

Servant leadership and power

An introductory theological analysis

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Abstract

This is an explorative study of the relationship between power and servant leadership from a theological perspective. It is argued that Robert K. Greenleaf, Tom Marshall and Yvonne Bradley have provided useful theoretical perspectives on this relationship that may be used to generate important theological research questions. The nature of legitimate power is understood differently based on the underlying anthropology and worldview promoted by these theorists. For Greenleaf, servant leadership is synonymous with legitimate power. His theory of servant leadership is shaped by a religiously indeterminate moral vision of the world and includes a number of moral virtues. Bradley rejects Greenleaf's model based on a conception of Christian Realism. For Marshall, legitimate power is identical with the character and virtues of servant leadership as this is revealed in Christ. For both Greenleaf and Marshall, the preferred mode of power is persuasion and moral modeling, yet under certain circumstances use of coercive power may be applied according to certain criteria. The study argues that the perspective of virtue ethics and *phronetic* analyses are useful to advance our understanding of both servant leadership and the dilemmas of power. Yet, such an approach also requires a systematical theological horizon that is sketched out by asking questions from the perspectives of Trinitarian theology, Christology and Eschatology.

Keywords: Servant leadership, power, systematic theology, Pentecostal-charismatic theology, Robert K. Greenleaf, trinity, soteriology, eschatology, virtue ethics, *phronesis*.

Introduction: Problem and purpose

Servant leadership has become a hot topic in popular Christian literature (Åkerlund, 2015, Banks et al., 2016; Wells, 2004). Some Pentecostal scholars have also suggested that present practices of charismatic leadership need to be re-envisioned in light of models of servant leadership (Klauss & Heusser, 1998). This article is part of a larger theological project that seeks to explore this kind of re-envisioning.¹ In this article, I set out to explore the relationship between servant leadership and power.

¹ Earlier I have done work within biblical studies (Tangen, 2018b, 2018c).

Why focus on power? Firstly, power has as Michael Hackman and Craig Johnsen observe become “the last dirty word”. Yet, avoiding the subject makes us more vulnerable to power abuse, not less (Hackman & Johnson, 2003, p.126). Similarly, in a recent article Mats Alvesson and Katja Einola warn against management theories (including servant leadership) that suffer from overly optimistic assumptions about human nature, making us blind to real-life dilemmas (Alvesson & Einola, 2019). Secondly, constructive (or systematic) theology is grounded in early Christian confessions, such as the *Apostolicum*, which worships God as the all-creative or almighty. It might follow that we need to explore the nature of legitimate power as we seek to construct models of leadership for those who are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-31).

This is mainly an explorative study. The overall goal is to stimulate further theological research on servant leadership in terms of identifying questions and important analytical perspectives. The first set of questions that will be explored is: *What is legitimate power - and what are the main criteria for responsible use of power according to theories of servant leadership?* The first part of the study is therefore a hermeneutic review of key positions and theories that may provide adequate answers to these questions. The goal is not to give a short summary of all possible positions as in a traditional literature review. I will rather explore three different positions in more depth to identify key questions for further research.

The main voice in the first part of the study will be Robert Greenleaf, who may be considered the founding father of the modern servant leadership movement.² However, I will also compare his model with two theological responses to his thinking. Yvonne Bradley is an evangelical Christian who stresses that the power of sin needs to be taken into consideration as we try to understand power and leadership (Bradley, 1994, 1999). Tom Marshal was a Pentecostal-charismatic Christian who emphasized that power and leadership should be understood through the redemptive work of Christ and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

In the second part of the study I will ask: *What are the key questions that need to be articulated if we are to consider the relationship between servant leadership and power from the perspective of constructive (systematic and practical) theology?* In this part, I will seek to identify critical questions for an adequate theological analysis of servant leadership and power. I will do this by providing a preliminary and exploratory analysis demonstrating that any attempt to develop a Christian account of servant leadership needs to confront difficult questions that already have been discussed by theologians for centuries. I will identify key thinkers in the Christian tradition that may provide resources for asking and answering relevant questions. I will be particularly attentive to perspectives from my own context, the Free church and Pentecostal-charismatic tradition, hoping that students and scholars from these movements might be stimulated to engage in further studies. However, I will also draw on other resources, and in particular studies of theologies of power so that the study also may contribute to a broader ecumenical conversation.

² Although we are now facing a third generation of theories of servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019) I still consider Greenleaf’s work as the most relevant for an analysis of power. For an introduction to Greenleaf’s work, see Frick, 2004, and Wells, 2004.

Robert Greenleaf on servant leadership and power

It is generally accepted that Robert Greenleaf is the father of the modern servant leadership movement (Eva et al., 2019). Greenleaf was unwilling to locate his vision of leadership strictly within one particular religious tradition, yet his vision was nonetheless addressing “seekers” who:

[...] will be religious in the root meaning of that word, religio, "to rebind," to bridge the separation between persons and the cosmos, to heal the widespread alienation and to re-establish men and women in the role of servant-healers-of-society. (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 2803-2804).

Greenleaf envisioned religious traditions and organizations such as churches as potential birth places for servant leadership that may bring healing to societies (Greenleaf, 2002, pp. 81-82). Thus, Greenleaf's model of leadership is also in a sense theological from the outset. However, as Mark Wells has shown, Greenleaf is more of an eclectic religious thinker than a classic Christian theologian (Wells, 2004, p. 61). What characterizes servant leaders according to Greenleaf? In his *Opus Magnum*, “The Servant as Leader” (Greenleaf, 2002), he suggests that the servant leader is driven by an intrinsic motivation to serve:

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. (Greenleaf 2002, p. 7)

In this passage, servant leadership is defined in opposition to “power drive”. It is not clear how power is to be understood but “power drive” might be associated with notions of domination or “power over” in a classic Weberian sense. Max Weber roughly understood power as the capability to achieve one's goals in face of opposition (Weber, 2009, see also Kearsley, 2016). Such a reading seems to be confirmed by the fact that Greenleaf elsewhere tends to describe power as the possibility of yielding “coercive pressure” (Greenleaf, 2013, loc. 522).

This way of seeing of power is often associated with conflict-sociological paradigms, and the Christian Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr, seeing power as a zero-sum game (Keller Jr., 1986, pp. 133–134). Yet, this is not the only way that Greenleaf uses the term power. In the subtitle of his classic book on servant leadership, he likens the study of servant leadership with a journey into an understanding of legitimate power (Greenleaf, 2002). It seems to follow that the criteria that are offered to define servant leadership, also define legitimate power:

Do those being served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is

the effect on the least privileged in society; will she or he benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?" I would now add one further stipulation: "No one will knowingly be hurt by the action, directly or indirectly." (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 352)

Based on this quotation, I think it is reasonable to see servant leadership as legitimate power to realize moral social projects and human flourishing, or what Roy Kearsley simply defines as creative "power to" (Kearsley, 2016, p. 10). The idea that the follower might become more autonomous also seems to imply that legitimate power is more than a zero-sum game. By empowering others to become servants, the leader seems to create, or at least exercise some form of relational "power with" that benefits all, and in particular the least privileged in a society. In Greenleaf's thought, and even more so in later models of servant leadership, there also seems to be a kind of universal causal connection between moral leadership and organizational success, which even can be studied statistically. The reasoning goes as follows: if you practice X = servant leadership, then you will have Y = organizational success, albeit mediated through intermediate variables like employee satisfaction (see Eva et al., 2019).

Hence, questions of service, power and empowerment are therefore central in this theory from the beginning, and Greenleaf seems to use power in at least two different ways. Legitimate power in Greenleaf's thinking seems to have at least four essential components. The first is a given social vision of a better world that may be seen as the why of leadership. Ethical foresight is therefore central to his theory of leadership (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 468). Thus, his way of thinking is fundamentally teleological. Yet, this why of leadership is not necessarily more important than the how of leadership. Greenleaf insists that a servant leader prefers a gradual social process that creates consensus based on persuasion over a rapid accomplishment of social goals by coercion (Greenleaf, 2013, loc. 71). He also demands that no one should be hurt in the process (Fraker & Greenleaf, 1996, loc. 555). This seems to imply that the nature of legitimate power manifests not only in the results of leadership but primarily in the process and in how power is used. Greenleaf explicitly rejects utilitarianism and its emphasis on ends:

Thus the servant (in my view) would reject the "utilitarian" position which would accept a very large gain in, say, justice, at the cost of a small but real hurt to some. The servant (in my view) would reject the nonviolent tactic for social change, however noble the intent, if, as a consequence, some who are disposed to violence are likely to resort to it, or some may threatened or coerced. I would fault Gandhi on these grounds... (Greenleaf, 2013, loc. 469-471).

