. It is through service to his followers that he could be considered a leader. It is the same attitude

⁶ Larry Spears (Frick and Spears 1996:4) is one such scholar who has identified ten critical characteristics of the servant-leader.

that he expected from local leaders of the communities he established. We discuss other reasons for considering Paul a servant leader and for preferring servant leadership model in section three of this article. But before we discuss Paul and his practice of leadership through parenting, let us first consider leadership in Pauline communities in general.

Leadership in Pauline Communities

Paul did not leave us with a manual on leadership. We can only get his concept and practice of leadership from his letters. Unfortunately, Pauline letters were occasional and therefore do not necessarily present a systematic theology of Paul on leadership. It is only through reconstruction done from the reading of the letters that one can come up with a Pauline concept and practice of leadership. That there were leaders in Pauline communities is not debated. Acts tells us that Paul appointed leaders wherever he founded Christian communities (Acts 14:23, 20:17-35). This is confirmed in his letters where he mentions bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1) and 'those over you' (1 Thess. 5:12). Debates are on whether leadership was institutional or charismatic.⁷ Other scholars like Benjamin L Merkle (2003) debate whether the leadership titles such as elder and overseer referred to two different offices or one office. Clarke (2008) is one of those scholars who accept the existence of leaders in Pauline communities. For him the debate is on the model supported and practiced by Paul, an issue of particular interest to this article. Clarke discusses three possible styles of leadership in Pauline communities: hierarchical leadership, egalitarian leadership and servant leadership. These three are somehow similar to the three styles of leadership discussed by leadership scholars: authoritarian, democratic and *laissez faire* as discussed above. Since this article is on Paul's preferred leadership style, we shall pay considerable attention to these three styles following Clarke before turning to look at how Paul uses parenting to illustrate his preferred style of leadership.

Hierarchical leadership is a style of leadership where the leader is pre-eminent. It can be compared with what leadership scholars call authoritarian leadership. Here the leader holds an authoritative position and commensurate status within an ordered hierarchy (Clarke 2008:79). Did Paul support or practice this model of leadership? Answers vary from one person to another as these are affected greatly by the context of the interpreter and texts they therefore chose to read in support. Be that as it may, there is plenty evidence within the letters of Paul that can be used to support his practice and preference for hierarchical leadership. Clarke (2008: 80) identifies the influential role of the Pauline letters as key evidence. Because of his call, Paul considered himself to hold a position of high status among his followers.⁸ This would explain why he wrote letters of instruction to the various Christian communities including some that he had not personally met, such as the community in Rome (Romans 1:1f, 16:1f). The apologetic nature of some of Paul's letters (e.g. Galatians) point towards a conclusion that his Christian communities were hierarchical and that his pre-eminent position was contested. Paul's letters also mention that he was not the only pre-eminent leader. In Galatians 2:9, for example, Paul states the apostolic agreement of dividing the missionary field between Peter and John (going to the Jews) and Paul and Barnabas (going to the Gentiles). Thus in Romans 15:20, Paul says he does not want to build on someone else's foundation. Paul also shows in his letters that in the communities

⁷ For John Drane (1986:384-386) Paul preferred charismatic leadership over the contemporary practice of institutional leadership compared to leadership in the business sector.

⁸ Paul called his followers to obey him (Phil. 2:12), gave them commands (1 Cor. 16:1), and even threatened them with punishment for disobedience (2 Cor. 10:6).

that he established he recognised local ranking of leaders (Clarke 2008:83). He mentions deacons and bishops (Philippians 1:1). Scholars⁹ debate whether this is evidence of established offices of leadership in Pauline communities since there is no evidence of the appointment of leaders in his letters. They therefore conclude that these could have been just charismatic or household leaders engaged in watching and serving others (Merkle 2003:107). However, even if this is true, what is of importance here is Paul's recognition of and also participation in some form of hierarchy within his Christian communities.

Paul did not only mention leadership as in Philp. 1:1, he also specifically endorsed the presence and role of local leaders like Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus and called his followers to recognise and respect them (1 Cor. 16:15-18). In the same way, among his followers, he had those whom he called co-workers,¹⁰ who, for sure, occupied a higher status than the other followers. A call for the recognition of such leaders is also made in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 where Paul acknowledges the presence of those who labour (*kopiontas*), lead/guide (*proistamenous*) and admonish (*nouthetountas*). He urges the Thessalonians to "esteem them very highly in love because of their work." Paul also gives a clear endorsement for the recognition of local hierarchy of leaders in 1 Cor. 12:28, "And God has appointed in the church *first* apostles, *second* prophets, *third* teachers..." This shows Paul's recognition of a hierarchical leadership.