Greenleaf's dismissal of the utilitarian position may surprise some. Is there not an element of consequentialism in Greenleaf's criteria of servant leadership in terms of the effects on the least privileged in society? Yet, I will argue that his overall ethical approach seems to have more in common with a kind of teleological virtue ethics. In Greenleaf's thinking it is foresight in terms of visions of the good society and not a utilitarian calculation of pleasure that define the common good. Service and the possibility of becoming an autonomous servant in

Greenleaf's thinking is not something that serves only as a means to an end. It is constitutive of the good life and the good society. It as an end in itself.³

Larry Spears has also identified certain characteristic patterns of servant-leadership-behavior (Spears, 2010) in Greenleaf's models that may be interpreted as virtues, although it is also clear that such patterns can be worked out as principles in terms of an ethics of duty. Anyhow, Greenleaf describes service and legitimate power as a process of persuasion, in sharp contrast to uses of coercion and manipulation:

[...] persuasion, thus defined, stands in sharp contrast to coercion (the use, or threat of use, of covert or overt sanctions or penalties, the exploitation of weaknesses or sentiments, or any application of pressure). Persuasion also stands in sharp contrast to manipulation (guiding people into beliefs or actions that they do not fully understand) (Greenleaf, 2013, loc. 486).

Larry Spears argues that this emphasis on persuasion (and consensus) is one of the 10 most important characteristics of servant leadership in Greenleaf's thinking, which makes it stand out in contrast to traditional authoritarian models of governance. Spears goes on to suggest that the approach has its roots in the denominational body to which Robert Greenleaf belonged as he developed his thinking, the Religious Society of Friends (see Spears, 2010, p. 28). Persuasion is also linked to other key capabilities of the servant leader such as awareness and conceptualization. Yet at the same time, it is crucial to acknowledge that persuasion basically rests on moral trustworthiness. Larry Spears also includes listening, healing, empathy, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of others - and to the community as a whole - in his list of key characteristics (Spears, 2010).

The key ingredient of legitimate power, according to Greenleaf, is therefore conceptual persuasion based on moral values in conjunction with being a serving moral example (San Juan, 2005, p. 194). It is worth noticing, however, that Greenleaf in his description of servant leaders included a fairly autocratic leader that used a rather rough form of persuasion. The leader set high standards and "was often uncompromising in his demands on people" with the result that his secretary would rush into the restroom crying. He still perceived this as a form of persuasion, since "he did not get mad and create obstacles" (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 3464-65). Thus, persuasion seems to go beyond simplistic notions of soft and gentle rhetoric.

It is also worth noticing that although persuasion and moral modeling is the preferred mode of power in Greenleaf's thinking, it is not the only form of legitimate power. Don Frick suggests that:

³ It is not clear how Greenleaf perceives utilitarianism in the passage above but he may assume that it is denying that moral rightness depends on anything other than consequences of an action (see also Sinnott-Armstrong, 2019). In virtue ethics, the vision of the good society or the good life (*eudaimonia*) is conceived of as something of which the virtuous activity is already partially constitutive.

Greenleaf recognized that there were times when manipulation, and perhaps even coercion, were in order, but only when it involved the well-being of others or institutional survival, not for the purpose of inflating one's ego. (Frick, 2004, loc. 6012)

Such a proposal might find support in the following passage in Greenleaf's *Opus Magnum*:

Some coercive power is overt and brutal. Some is covert and subtly manipulative. The former is open and acknowledged; the latter is insidious and hard to detect. Most of us are more coerced than we know. We need to be more alert in order to know, and we also need to acknowledge that, in an imperfect world, authority backed up by power is still necessary because we just don't know a better way. We may one day find one. It is worth searching for. Part of our dilemma is that all leadership is, to some extent, manipulative. Those who follow must be strong! (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 682-685).

This passage seems to demonstrate three kinds of realism in Greenleaf's thinking. The first is the simple observation that coercion (and manipulation) takes place in an imperfect world. The second is that followers must be aware of this. Thirdly, and for our purpose more importantly, it seems that legitimate authority in organizations in practice needs to be backed up by coercive power because we live in an imperfect world.

This perception is further developed in his theory of institutions.⁴ Greenleaf's willingness to invest different forms of power in institutions is grounded in a twofold motivation. First, Greenleaf was convinced that institutions were absolutely necessary to create beneficial social change. He also launched creativity alongside prudence as a criterion for good institutional leadership (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 2679). Greenleaf promoted egalitarian ideals, but he acknowledged that power needed to be invested in both a board and an operational leader. This admittedly forms at least a minimal hierarchy, although he stressed that both the leader of the board and the operational leader should function as a *primus inter pares* (first among equals):

The first task of the growing edge church is to learn what neither Luther nor Fox knew: how to build a society of equals in which there is strong lay leadership in a trustee board with a chairman functioning as *primus inter pares*, and with the pastor functioning as *primus inter pares* for the many who do the work of the church. Having accomplished this, the second task is to make of the church a powerful force to build leadership strength in those persons who have the opportunity to lead in other institutions and give them constant support. (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 81-82).

⁴ In his wartime reflections he came to the conclusion that coercive power, even the use of violence in judicial (police) and military systems, could be beneficial and performed in the spirit of love for one's fellow man. One might add that Greenleaf also rejected consequent non-violence as a social tactic for change. Frick, who has explored Greenleaf's wartime journal, observes that he was increasingly ambivalent to the pacifism embedded in his religious tradition. (See Frick, 2004, loc. 2497-2499).

It seems that these minimalist hierarchies possibly might provide some beneficial form of coordination that possibly might count as beneficial power. At the same time, Greenleaf consistently insists that “not much that endures can be built with coercion” (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 1174). The need for coercive power is primarily motivated by the shadow sides of human potential, which may manifest in unchecked and destructive forms of power (Greenleaf, 2013, loc. 520). As a result, he strongly promotes forms of organizational accountability claiming that absolutely no one should be trusted with “the operational use of power without the close oversight of fully functioning trustees.” (Greenleaf, 2013, loc. 543).

Although Greenleaf may be ambivalent at this point, it seems to follow that the servant leader should have the right to use coercive power over others in a minimalist hierarchy. Thus, despite his heavy emphasis on service he seems to accept that leaders will face moral dilemmas that include questions on when and how to use coercive power.⁵ Such dilemmas cannot, according Greenleaf, be solved on a general level but needs to be solved in particular contexts and situations (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 3112). Under such circumstances he subscribes to the idea that leaders have to act pragmatically, they cannot withdraw into a cave “and be uncontaminated by the world”. Leaders should rather take responsibility by engaging the world as it is and “put as much goodness into it as one can” realizing that this also would require compromise on occasion” (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 3580-3582)⁶.

We are now in the position to evaluate and in part confirm Don Frick’s suggestion. Greenleaf is an idealist in the sense that he will strive to realize some ideals of a better world. Yet, to some degree, he is also a realist in the sense that he acknowledges that all forms of organizational management and even servant leadership in practice might include forms of coercion and manipulation (see also Greenleaf, 2002, loc.1914-17). Moreover, he is also an ethical realist (or pragmatist) in the sense that moral principles cannot be applied without some form of situational judgment and compromise where one has to choose lesser evils over greater ones.

As I suggested above, the main criteria in this process will be foresight orientated towards images of the good society and not (or at least not only) utilitarian calculation. However, there might be a partly unresolved tension in Greenleaf’s thinking at this point. On the one hand, he basically defines servant leadership in contrast to coercion (including manipulation), yet on the other hand he also, perhaps unwillingly, acknowledges that coercion in some way needs to be integrated into the actual practice of leadership performed by servant leaders – in and through institutions. One might ask, if this actually implies that the principle based (deontological) claim that nobody should be hurt should be considered unrealistic? Will not organizational survival require actions like downsizing, which most likely will bring emotional hurt and economic losses even if one tries to minimize the effect? It is not clear how Greenleaf would respond to this challenge but he might have said that all decisions are taken

⁵ He also suggests that the fruit of being a seeking servant is effective involvement with the ethical dilemmas of one’s time (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 2782).

⁶ He also says that leadership is never perfect because leaders need to make decisions under the nobler of hypothesis, before all relevant information is available and they can know for sure (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 353-4).

under less than perfect conditions, and that leaders have to try to solve actual dilemmas through situational judgement based on foresight, seeking for the best possible solution.

To sum up, Greenleaf did leave us with some criteria for facing and handling dilemmas of power, even if there might be inner tensions between some of them:

- (1) It seems clear that legitimate power primarily appears as servant leadership in terms of conceptual persuasion and moral modeling. In this preferred *modus operandi*, creative power is “power to” and possibly “power with” that enables moral projects for both individuals and communities. However, in certain situations coercive power (including manipulation) may be accepted to restrain other and more destructive forms of power.
- (2) Any use of power should be grounded in a self-transcending motivation that stands in contrast to egoistic individualism.
- (3) Power should be used to promote the well-being of others.
- (4) In particular, it should lift up the least privileged in society.
- (5) Use of coercive power may be also justified by the survival of an institution.
- (6) Within the context of institutions, the holders of legitimate power will need to accept accountability and the checks, balances, and transparency that come with it.
- (7) Finally, coercive forms of power should be used to the *least extent possible* to avoid that people are hurt in processes.

Yvonne Bradley: Using Machiavelli and Niebuhr to criticize Greenleaf

Yvonne Bradley’s critique of Greenleaf is presented in two articles (1994, 1999). Bradley begins her essay by discussing servant leadership in light of the works of Niccolò Machiavelli (Machiavelli, 2003). This 15th century political theorist is perceived as one of the early fathers of political realism, taking the position that the survival of the state (or the organization) is the final end of political action. What is often overlooked, is that Machiavelli’s treatise on power also may be considered a theological work that has deep underpinnings in Augustin’s account of original sin (Qviller, in: Qviller & Machiavelli, 1999). This generic relation is not thematized by Bradley, but she certainly acknowledges that leaders according to Machiavelli have to take into consideration that most people are predominantly “selfish, insecure, acquisitive, untrustworthy, aggressively competitive and unattractively vulgar” (Bradley 1994, p. 17).

Because of this, people will naturally want to resist both law and reason and consider the exercise of power over them by others as fairly unjust. This state of affairs requires that leaders are “men of action” who do not hesitate to use coercive power when necessary. The leader (the Prince) may also be morally virtuous but basically out of necessity. The necessary is defined by one’s wish to stay in power and by the survival of the state (or organization). “Morality therefore is just another means to an end, if it serves your purposes, use it, if not - don’t” (Bradley, 1994, p. 17). Machiavelli argues that it is better to be feared than loved. Yet some balance should be maintained. To avoid fear turning into hatred, there has to be a sense of self-restraint and notion of justice with regard to property and influence. Nonetheless, when required, the ruler should act cruelly to sustain fear. This should be done quickly and

effectively and be ended as soon as possible, yet Machiavelli warns against excessive caution which may be taken for weakness (Bradley, 1994, p.19).

The realism of Machiavelli may be summarized in two of Bradley's key points. The first key point is this:

[...] there are important implications for leadership theory in the frequently ignored fact that leaders often will not have the choice between right and wrong, but only between opposing wrongs. Prudent leadership, therefore, says Machiavelli, consists in knowing how to distinguish degrees of disadvantage, and in accepting a less evil as a good. (Bradley, 1994, p.20)

From this it follows that the Machiavellian executive may and will move outside the law (and formal organizational structure) and into the realm of non-legal, arbitrary decisions that need to be concealed. When necessary leaders may even move into the shadow areas of action that may require secrecy, hypocrisy and deceit, including a false religious façade:

What matters is that leaders succeed in the task they have set for themselves. There is little point in failing and consequently undermining the organization for which you are responsible, merely for the sake of keeping your own integrity intact, or of keeping your conscience clear. To take that option, says Machiavelli, is to be unacceptably self-indulgent. In the shadows cast by the realities of human nature leaders must act in whatever way is likely to achieve success. (Bradley, 1996, p.18).

This is not an ultimate ideal for Bradley. She strives to hold on to a kind of biblical ethics by introducing an alternative theological anthropology. In short, she suggests that humans are not only fallen beings since they are also created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-31). Thus, they are rather an ambiguous mixture of self-centeredness and moral consciousness. This leads her to suggest that

[...] in the Biblical understanding, the persistence of evil does not mean self-centeredness is the only fundamental inclination of human beings. For it is a universal inclination of human beings, also, to consider the needs of others. Individuals are uneasy when they seek only their own purposes at the expense of others. They are aware of higher possibilities beyond self-seeking. They are aware of their dependence on others for the fulfilment of life. They have some consciousness of what they ought to be, as distinct from what they are. (Bradley, 1994, p.22).

She then moves on to discuss these models of man in relation to three important aspects of Christian leadership: vision, submission, and service. She considers vision to be both a useful and biblical tool of leadership in the sense that it provides purpose and meaning to a group. Yet, she remains skeptical to the idea of shared visions because it could be argued that the bonding that organizational visions generate is often achieved by sophisticated and subtle manipulation (Bradley, 1994, p.25-26).

She also observes that mutual submission in terms of giving up one's own interest for the sake of others is also a central motif in the biblical narrative, acknowledging that servanthood is an important concept in the Bible. Christian leaders are servants of God and men. This seems to point towards an organizational culture that undercuts claim of status based on position. Instead, leaders should nurture mutual encouragement and appreciation, consensus, collegiality, power-sharing, collaborative decision-making, and a shared vision (Bradley, 1994, p. 27). Yet, Bradley seeks some kind of middle ground suggesting that a biblical model of leadership actually calls for a paradoxical combination of submission and authority.

For this reason, she suggests that there is a theological limit to submission. This limit is defined by the vision and purpose of the organization. When submission proves to be destructive for the organization it should not be pursued (Bradley, 1994, p. 29). Thus, in the end, she seems to lean towards the Machiavellian priority, organizational survival first. Following Machiavelli, she seems to assume that leaders often will be working in the uncertain shadows cast by the "limits of submission". Often, they will be faced with a conflict of wills and interests that have the potential to undermine or destroy their leadership. Moreover, it would often be difficult, if not impossible, to separate their self-interest from the success of the organization (Bradley, 1994, p. 30).

Bradley moves on to claim that organizations by their very nature carry a kind of selfishness that even exceeds the egotism of individuals. Bradley borrows this idea from the father of Christian realism, Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr provides several reasons for why organizations are considerably less ethical than the individuals. Firstly, a sizable group is incapable of selfless love or sacrifice because a moral leader must accept responsibility for the others in the group. Secondly, a group has much less self-transcendence than the individual because it is not capable of standing outside itself and observe its actions. Thirdly, it is much harder for leaders to identify with the needs of people outside the group than caring for those on the inside. Fourthly, the mind that may restrain impulses in individual life, says Niebuhr, exists only in limited form in the group. Finally, he suggests that the selfishness of groups is greater because they do not have a (limited) biological time to their existence (Bradley, 1994, pp. 31-32).

At this point Bradley does not provide a balancing counter-perspective. Instead she concludes that:

Thus, if Niebuhr's basic point that there is no way to escape the moral ambiguity of collective life contains even an element of accuracy, the 'shadowy' area of activity in which a leader must sometimes operate, is considerably expanded. (Bradley, 1994, p. 32).

We are now in a position to better understand why Bradley is also suspicious of visionary leadership. It may become a form of collective self-indulgence. Yet, she maintains that servant leadership and submission need to be limited precisely by such visions and the purpose of the organization. Thus, on the overall Bradley seems to embrace both Machiavelli's and Niebuhr's "realisms" to a significant degree. Although, or perhaps precisely because, she wants

to maintain some form of theological balance, she ends up with a very down-to-earth and, in a sense, disillusioned form of Christian realism. This can be seen in her concluding remarks:

To be involved in leadership may have outcomes that many Christians have difficulty accepting - compromise, uncertainty and, even more threatening, an uneasy conscience. A leader in an imperfect world will often face a choice not between right and wrong but between one wrong and another wrong. Even trying to choose the lesser of two evils is extremely difficult. With all the good-will in the world, we may fail to see that the greater evil we are trying to avoid may eventually prove to be the lesser one. At times in leadership, therefore, the difficult choices we have to make will leave us not with a warm inner glow, but with a sense of deep regret and uncertainty. (Bradley, 1994, p. 34).