Besides internal evidence on hierarchical leadership in the letters of Paul, there is also external evidence which seems to favour hierarchical leadership in Pauline Christian communities. Hierarchical leadership was the predominant model of leadership within the Greco-Roman societies of Paul's time. Clarke's (2008:85) argument is that were Paul against such kind of leadership, "we might expect to have seen explicit reference to a contrasting picture of the existence of local hierarchies that is consistently presented elsewhere in the New Testament, and is not evidently rejected by Paul." Paul also came from structured communities in the synagogue and hierarchical leadership was the common practice in other voluntary associations of his time. Clarke (2008:88) puts it thus, "Given the dominant cultural context of deeply embedded stratification in Graeco-Roman civil society, as well as the voluntary associations, the Jewish synagogue communities and the Mediterranean family, it would perhaps be unsurprising if there was a predisposition for believers to adopt a broadly similar approach to the social structuring of their Christian communities." The hierarchical nature of Pauline communities is also supported by the fact that they were house churches. Karl O Sandness (1997:151-152) while using the story of the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:20ff) argues that the starting point of the Pauline churches was normally the conversion of the *paterfamilias*, who embraced the Christian faith together with his household that included extended family and friends (Acts 10:24). The family of Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:16, 16:15-16) also serves as an example of the nature of Pauline churches.

Another model that has been discussed concerning leadership in Pauline communities is egalitarianism. Egalitarianism can be compared to democratic leadership that we discussed above. E Schussler Fiorenza's (1983)¹¹ is the dominant voice on this model as she bases the model on the teaching and ministry of Jesus. In the case of Paul, Schussler Fiorenza based

⁹ Merkle (2003:107) cites them saying, "Some immediately object to the idea that Paul is referring to any organised church office arguing that the terms refer to function and not office since no definite article is given in the Greek."

¹⁰ For example, Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17, 16:10, 1 Thess. 3:2) Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25; 4:18).

¹¹ K Schaifer also takes this position writing in Deutch (See KO Sandnes (1997:150-165) who presents his thesis in English).

her argument of 'discipleship of equals' on Gal. 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Additional support has been from Paul's metaphor of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Using this metaphor, Paul underlined the value of each distinct member of the body. Other evidence for Paul's preference of egalitarian leadership include his use of the term 'brother' in referring to all believers (Rom. 7:1, 12:1),¹² his use of *συν-* as a prefix in nouns such as *συνεργος* (co-worker) (1 Thess. 3:2) and his practice of naming co-senders at the head of letters (1 Thess. 1:1) projecting an element of egalitarianism (Clarke 2008:93-94). The evidence for egalitarianism in Paul's thinking and practice, however, has received vehement criticism from scholars. John H Elliott (2002, 2003), for example, rejected this argument rebutting Schussler Fiorenza's thesis point by point. Terms used to argue for egalitarianism such as 'brother', co-worker and the mention of co-senders in Pauline letters have been interpreted as showing mutual dependence, support and love (Clarke 2008:92) not egalitarianism. Further, Clarke (2009:89) is probably right in his argument that egalitarianism was only an ideal or an eschatological concept within early Christianity and that the search for egalitarianism within the early church is likely to be a result of contemporary appeal to an egalitarian society over hierarchical leadership. Sandnes (1997:153) expresses the same view saying, "The egalitarian brother- or sisterhood is clearer as a model than it is in reality."