She does not dismiss virtues of service and submissive humility completely; in the conclusion of the first article (Bradley, 1994) she admits these virtues are compelling for Christian leaders in light of the redemptive action of God in Christ. Yet, the idea of redemption is not unpacked in any depth neither in this article nor in a later article that appeared five years later (Bradley, 1999). In that article she seems even more pessimistic, considering aggressivity in the workplace and the perception that followers might manipulate leaders. She maintains that the wish to serve others is a fine moral attitude that may be embraced. However, Greenleaf's model of servant leadership as a whole is dismissed as "wooly and unrealistic". She sees it rather as a good "bed-time story .. that unfortunately may deflect us from developing more useful models of leadership" (Bradley, 1999, p. 53). In sum then, Bradley seems to reject Greenleaf's model of servant leadership and its implied description of legitimate power

Bradley and Greenleaf. A short note on different anthropologies

It is important to notice that this dismissal of Greenleaf's model is grounded in a more pessimistic and possibly more realistic anthropology, which in turn is grounded in theology and the notion that humans, even though they are created in the image of God, are significantly influenced by sin. From the analysis above, it is possible to suggest that there are elements of realism in Greenleaf's thinking as well. However, because there are considerable differences in terms of how Bradley and Greenleaf weigh and emphasize the good (and created) moral potential of humans on one side, and their factual depravity (or sinfulness) on the other, this difference in emphasis has the consequence that their views on practical leadership seem worlds apart. For Bradley, power yielding and uneasy moral compromises are the normal state of affairs, meaning that service is a noble attitude but not the essential or resounding element of legitimate power that can give shape to a theory or *gestalt* of leadership.

Tom Marshal: A theological account on power and servant leadership

As I suggested above, Bradley does not unpack what redemption means for leadership. This is done by the charismatic Bible teacher Tom Marshall, who is more affirmative of Greenleaf's

work (Marshall, 2003, p.71). Marshall's most original contribution to servant leadership theory was that he elaborated the concept from the perspective of the biblical storyline of creation, fall, and redemption. Marshall does not demonize power *per se* but starts from the premise that all power belongs to God. He seems to perceive power both as ability to, and as control over.⁷ Marshall argues that power should be distinguished from authority, which includes both (1) the legitimate right to exercise power, (2) and the actual use of power (Marshall 2003, pp. 105-106).

At a basic level, Marshall sees all humans as carriers of delegated authority, grounded in the mandate to rule in the world that was given by God as they were created in his image,⁸ implying that all forms of leadership are kinds of stewardship:

God's purpose has always been for man to exercise authority as can be seen from the original mandate of stewardship he gave to humankind to rule over the world.
(Gen 1:28; Marshall, 2003, p. 106)

Marshall also sees all forms of human cooperation in light of this mandate (Marshall, 2003, pp. 195-198). He stresses that leaders who are charged with exercising authority must be given enough power to perform, while at the same time being held accountable for actions (Marshall, 2003, p.106). He also acknowledges that human use of power has a tremendous corrupting potential and that power has become corrupted through human participation in it. Since humans have turned away from true worship and obedience to God, they have turned the creation mandate against God. Sin, then, is rebellion and human power has now become a part of the rebellion, which in turn leads to power abuse and in some cases tyranny and domination (Marshall, 2003, pp. 49-53).⁹

Marshall observes that Christ was born into a context dominated by different forms of oppressive social and economic structures (Marshall 2003, p.63). Yet, in the midst of these structures Jesus incarnated and demonstrated another and alternative form of power. Marshall goes on to argue that God through the incarnation – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – redeemed all aspects of human nature, including power. Commenting on Philippians 2:8-11, he says:

What Paul stresses was not that Jesus' death on the Cross was something he freely chose himself, but that it was a death chosen for him by the Father to which he was willingly obedient. That choice made by the man with the most power in the entire universe did something to power itself - it redeemed it. (Marshall 2003, pp. 66-67).

⁷ He says that power can be defined as the capacity or ability to act or perform effectively, to have control over the environment, and to get done whatever you will do (Marshall, 2003, p. 60-61).

⁸ He is describing power quite similar to French' and Raven's classic fivefold typology of power in organizations. Although he does not refer explicitly to reference power, God is seen as the ultimate reference.

⁹ This means that power to some degree has become demonic. At this point, Marshall also suggests that sociological macro-structures are influenced by demonic powers that "dominate the world system and oppress the whole of human race" (Marshall, 2003, p. 48).

Thus, Marshall suggests that salvation is not only a redemption of human nature but also a redemption of power. Jesus' death on the cross is not only a symbol, it is also an ontological source of a transformed form of power which manifests as servant leadership. This form of service is basically theocentric in the sense that it expresses itself through the incarnated Son's obedience to, and love for, the Father.

By the presence of the Holy Spirit, Christian leaders may now be shaped in this image (Marshall, 2003, p. 69). What characterizes such leaders? Firstly, such leaders have overcome what Marshall calls "the status syndrome" (Marshall, 2003, p. 86).¹⁰ Leaders and followers should still honor one another but this should be a kind of symmetric exchange of gratitude among people of equal value. Christians who function in a role of leadership should therefore also resist the temptation to see themselves as "special men of God". Rather, they should see themselves as servants created by the redeeming work of Christ. This kind of servant leadership is not only modelled by Jesus, it is also mediated by the Spirit in the sense that believers are given "access to the life of Christ" through the new birth and continual presence of the Spirit (Marshall, 2003, pp. 79-80). Redemptive power should therefore primarily be understood as a new character and a "second" nature rather than as a set of roles or a leadership style (Marshall, 2003, p. 71-73).

In order to describe this new character, Marshall employs the biblical image of the leader as shepherd and argues for a list of virtues and practices that include caring for and empowering others, acceptance of obligation and accountability, humility and willingness to listen, and wise and realistic judgment. Christian leaders need to develop a particular kind of foresight which is grounded in Scripture and empowered by gifts of the Spirit, including wisdom, discernment, and prophetic insights (Marshall, 2003, pp. 16-23).

Marshall stresses that leaders need to exercise authority. In the realm of prayer and worship, this implies coercive spiritual power over demonic powers (Marshall, 2003, p. 115). Yet, in interpersonal relations, which are also to be considered spiritual, redeemed power takes another form. The second aspect of spiritual power is providing "authoritative and reliable, but not infallible, guidance and direction to the church" (Marshall, 2003, p. 115). This kind of moral authority proceeds from the spirit of the one exercising it. It carries an "oughtness" impacting the listener's conscience, but it still leaves him or her with a real choice of obeying or disobeying. Marshall understands this in contrast to coercion and manipulation:

Church leaders who are exercising spiritual authority must, therefore, strenuously avoid coercion and manipulation in any form whatsoever, whether by force of will or personality, charisma or reputation, or group or peer pressure. Even more to be shunned are claims to divine revelation or divine sanctions to back up directives or reinforce views of opinions. (Marshall, 2003, p. 114).

¹⁰ This includes special means of identification, such as prestigious titles, forms of address and clothes, and is accompanied by material and social privileges, monetary reward, and more power.

At this point Marshall refers to Menno Simons, who insisted that one could not use spiritual authority to make the rebel obedient. The purpose of spiritual authority is rather to enable the willing or obedient person to live a holy life by “spiritual means”. Its only weapons are prayer, scripture, council, and the example of a holy life (Marshall, 2003, p.114).

It might be worth noticing that this applies to spiritual leadership in the church. Elsewhere, Marshall includes coercive power in his description of leadership. Marshall sees coercive power as the ability to threaten or punish those who do not behave in a desired way. It means they will be “demoted, fined, dismissed, expelled, imprisoned, or have other unpleasant sanctions against them” (Marshall, 2003, p. 104). Yet, he also identifies “milder forms of coercion” in terms of reprimanding or rebuking, which is simply described as the power of leaders. Thus, as in Greenleaf’s thinking, one might suspect that the line between persuasion and verbal reprimanding is somewhat fuzzy.

But is coercive power legitimate? Legitimate authority exists according to Marshall in at least three forms: task authority, teaching authority and spiritual or moral authority.¹¹ Task authority seems to be a kind of power over, but it is strictly limited to certain missions within certain contexts. Teaching authority has the long-term purpose of empowering students to understand something new but also to think freely and responsibly. In the contexts of task and teaching authority, it seems that forms of coercion, and in particular in its milder verbal forms, may be seen as legitimate within certain limits. However, Marshall argues that leaders who call for unquestioning obedience in the third realm – moral and spiritual matters – make a severe category mistake:

When spiritual leaders declare categorically what they conceive to be the truth in moral or spiritual matters and allow for no questioning, no inquiry, and no discussion, they are using task authority in a spiritual situation. And when they classify any contrary views or alternative interpretations as rebellion against anointed authority, they are also misusing task authority. (Marshall, 2003, p. 115).