Lastly, the other model of leadership that scholars draw from the Pauline letters is servant leadership. We paid close attention to this model of leadership above. In this section we shall therefore focus on how scholars read servant leadership from the Pauline letters. Clarke (2008:95) says there is hierarchy in servant leadership only that this is an inverted hierarchy where the leader is at the bottom of the leadership pyramid leading by serving the followers. As we noted above, servant leadership is best represented and taught by Jesus in the gospels. Paul, however, also says something about the model. The majority of his references to slavery or slave language¹³ have to do with slaves in society or metaphorical slavery to sin or law, or a relationship as slave to God (Clarke 2008:99). But there are also references to slavery language in relation to leaders and leadership. Clarke (2008:99) identifies 1 Cor. 9:19 as the key verse, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more." In this statement Paul assumes servant leadership as he voluntarily makes himself a slave of the Corinthians. This is also the sense in which he refers to his slavery in 2 Cor. 4:5. Paul also refers to servant leadership with reference to Jesus in the so-called kenotic theology of Phil. 2:5-8. Paul also makes widespread use of *διακονια*, *διακονος* and *διακονεω* language which Clarke (2008:100), against Collins (1990), sees as evidence of servant leadership as Paul expresses his readiness to pursue manual labour. He says, "Such language ought to be understood alongside the widespread sense in Graeco-Roman society that free people should not act like slaves by working with their hands, denying their dignity and self respect" (Clarke 2008, 100). Paul also makes use of terms associated with toil and labour in connection with his and others' manual labour and Christian ministry (1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 4:9, 11; 1 Cor. 9:1, 15:10; Phil. 1:22; Rom. 16:6). Clarke (2008:101) says Paul's references to his sufferings for the gospel (e.g. Rom 5:3, 8:18, 12:12, 1 Cor. 4:8-13) and his call to others to endure such

¹² Pauls' theme of brotherhood is given close attention by Reidar Aasgaard (1997:166-182).

¹³ Studies of slavery and slavery language (e.g. by Byron 2003, Harrill 2006, Harris 1996) have shown that slavery is associated with menial and servile work, degradation and punishment, humiliation, to differentiate a person of comparably low status to the person of comparative high status, as a term of honour especially with reference to a slave of king or God.

suffering (e.g. 1 Thess. 1:6, 2:14, 3:3-4,7) also point to his preference and practice of servant leadership. In a number of occasions, Paul also laid aside his hierarchical status as he denied such status, for example, in the case of 1 Cor. 1-4 where he shows that he himself, Peter, and Apollos are just servants in the service of God. He even denied exercising his rights to financial support (1 Cor. 9:1-23) acknowledging his physical weaknesses (2 Cor. 10:10, 12:7; Gal. 4:13, 15) and his lack of skill in certain areas (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:10). Several times Paul also repudiated those who held him in high regard (1 Cor. 1:13, 14-17).

From the above survey of the letters of Paul, it is clear that Paul practiced some form of leadership that can be classified into different models of leadership as suggested by leadership scholars today. This is not surprising considering that Paul's letters were occasional. His position would change depending on the occasion he was addressing. This is not only true of Paul's theology of leadership but of other aspects of his theology as well. In fact, leadership scholars also do not recommend one model of leadership. The appropriateness of each model of leadership, says Northouse (2010) depends on the specific situation. It is my opinion, however, that Paul seemed to lean more towards servant leadership, accepting hierarchical leadership practice in love and mutuality. From our assessment of Paul's references to leadership above, Paul's conception of a Christian leader in his communities was one who is a head of the household and master of domestic slaves and whose house church in all probability included slaves. For me, Paul's call was for such leaders to accept status inconsistency, that is, to reverse the roles that have been normal in non-Christian contexts. Jennifer A Glancy (2002) describes the status of slaves in ancient Mediterranean society noting their subservient status and especially their role as sex slaves for their masters. Paul then sees Christian leaders beginning with him as having to accept their lowly status. For such leaders, "humility, vulnerability and service set a context for the exercise of authority..." (Clarke 2008:102). We argue that parenting provided the right model for Paul to illustrate servant leadership. This is the central argument of this article, to which we now turn.

Paul and Parenting

Paul's parent talk is largely metaphorical. Although he had no biological children of his own, he talks a lot about his role as a parent. In a number of texts, he considers himself to be a father to his followers (1 Cor. 4:14-15, 2 Cor. 6:13; 12:14-15). Paul is also a father to his co-workers like Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17, Phil. 2:22), Titus and Onesimus (Philm. 10). In these texts, Paul mentions the roles of a parent (in this case the father). In 1 Cor. 4:14-15, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he writes to them as his children pointing out the duty of a parent as admonishing children when they go the wrong way. The Greek word Paul uses for admonish is *νουθετων* and implies the corrective role of parents towards children. Rogers Jr. and Rogers III (1998, 355) in defining the term say, "Parents are responsible to reprimand, admonish and correct their children." Thus Paul begins by telling the Corinthians that his intention is not to shame (*εντροπων*) them. CK Barrett (1968:115) says admonishing is characteristically the act of a father. It is positive and creative correction performed in love. Paul mentions these characteristics of a father again in 1 Thess. 2:11 when he says, "...for you know how, like a father with his children, we *exhorted* each one of you and *encouraged* you and *charged* you." As a parent, Paul also urges his followers to imitate him (Castelli 1991).