Authoritarian abuse of authority is obviously a temptation for leaders but it is worth noticing that Marshall also views it as a temptation for followers. These are tempted to avoid personal moral responsibility by delegating moral inquiry upwards to leaders. In the long term this leads to the tragedy of religious legalism: “to live within the letter of the law without it affecting our heart” (Marshall, 2003, p. 115). Thus, authentic spiritual authority does not only allow but require questioning, inquiry, and the underlying principle of freedom of conscience. This is also necessary because leaders are fallible. For this reason, Marshall stresses that leaders should make disciples “not to men but to Christ” (Marshall 2003, p. 115).

¹¹ These should be applied contingent on contextual factors. Situational analyses and sound judgement in terms of knowing when and how to use different forms of power and authority is therefore an important part of leadership (Marshall, 2003, pp. 105-9).

A comparison of Greenleaf's and Marshall's models

Overall there are both significant similarities and substantial differences between Marshall's and Greenleaf's models of servant leadership. When it comes to the nature of legitimate power, both thinkers see service (in terms of serving others) as an essential dimension of legitimate power. For Marshall, legitimate power is more or less identical with the character of Christ and Christ-like service. Both agree that persuasion and moral modeling are the primary and preferred modes of power, although the line between persuasion and milder verbal forms of coercion such as reprimanding seems somewhat fuzzy. Nevertheless, both define servant leadership in opposition to manipulation and authoritarian use of coercive power. Both thinkers may be seen as virtue ethicists that emphasize the need for wisdom or foresight and caring and empowering leadership. For Marshall, this kind of virtue ethics is ontologically grounded in Christ's redemption. In other words, it is a kind of Christological virtue ethics that defines the essence of legitimate power. It is worth noticing that Marshall, unlike Greenleaf, also emphasizes humility towards, love for, and volitional obedience to God. The terminology of obedience is absent in Greenleaf's *Opus Magnum* (Greenleaf 2002) and this dissimilarity is hardly coincidental since he seems to be fundamentally more skeptical to hierarchies as a phenomenon.

This difference seems to be grounded in a more fundamental difference at the level of anthropology, and one might add, spirituality and world view (or social vision). Marshall argues that legitimate authority comes from God, who has revealed himself in the biblical story and can be identified in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He does not promote an authoritarian kind of Christian spirituality. He does however envision a world which is theocentric rather than anthropocentric. Men serve one another within the horizon of serving God, and for this reason, there is a basic hierarchy in the world that possibly may be grounded on other hierarchies in certain respects (e.g. task and teaching authority). Moreover, the main source of beneficial human transformation is not primarily the autonomous human spirit (which according to Marshall is influenced by the fall) but the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is described as being lovingly obedient to the Father and this type of life and leadership is mediated to the church through the Spirit (Marshall, 2003, pp. 79-80).

Greenleaf, on the other hand, saw Jesus as an example of servant leadership and treasured the Judeo-Christian tradition, yet he explicitly says that he does not value it above other religious traditions (Greenleaf & Drucker, 1996, p. 289).¹² Greenleaf believed that all people should be their own theologian listening to the spirit within themselves (Greenleaf & Drucker, 1996, p. 324; see also Frick, 2004, ch.10). For this reason, he mainly sees the Christian church as an expression of man's search for meaning.¹³ Thus, Greenleaf's spirituality is humanistic in the sense of being anthropocentric. In an extensive analysis of Greenleaf's thinking, Mark

¹² Frick observes that Greenleaf wanted to develop this tradition and that he speculated on the emergence of a religion that "probably will not be exclusively Christian" (quote from Frick, 2004, loc. 3735).

¹³ This can be seen in his definition of church: "I view the churches, as I have said, as the institutionalization of humankind's religious concern" (Greenleaf, 2002, loc.2760-2761). Thus, Christianity is primarily understood as an expression of a universal human need, see also Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 3555.

Wells comes to the conclusion that Greenleaf's anthropology is significantly influenced by the secular existentialism of Albert Camus and the religious syncretism of Herman Hesse, which was predominantly Eastern (Hindu/ Buddhist) in its orientation (Wells, 2004). Thus, when Greenleaf speaks about the healing of individuals and communities in terms of becoming "whole" this does not necessarily mean an incorporation into Trinitarian life as it could in Marshall's theology.

According to Wells, it can rather be understood as a kind of unity with the cosmos or Brahma in the "Eastern" sense of "God" following the pattern of a kind of Hegelian dialectics (Wells, 2004, p. 35) - although I will add that Greenleaf was not a dogmatic Hindu or Buddhist either. He remained an admirer of George Fox.¹⁴ The essence of Greenleaf's spiritual humanism is nevertheless that every human has an inner spirit that may serve as a creative source of truth and transformation. This does not necessarily imply a radical form of individualism since transformation in Greenleaf's conception also may take place in a community of fellow seekers. It does, however, imply that he is a radically egalitarian thinker who seems to accept organizational hierarchies only out of pragmatic necessity.¹⁵ His social imagery or vision of an ideal world seems to be that of a strict egalitarian society of friends.

This way of viewing the world gives shape to Greenleaf's perception of legitimate power and underlie his understanding of criteria for how power should be used. Greenleaf's ethical criteria has no explicit transcendent reference, rather these are centered on empowerment and caring for the welfare of humans, and in particular the least privileged in society. One might suggest that different forms of religious thinking and their social imageries then will be tested against these criteria and not the other way around. Marshall, on the other hand, reflects within the horizon of a more classic Christian tradition. In sum, then, the analysis of Bradley's critique and the comparison between Marshall's and Greenleaf's models of leadership show that theological anthropology, and how one answers fundamental theological questions, have a substantial effect on how one understands the nature of legitimate power and how one defines criteria for how power should be used. This leads to the next part of this analysis.

Theological research questions that need to be explored

The purpose of this final section is to establish relevant and fruitful research questions that may stimulate further research on servant leadership and power from the perspective of constructive, systematic, and practical theology.

¹⁴ Wells (2004) shows that there are a number of psychological (Jung) and liberal (versions of Quaker and Unitarian) theological influences in his thinking.

¹⁵ Interestingly, he sees larger hierarchies as an unfortunate import in to the Judeo-Christian tradition through the pagan priest Jethro (Greenleaf, 2002, loc. 1157).

Servant leadership and the horizon of Trinitarian theology

What should be the point of departure for a constructive theological study of power? Pentecostal-charismatic scholar Veli Matti Kärkkäinen suggests that constructive theology should be grounded in a theology of Trinitarian relations (Kärkkäinen, 2014). A possible research question could therefore be: *How does Trinitarian theology provide a framework for conceptualizing legitimate power and servant leadership in organizations (in particular the church)?* In light of the analyses so far one may also ask more specifically: *Is legitimate power after the image of Trinity - only empowering and creative power to - or does it also include some form of hierarchical power over?* There are at least two perspectives on Trinity that may serve as useful departure points for answering these questions. The first is represented by theologians like Jürgen Moltman who strongly promote a kind of egalitarian theology by evoking, and in part reinterpreting, the patristic understanding of Trinity in terms of *Perichoresis* (e.g. Moltmann, 1981).

Perichoresis is used to describe the mutual dependence and co-inherence by the divine persons in one another. As such it may serve as a hermeneutical key for understanding the complex interplay of giving and receiving of love within the Trinity, and as a description of a process of mutual creative empowerment among persons, also on a sociological level. Kärkkäinen describes Moltman's theological program as one that seeks to combat hierarchical and power-laden ways of life by imagining the trinitarian God as a "community of equals, vulnerable and open to the human suffering" (Kärkkäinen, 2014, loc. 9591). This view of the Trinity also induces a particular understanding of the nature of God's rule, the kingdom of God. Sykes describes this theology as follows:

There is a kingdom of the Father, who creates creatures who are dependent, there is a kingdom of the Son, who redeems and adopts humans as his children, a family community of equal brothers and sisters, but there is a third kingdom, that of the Spirit, in which the servant of God and the children of the Father, becomes God's friends. (Sykes, 2006).

Sykes also observes that Moltman concludes that this kind of friendship abolishes the distance between the sovereignty of God and human freedom. Thus, this last stage seems to have a striking family resemblance with the kind of egalitarian social vision that is promoted by Greenleaf. Moltman's image of the Trinity has also inspired visions for social change and liberation implying that social structures should be flattened. This includes feminist theologies and the Charismatic free church ecclesiology that has been worked out by one of Moltman's most celebrated students, Miroslav Volf (Volf, 1997). However, other Charismatic theologians like Kärkkäinen have objections to Moltmann's theology based on how Trinity is described in Scripture. For this reason, Kärkkäinen seeks for a middle course between Moltman and a more traditional Trinitarian theology, following Wolfhart Pannenberg (Kärkkäinen, 2014, loc. 9658 -63).¹⁶

¹⁶ It is worth noticing, however, that Kärkkäinen suggests that a hierarchical understanding of the Trinity does not necessarily lead to a hierarchical understanding of ecclesial relations.

A second, and alternative perspective on the Trinity, is the more traditional Eastern Orthodox approach (e.g. Williams and McKibben, 1994) which identifies an interplay between hierarchy and conciliarity in both the Trinity and the church. This model of the Trinity seems to point towards more complex and perhaps more contextually dependent answers to the questions that were posed above. Such a perspective seems to be reasonably compatible with Marshall's position who sees certain forms of hierarchal power as potentially beneficial. Furthermore, servant leadership might be performed within hierarchies without erasing such (formal) structures totally.¹⁷ With Marshall it might also be fruitful to rethink hierarchies from a Christological perspective and the possible paradox of being empowered by volitional obedience. This does not necessarily lead to an ecclesial structure with one centralised hierarchy. It might also be compatible with Volf's (1997) conciliar ideal of a charismatic and polycentric church in which the gifts of the Spirit are distributed among church members in ways that make them dependent upon one another. On the other hand, one might also suggest that some gifts, and in particular those gifts that typically come first in Paul's lists (e.g. 1 Cor 12, Eph 4; apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) perhaps tend to lead more than other gifts.

However, in some respect Trinitarian approaches also seem to have critical limitations as analytical perspectives. This is clearly applying to images of the so-called immanent Trinity, which in the end is basically our attempt to imagine how the divine persons relate to one another in eternity. As Kärkkäinen argues, we can only know God and Trinitarian relations through the revelation of God in history, or what is commonly called the economic Trinity (Kärkkäinen, 2014, loc. 7598). Moreover, even if we were able to provide an accurate image of how love and power is shared through mutual and self-giving relations in the immanent Trinity (in eternity), this image might be unattainable or even dysfunctional in our world. The reason is that the world is not fully redeemed, as Bradley persistently reminds us. Following Machiavelli (and Niebuhr), she seems to suggest that those who naively follow such ideals may be an easy prey for evil-minded men in the real world (see Bradley, 1994, p. 18).

Servant leadership in light of Christology and Soteriology

One possible solution to this problem is to focus on how Christ related to power. After all, he was incarnated into the real world. John Howard Yoder insists that we in the example of Jesus' service and submission see a countercultural example of "revolutionary" life politics that still may serve as a basic model for the church (Rasmussen, 2002; Yoder, 1994). This stands in contrast to the kind of Niebuhrian Christian Realism that Bradley promotes and that may come close to reducing the story of Christ, and in particular the event of the cross, to a kind of transhistorical idealist principle (see Keller Jr., 1986). Given the Christological focus of the

¹⁷ We might expect that servant leadership as role-performances will "flatten" the actual and informal social structure (in terms of actual patterns of actual interaction) compared to other styles of leadership, yet without demolishing the formal structure completely (Lingenfelter, 1996).

early Pentecostal movement (Land, 2010), it also seems reasonable to suggest that a Pentecostal or Charismatic theology should approach servant leadership from the perspective of Christology. This may be the basis for the following research question: *In what way should Christ's redeeming work be understood as a transformation of human power - and what are the main implications for leadership?*

Any Christological account should begin with the biblical story and include recent works in the field of biblical studies. Studies should include both those studies which affirm servant leadership as a root metaphor of Christian leadership (e.g. Agosto, 2005; Bell, 2014; see also Tangen, 2018b), and those which question this proposal seeing other images as being more central to the New Testament narrative (e.g. Clarke, 2013; Wilson, 2010). Kent Wilson is an example of a scholar who quite connivingly argues that stewardship rather than service seems to serve as the key metaphor for leadership in the New Testament (Wilson, 2010; see also Wilson, 2016). This implies that leadership as service primarily should be understood as a kind of stewardship, rather than vice versa. From a systematic theological perspective, one might suggest that both metaphors may be held together in some kind of integrative dialectical tension. What might be called biblical realism seems to suggest that leaders are not only generous table hosts (*diakonos*) that share the overflow of God's gifts and hospitality, they are also stewards (*oikonomos*) responsible for the sustainability of the church. Evangelists cross borders and invite all people to the feast of God (Luke 14; Acts 15), but shepherds and teachers still have to draw a line between acceptable and false teaching and confront unacceptable behavior (Acts 20; Tangen, 2018d).

Indeed, a theological account of servant leadership must go beyond descriptions of leadership behavior in the Bible to approach classic systematic theological questions. We have seen that for Marshall, unlike Greenleaf, Jesus is not only a moral example and model of servant leadership (see also Wells 2004, pp. 167-169), he is also an ontological source of human transformation. Jack Niewold has criticized Christian versions of servant leadership for promoting an impoverished *kenotic* Christology emphasizing the possibility that Jesus in his death surrendered his divine prerogatives (Luke, Philippians 2) at the expense of a *pleromatic* Christology, that accentuates the constant deity and progressive glorification of Christ that began in the incarnation (see Niewold, 2007).

This objection to servant leadership theory should certainly be discussed, but it may not apply to Marshall's model who preciously makes the point that Jesus' submission to his Father at the cross was done by "the man with the most power in the universe" (Marshall, 2003, p. 63). Moreover, Marshall's account also seems to have a kind of family resemblance with the Eastern Orthodox notion of human transformation as *theosis*,¹⁸ which certainly corre-

¹⁸ Marshall's account of the redemption of power certainly should be discussed, but I will suggest that it is fairly compatible with Thomas F. Torrance's evangelical application of patristic theology and version of *theosis*, suggesting that "Christ became what we are, in order to that we might become what he is." (See Marshall, 2003, pp. 61-63). At this point, one might ask if Marshall unfortunately also comes close to a kind of Irvingian theology. Torrance's theology of *theosis* may solve this problem (see Habets, 2016).

sponds to Niewold's theological concern. *Theosis* implies that redemption also conveys a divinization of the human, in the sense that the church now participates in Christ's love and holiness because Christ first became human. This proposal is interesting from a Free church perspective because *theosis* recently has been adopted, though critically, by Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars who develop this idea from the perspective of a Third Article theology or Pneumatology (Kärkkäinen, 2016; Macchia, 2006).

Servant leadership in light of Pneumatological Eschatology

I consider Marshall's proposal of servant leadership as part of redemption as very appealing. However, I will also suggest that Marshall's theology and anthropology needs some revision in light of the insight that the Kingdom of God is already present, but not yet fully consummated. This eschatological notion of redemption seems to form scholarly consensus among many contemporary theologians in general, and among recent Pentecostal-charismatic theologians in particular (Kärkkäinen, 2014; Land, 1993; Macchia, 2006; Yong & Anderson, 2014).

Frank Macchia offers a pneumatological perspective on the Kingdom of God claiming that Spirit baptism, or the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, brought the Trinitarian life of the kingdom into this world:

The Trinitarian structure of Spirit baptism has to do with the participation of creation by the Spirit in the redemptive act of the Son with the goal of participating in the bond of love between the Son and the Father. The ultimate goal is the fulfilment of the kingdom of God in righteousness as the dwelling place of God. (Macchia, 2006, p. 129).

Somewhat simplified, one might suggest that the kingdom is pneumatological in its substance in the sense that "Christ is the king and the Spirit the kingdom" (Macchia, 2006, p. 89). Yet, this kind of participation in Christ's rule through the Spirit is not fully consummated. A practical theology of servant leadership therefore needs to ask another question that may provide images of an eschatologically informed anthropology of power: *How does the character of the kingdom of God as already, and not yet, give shape to the performance of servant leadership and exercise of power (in a world that is not fully redeemed)?*

More specifically, we could ask: *How does redeemed power, or the power of the Spirit, appear in a world that is not yet fully redeemed?* This kind of eschatological approach might serve as a frame for integrating elements from the thinking of Greenleaf, Bradley, and Marshall into a new theological whole. At the same time, it may serve as a base for critique. It may be Bradley's somewhat narrow focus on sin which produces an overly pessimistic anthropology and at the same time a kind of under-realized eschatology. As Jack Keller has shown, Christian realism reduces humans to atomistic selfish individuals that basically engage in zero-sum power struggles in a way that neither sufficiently account for human power as partly moral, nor for the new reality of the redeemed order (Keller Jr., 1986). If the Holy Spirit renews the human capabilities that is given through creation as people participate in Christ (sanctification or *theosis*), one has to see serving and creative power as a real possibility in this world, although it will be both vulnerable and incomplete.