Paul also believes that it is the responsibility of parents to provide for the children. In 2 Cor. 12:14-15 he says, "...for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for

their children.” Elsewhere Paul shows that he worked with his own hands to support himself and his ministry not burdening the followers (1 Cor. 4:12). In 2 Cor. 12:14-15 he raises the same subject reminding the Corinthians that he was not a burden upon them. Rather, in line with his view of responsible parenthood (1 Cor. 4:1ff), he had worked with his own hands contrary to Greek belief of despising those who earned their living by using their hands (Hargreaves 1978:47). Promising to visit the Corinthians, Paul says he was going to continue with his practice of providing for the material needs of his children rather than depending on them.

Paul does not only view parenthood from the perspective of a father, he also talks about his motherhood. In 1 Thess. 2:7 he says he was like a nurse among the Thessalonians. The Greek word *τροθοσ* often translated nurse refers to one who nourishes or feeds (Rogers Jnr. and Rogers III 1998:474). Thus it can also be translated as nursing mother (Best 1972:29). Motherhood points to parental qualities of tenderness. As he would emphasise in Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:12, 9:1ff), Paul was aware that as an apostle (a leader) he had authority and, in the words of M Gorman (2004, 154), could ‘throw (his) their weight around’ (1 Thess. 2:7) even demanding financial support (1 Cor. 9). Paul and his co-workers did not exercise this right. Rather like a nursing mother they worked day and night not to be a burden to the believer. The word used to describe the work they did is *μοχθοσ* (toil) referring to trouble and pain of arduous work (Rodgers Jnr. and Rogers III 1998:474). This theme of self-giving, of relinquishing a right for the welfare of others comes throughout the letters of Paul (e.g. Phil. 26-8). Paul does not employ it for himself, his co-workers and other apostles only but for all believers (Gorman 2004:155). As a mother Paul also knows the kind of food to be given to children at each stage of their growth. He said in 1 Cor. 3:2, “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it...”

Paul does not only use parental language with respect to himself. At the heart of the household as church metaphor is God as the father (Clarke 2008:138). Fellow Christians as sons and daughters of God are therefore siblings calling to God their father (Rom 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Using Galatians, P Esler (1997:131) discovers five major ways in which believers are siblings. First, believers are siblings as they all have God as their father (Gal. 1:1-3) and share in faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26; 4:6). Second, they are siblings through Abraham (Gal. 3:16, 29). Third, they are also siblings because they are Paul’s children (Gal. 4:19-20). Fourth, they are siblings through the promise made to Sarah (Gal. 4:21-31). Lastly, they are siblings as Paul addresses them as brothers (and sisters) (Gal. 1:2, 11; 3:15; 4:12; 5:11, 6:1). Thus for Paul, believers are a household in the universal sense and also in the local sense of the household churches (Gerhing 2004). Parenting becomes an important model of leadership since the household setting was the setting of early Christian communities. Leaders of the local Christian communities were therefore generally the household leaders (Moxnes 1997:26). We have also seen above that both the local and the universal church,¹⁴ were considered households where all were siblings with God as the father. The fatherhood of God in terms of provision, protection, care and love would therefore provide models to be followed by the leaders of these Christian communities.

Parenting as the Right Model of Servant Leadership

We have argued for servant leadership as Paul’s preferred leadership style above. In this section we argue that parenting provides the right model for servant leadership and that

¹⁴ The idea of the universal church had not fully developed during the time of the genuine Pauline letters. It is with the Pastorals that the idea is clearly articulated.

Paul's use of this metaphor was unmistakable. We have already seen that servant leadership focuses on the fact that the leader is there to serve the followers' needs in order to accomplish what needs to get done. Servant leaders place their followers first, empower them, and help to develop them to their fullest potential. The servant leader's role is to develop the follower so that they can be able to make their decisions for the good of the organisation. This is true of the role of a parent. Parents want their children to grow, be independent and even do better than themselves. They take pride in the growth of their children. We can therefore argue that the metaphor of father or parent provides Paul with a servant model of leadership. Clarke (2008:145) says, "...although the model of father/child, and especially at the time of the early Roman empire, a superior/inferior relation, it does not necessarily entail an authoritarian relationship, indeed, in the case of Paul, this dynamic is clearly modified by love." The father-son (parent-child) relationship that Paul uses for leaders is telling. This is because the parent-child relationship, although in a way similar to the exploitative master-slave relationship was more reciprocal. Moxnes (1997:29) says, "...the father-son relationship had social and affective qualities that set it apart from that of the master-slave relationship." Parent-child relationships even in the world of Paul as it is today, were characterised by concern on the part of the parents with the most central concern being provision of food (Moxnes (1997:33). Especially the father was considered the provider, nurturer and carer. There is little said directly by NT authors about the role of children in the family serve for loyalty and obedience. Parent language underlines the following characteristics of a servant leader that we discussed above: authority, love, concern of the father for his children, protection and provision.

Paul's conception of leadership through parenting is set within the context of *paterfamilias* with injunctions to obedience and submission. Such kind of leadership can lead to paternalism and indeed one disadvantage of servant leadership is that it tends to be paternalistic¹⁵ and therefore can gravitate towards authoritarian leadership (Anderson 2005). However, an analysis of Paul's view of parenting as presented above shows that Paul advocated for what Clarke (following Cynthia Briggs Kittredge) calls benevolent patriarchalism (2008:147). Lee and Smith (2011:122) seem to explain Paul's benevolent patriarchalism when they say, "when Paul uses the term father, he does not do so in order to stress authority rather to emphasise the nurturing, educating nature of a father." They note that this role of a father was also emphasised by Greek moral philosophers and among Jewish educational settings. As we have seen above, Paul did not use the term 'father' to represent authority but rather to stress his concern to nurture and exhort his children. In fact J Anderson (2005) views paternalism in leadership as bad parenting. He says, "In essence, normal paternalistic leadership is a form of negatively implemented parental leadership – a form of parental leadership that is done poorly." He says poor parenting may be a result of doing wrong things or failing to do the right things. Anderson says servant leadership should be viewed from the perspective of good parenting. Good parenting is not simply paternalistic. It should both be 'paternalistic' (fatherly) and 'maternalistic' (motherly) as Paul implied in his use of both the father and mother metaphor for parenting. Anderson (2005) is right in noting that when servant leadership is accused of paternalism, it would

¹⁵ As defined by Joe Anderson (2005) who says, "It is a model where the leader is seen as a benevolent ruler who makes all important decisions, controls all important information, does all the important thinking, and basically directs all the important activities of the organisation as he (and occasionally as she) sees fit" ('Servant Leadership and the True Parental Model: A Construct for Better Research, Study and Practice,' www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/sl_proceedings/2005/anderson_servant_leadership.pdf, accessed 28 June 2016.

have failed to include the maternal (softer) aspects of parenting. Paul included these maternal aspects. As we have seen above, he fed his followers with the right kind of food (1 Cor. 3:2) and nursed them (1 Thess. 2:7).

Good parents know that children grow and mature at different rates, they have different personalities, skills, abilities and interests and so they treat them accordingly (Anderson 2005). This is what good leaders should do. From this observation, Clarke (2008:148) should therefore be right in insisting on the hierarchical structure of leadership in Pauline communities. He thinks Paul's use of the body metaphor in 1 Cor. 10-12 should be understood in terms of Paul's teaching on leadership. He (Clarke 2008:148) says, "...leaders had adopted an abusive and disrespectful relationship in regard to their fellow church members. The solution, for Paul, was not to alter the organisational structure of the church community, but to highlight its organic qualities, emphasising its dependency on mutuality and mutual respect." Although Clarke takes the organisational structure as hierarchical, we argue that Paul, like Jesus, was underlining servant leadership. A servant leader, like a parent, is above the followers but serves them for the growth of each. Like a parent, he/she provides for the followers, working hard to provide an example. The parental and household metaphor Paul uses underlines the hierarchical¹⁶ nature of the Pauline communities, but also the paternal motivations of its leaders. Obedience and submission are expected, but within the parameters of moderation and the gospel of Christ (Clarke 2008:154).

The hierarchical nature of Pauline communities cannot be denied. Pauline communities were house churches as we have highlighted above. On three occasions Paul used the term *κατ οίκον εκκλησία* (house church) to describe a congregation formed in and around, and convening in, a private household (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5; Phlm 2). Most likely the owner of the house, male or female, functioned as a patron and leader to the rest of the membership (Sandnes 1997:151; Esler 1997:135). Paul then used the parenting metaphor for such leaders. This parenting metaphor made Christian leadership countercultural. Unlike secular leaders who loaded it upon their followers, the Christian parent leader was a slave leader.