Much of Greenleaf's model of leadership might be confirmed by a theology of creation. Yet, seen from the eschatological perspective of the not yet, it seems to be overly optimistic. It may perhaps also be considered as a kind of (overly realized) anthropocentric pseudo-eschatology that gravitates towards the assumption that the fullness of human flourishing may be restored in this age by means of the human spirit, without a restoration of right worship. An eschatological perspective may also be useful in terms of evaluating the philosophy of prosperity that seems implicit in more recent models of servant leadership. It may challenge, but possibly also confirm, the if X (Servant leadership) then Y (organizational success) type of causality that was presented above. The biblical wisdom literature confirms that people who sow "righteousness" might reap "blessing" (Proverbs, Psalm 1). Yet at the same time, it wrestles with the fact that bad things happen to good people in a way that certainly obscures the most simplistic version of the X-Y rationality (e.g. Psalm 73; Job). Put simply, because of the power of sin, the world is not fair. The solution is the eschatological judgment of God that restores justice (Gal 6:8).

Moreover, this account of human flourishing might imply that we also explore the relation between salvation and the restoration of creation in this age. A kind of "Greenleafian" universalist interpretation of redemption could suggest that since power is redeemed, servant leadership may now contribute to human flourishing in all spheres of creation, regardless of whether people believe in Christ or not. Alternatively, one could also imagine a kind of a hidden presence of Christ (as creator, not necessarily savior in the eternal sense?) wherever servant leadership takes place. Thus, one might ask whether the redemption and transformation of power (to service) is uniquely available only through the church's redemptive and covenantal union with Christ as Marshall seems to suggest, or whether it is also in some way or another universally available as a moral and even "causal" principle. Most classical Pentecostal and Free Church theologians will probably insist that the image of Christ is exclusively reproduced in those who believe in him, yet others might be open for a cautious exploration of more inclusivist alternatives starting from a slightly more integrative theology of religions.¹⁹

Yet, even if we begin from the premise that redemptive power is exclusively mediated through the Spirit in the church (2 Cor 3:17-18), there will still be disagreement on how this should be described depending on different emphasis on and understandings of the already and not yet. From the works of Michal Gorman, it is possible to make a strong case for "cruciform" as a specific Christian root metaphor that may apply to servant leadership (Gorman 2001, 2009, 2014, 2015). Put differently, by the Spirit Christian leaders are shaped into the image of the cross. Yet, this choice of root metaphor may also be somewhat one-sided since Paul also sees the church's communion with Christ as participation in the resurrection. This means, as Marshall suggests, that the church may exercise coercive power over destructive

¹⁹ See the discussion in Yong, 2003.

and demonic forces in the name of Jesus because it is empowered by the Spirit to do so.²⁰ Pentecostal-charismatic theologians will therefore certainly explore if servant leadership is more adequately described in terms of being cruciform-charismatic, meaning that the church is transformed not only into the image of the serving and suffering Christ, but also into a partial reflection of his resurrection.

Put differently, we can expect to see powerful manifestations of the resurrection power like charismatic healings of bodies also in this age. Gifts of the Spirit may also include words of wisdom that may guide leaders, highlight common goods, and bring forms of healing, reconciliation and peace (*shalom*) to a given community, though partially in this age. Leaders that facilitate this kind of social healing or transformation cannot escape self-giving, sacrifice, and at times unjust suffering, since sin is real, and the cross is the wisdom of God in this age (1 Cor 1:16ff). Yet, the power of the Holy Spirit may still restore justice and forms of creational inter-play among those led in ways that significantly contribute to human flourishing (2 Cor 4:10-15). Although such processes and events appear through, rather than instead of or apart from, weakness and suffering, and therefore will be partial and vulnerable, they will still serve as present signs of the coming Kingdom and the day when the church will be resurrected from death into eternal glory in the image of the triune God (Phil 3:3-12; Tangen, 2018b).

Servant leadership, moral virtues and practical wisdom

These images – Trinity as the foundation for a loving and creative power, Christ as the redeemer and human image of legitimate power, and the church's union with him through the Spirit as both cruciform and charismatic – could serve as a hermeneutic horizon as one turns to the second question: *What are the main moral criteria for the use of power?* I will suggest that a theological approach should follow Greenleaf's and Marshall's intuitions and begin this kind of inquiry from the perspective of virtue ethics. Above, I have suggested that Marshall's model of leadership represents a kind of soteriological virtue ethics. I have also suggested that Greenleaf's approach is fairly compatible with virtue ethics. Greenleaf's general concept of foresight at the center of moral inquiry is open to many different visions of the good. This is both a strength and a weakness. Its strength lies in its flexibility and its possible compatibility with a number of ethical traditions. Its weakness is that the criteria that Greenleaf presents are too minimalist to deal sufficiently with a number of moral problems. This can be seen if we, for instance, identify the chronically ill as some of the least privileged in society – and then

²⁰ A possible question within the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition is whether this charismatic dimension is mediated in the initial reception of the Spirit (and may be released later by an infilling of the Spirit), or whether it is more adequate to speak about a Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4) as a subsequent act of spiritual empowerment that mediates such spiritual gifts. This must, however, be discussed elsewhere. What remains common ground among charismatics, is that the Holy Spirit empowers leaders for service in ways that transcends immanent human capabilities. Continual experiences of being filled with and empowered by the Spirit will certainly remain imperative, regardless of how one conceptualizes the *Ordo Salutes* or *Via Salutes* of the Christian leader (Atkinson, 2011; Land, 2010; Macchia, 2006).

ask if assisted self-euthanasia would count as a kind of empowerment?²¹ Greenleaf's criteria are insufficient in providing a warranted description of the best interest of the least privileged. In order to provide such an account, we need to approach the question from a more robust moral tradition that extends beyond generations and provides a thicker description of human life and moral goods (MacIntyre, 2007).²²

Fortunately, there are countless resources in the Christian tradition that might contribute to such a difficult hermeneutical enterprise. The next research questions could therefore be: *What are the key practices and key virtues of servant leadership – in light of the Christian tradition?* The Bible is the norming norm of the Christian tradition, but it is not the only resource. Stephen Sykes (2006) shows how thinkers Gregory the Great and Benedict of Nursia offer important reflections on the ambiguities of power and virtues of leadership. The historically most important source on virtue ethics in the Medieval Christian tradition is nonetheless Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* (Aquinas, 1981). This approach might not be uncontroversial in the protestant world of Free Churches, yet recent developments in Pentecostal-charismatic theology might be helpful if one embarks on the quest of integrating classic virtue ethics and Charismatic Free church theology (Castelo, 2012; Land, 2010).

On a general level, theologians should explore how the traditional understanding of virtues like love, faith, hope, justice, moderation, courage, and prudence might be used to elaborate and perhaps transform the existing list of virtues in theories of servant leadership.

An interesting dialogue partner could be Geoff Moore who has quite successfully applied Alasdair MacIntyre's (2007) Neo-Thomistic virtue ethics to the domain of organizational management (Moore, 2019). One of Moore's key points is that moral leadership is orientated towards facilitating practices that seek to realize intrinsic (non-instrumental) moral goods. Yet, they are unavoidably also stewards of institutions that enable such practices. Paradoxically, such institutions also have their own "systemic" concerns including survival (or organizational egotism according to Niebuhr) that actually may threaten the moral concerns of the practices they were established to sustain. Moore's model may therefore be an important dialogue partner as we approach the difficult questions that are evoked by Bradley's philosophical and theological realism.

One virtue that may stand out as particularly critical as we face moral dilemmas is the virtue of *prudence* (Latin) or *phronesis* (Greek). According to Thomas Aquinas, prudence of practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue that enables us to make judgments that are consonant with and ordered to our proper ends (Aquinas 1981, 57.5). Such an enterprise requires what

²¹ Luke Bretherton suggests that the debate surrounding questions of euthanasia is a paradigmatic instance of the problems that will require a thick moral tradition, albeit different traditions will approach this problem differently. However, it is worth noticing that Bretherton still believes that ad hoc dialogue between different traditions are possible (Bretherton, 2010, p. 160).