The metaphor of the family is used to describe the common life of the Pauline communities. In a context where the Jewish aristocracy and the Roman imperial power emphasised hierarchical leadership, the metaphor of a family provided a new understanding of leadership (Agosto 2005:21). In Mark 10:42-45 that we cited above, Jesus warned the new family not to follow the leadership style of the surrounding world. Like Jesus, Paul also used the family metaphor to describe the new community of believers.¹⁷ His common use of the family metaphor points to parenting as his preferred model of leadership. It can be argued that Paul preferred servant leadership for the community of believers. The leaders, like fathers, have to exhort and encourage the followers (1 Thess. 2:11). They are to discern the right kind of food for the followers (1 Cor. 3:2) and lay up for the needs of the followers (2 Cor. 12:14-15). E Agosto says, against those who accepted secular understandings of leadership, Paul associates leadership with acceptance of servanthood and suffering. He and his coworkers are servants to the Lord Jesus and to the communities they serve (Rom. 1:1). Not only are the co-workers servants prepared to sacrifice their lives (Phil. 2:19-30), local

¹⁶ Eva M Lassen (1997:114-115) submits that although the Roman family was hierarchical, the family metaphor as used by Christians was used to describe inter-human relationships creating equality and a new sense of belonging.

¹⁷ That other common metaphor Paul uses of the church is the body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17, 12:27).

congregation leaders are also called to provide service to the people (1 Thess. 5:12-13, 1 Cor. 16:15-18).

The Pauline parent leaders are therefore not like leaders in the secular world. They are servant leaders. Paul advocates a form of intra-community enslavement of love, thereby redefining the concept of slavery away from its oppressive meaning current among those outsiders towards an entirely different reciprocal love relationship (Esler 1997:138). Esler uses Gal. 5:13 to 6:10 to show that the collective honour within a family means that it is particularly shameful if the members themselves fall out and fail to present a united front to a harshly judgmental public (1997:124). Paul also redefines slavery in his letter to Philemon. Here Paul turns Onesimus from Philemon's slave into a brother in the Lord (Philm. 16). As Sandnes (1997:157-8) observes, "Paul has effectively pulled the issue of the returning slave out of the private sphere." This is because a master was solely responsible for his decision in such a matter of a returning slave. But Paul does not accept the master's power when it comes to the question of the status of a recent convert. His and Onesimus' new Christian status means, as the leader, Philemon is now expected to act not as the usual master but according to the brotherhood nature of the Christian fellowship. Paul's response here shows his acceptance of the hierarchical nature of leadership in early Christian communities. However, he tends to tacitly, through his rhetoric, question the autonomy and sovereignty of the master on the basis of the nature of Christian fellowship (Sandnes 1997:158). As we have seen, for Paul, the master is the parent and acts for the good of the children. The complex relationship between Paul and Philemon leads Sandnes to suggest that this could be an egalitarianism found within a structure which also embodies hierarchical relationships (1997:162). Thus, based on what has been discussed above, we can conclude that the model of leadership Paul implied throughout his letters involved reciprocity, love, sharing of resources, nurturing, encouragement, instruction, exhortation, provision, spending time together, care and all other virtuous acts that have been associated with servant leadership. Parenting becomes the right model for Paul to demonstrate this kind of leadership.

Conclusion

In contexts like Africa, where leadership is at the centre of most of the problems, parenting indeed provides a good model of leadership. Esler's (1997:144) argument is that although our culture is different from that of early Christians, through inter-culturalism we can learn from other cultures and enrich ourselves, "In a sense, our ancestors in faith, by whom and for whom Galatians was written, are strangers whom we may yet encounter through a process of historical investigation and from whom we can learn". We are capable of inter-cultural enrichment from the experience of the Pauline house church members of the faith. In our African contexts where the majority of our problems are of poor leadership, we can learn from Paul how to be servant leaders who lead with love, care, protection and mutuality as parents. This is what this paper has argued. Beginning with a discussion of leadership theories and types, the paper proceeded to discuss leadership practices in Pauline communities. It then argued and concluded that Paul preferred parenting as the best approach to leadership and that this could be a helpful model of leadership in communities that still uphold the teaching and practice of Paul.

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