²² MacIntyre's definition (2007, p. 222) of a tradition is quite complex: "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition. Within a tradition the pursuit of goods extends through generations, sometimes through many generations. Hence the individual's search for his or her good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual's life is a part, and this is true both of those goods which are internal to practices and of the goods of a single life".

Greenleaf would call foresight within the horizon of a moral vision. Obviously, this would require some knowledge of the Christian tradition as a whole, but Free church theologians could also begin with the vision and story of the local church. For this reason, we might add *in the local church* to the research question that was articulated above. When it comes to prudence, Bradley's realism functions as a sobering reminder telling us that most of the time we will meet tough moral dilemmas, including those that have been identified above. These provoke the following questions for both leaders and researchers: *How should servant leaders identify and deal wisely with egoistic and even destructive forms of power? May servant leaders also use some forms of coercive power and, if so, (a) what kind of coercive power, and (b) according to which moral criteria?*

Steven Sykes' (2006) study shows that these questions have been heavily debated among countless theologians for centuries. Very simplified, one might suggest that there are three basic positions in this debate that provide answers to two questions. Within the Christian theological tradition it has proved difficult to answer the question of whether or how to use coercive power without also asking in which sphere of society. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the theology of Martin Luther. Luther makes a distinction between how God operates through the law in the sphere of government and criminal justice (or the state) on one side, and how he operates through the Gospel in the church on the other. Very simplified, one might suggest (using Luther's terms in a new context) that God works *Opus proprium* or according to his own nature *through* forms of persuasion and moral modeling that may be associated with the Gospel, including service and care for one's "enemies". At the same time, one could also see God at work through political coercive power that protects the weak, although in a form that is alien (*Opus alienum*) to God's primary will and purposes in most spheres of society through the principle of law.

This is further complicated by the fact that Luther also claims that preaching in the church should entail both Law and Gospel. However, since this basically means verbal correction it may qualify as persuasion in Greenleaf's and Marshall's terminology. Obviously, it is possible to raise a number of objections against this teaching. The most important for our purpose is that the church also needs some form of organization, which in turn requires some form of law or constitution, which in turn defines sanctions, including church discipline (Arand et al., 2012). The Medieval Catholic church did differentiate between the church and what we today will call secular power or the state but not in the same way as Luther. For this reason, it developed extensive forms of church law in many areas of life, and more importantly it also developed a theology of the just war (which later could be integrated into the Lutheran framework). Augustine argued that coercive power, also in the shape of violence might be used in the service of God against destructive powers, including not only pagans but also heretics (Sykes 2006).

The notion of just war cannot be rejected out of hand, despite problematic examples from history. It may turn out to be an important dialogue partner even for those who like Greenleaf somewhat reluctantly accept that some form of coercive power is necessary in modern organizations, although as a kind of last resort. Henrik Syse, who is a Lutheran moral philosopher, shows that classic criteria from the just war tradition might be applied as helpful

criteria for the use of power and handling conflicts in many spheres of life. This would include the criteria of competent authority, a just cause, fairness, proportionality, and a fair chance of success (Syse, 2009). Pentecostal-charismatic theologian Amos Yong might, at least in principle, be in a position to embrace this approach due to his openness to Abraham Kuyper's doctrine of different sovereign societal spheres (Yong, 2010).

Yet, Yong is also sensitive to the intuitions from the Anabaptist and other pacifist traditions that persistently claim that the use of military violence always is contrary and incompatible with the kind of servant leadership that is shaped by the cross. David Willgren observes that early Anabaptist theology unveiled a massive potential for criticizing power from above by a subversive use of power, or for our purpose, service from below, in terms of "humility; care for the weak; love; and nonresistance" (Willgren, 2017, p. 5). It is not coincidental that Greenleaf belonged to, and Marshall refers to, pacifist traditions (Quaker, Mennonite) and it is possible to imagine that these traditions may form the basis of an even more total rejection of coercive power than the one offered by Greenleaf (Steenwyk et al., 2013). However, David Willgren notes that history also shows that as Anabaptists had to organize themselves (and perform church discipline) they failed to realize their own ideals of subversive power, in particular in relation to women (Willgren, 2017).

Anyhow, it seems clear that those who think within traditions that defend the notion of just wars, and those who think within a pacifist paradigm, potentially might work out reasonably different models of servant leadership in terms of how one should relate to, and possibly use, coercive power. As I argued above, Pentecostal-charismatic theologians like Marshall will also argue that a spiritual gift of wisdom in specific situations (1 Cor 12:8) may enable Christians to make prudent decisions. This seems useful since the discussion above seems to imply that we need to ask contextual questions like: *In what kind of organization and in which social sphere do we serve?* And we should also add: *In which cultural context?* Such a proposal obviously implies that we also have to seek for resources in the fields of sociology and cultural anthropology. Missiological anthropologist Sherwood Lingenfelter claims that all social games, even egalitarian ones, have problematic structural features. Lingenfelter therefore suggests that servant leadership needs to be contextualized differently according to the type of social structure it inhabits (Lingenfelter, 1996, 2008, 2018).

In sum, it seems that prudence is a highly contextual virtue. Bent Flyvbjerg stresses that the same applies to "phronetic research" (Flyvbjerg, 2001). If prudence is central to servant leadership it might imply that further research on servant leadership and power also should begin in small scale case studies. Obviously, in case studies we will not only seek for universal patterns but ask what shape servant leadership takes in this particular context. Yet, through a number of case studies we might also see some more general patterns within the varieties of social games and cultural structures. Thus, in the end we might also ask: *In what sense is servant leadership contextual in relation to different cultures and their given social, cultural and organizational structures?*

Conclusion

On the whole, I will conclude that Greenleaf, Bradley and Marshall offer interesting and fruitful perspectives on servant leadership. I have shown in the thinking of Greenleaf and Marshall that servant leadership is more or less synonymous with legitimate power. The preferred mode of power is persuasion and moral modeling, yet under certain circumstances the use of coercive power may be necessary. Servant leadership is orientated towards a given vision of the world and includes a number of moral virtues. According to Greenleaf, any use of power should be grounded in (1) a self-transcending motivation that stands in contrast to egoistic individualism. (2) Power should be used to promote the well-being of others (3) and in particular the least privileged in society. (4) Use of coercive power may be also justified by the survival of an institution. (5) Within the context of institutions, the holders of legitimate power will need to accept accountability and the checks and balances and transparency that come with it. Finally, (6) coercive forms of power should be used to the *least extent possible* to avoid that people are hurt in the process.

I have also shown that the nature of legitimate power is understood differently based on the underlying anthropology and worldview that these theorists promote. Tom Marshall suggests that legitimate power is more or less identical with the character and virtues of servant leadership as this is revealed in Christ. I see this as a fruitful point of departure for theological analyses, but I have also argued that such analyses must include the Trinitarian and eschatological considerations and paradoxes of power that are highlighted by Christian realists, like Bradley. My preliminary inquiry shows that any model of legitimate power, in some way or another, should correspond to an understanding of love and power in the Trinitarian relations. Yet, Christian leaders are not only table servants who give limitlessly of their gifts, they may also be serving stewards that set boundaries and confront evils in the world as it now is. They may be cruciform leaders that delimit their use of power, but they are also charismatics that must exercise power for the sake of others and the common good. Moreover, both leaders and followers are complex and unpredictable beings. They are created in, and possibly transformed to, the image of God, yet significantly marked by sin because the world is not fully redeemed.

This horizon is necessary as we approach the difficult questions about how leadership should handle destructive power by using or not using coercive power. I have argued that the best way to approach this is from the perspective of virtue ethics and what might be called *phronetic* analyses. However, my analyses also show that those who embrace the just war traditions may develop radically different models on servant leadership from those who think within a pacifistic Anabaptist paradigm. This shows that one should not ignore century-long theological debates as one tries to conceptualize servant leadership. The study has also identified a number of research questions that may be explored further by both researchers and students. These are:

1. How does Trinitarian theology provide a framework for conceptualizing legitimate power, servant leadership, and organizations? Is legitimate power after the image of

Trinity only empowering creative power to, or does it also include some form of hierarchical power over?

2. In what way should Christ's redeeming work be understood as a transformation of human power - and what are the main implications for leadership?
3. How does the character of the Kingdom of God as already now and not yet give shape to the performance of servant leadership and the exercise of power (in a world that is not fully redeemed)?
4. What are the key practices and key virtues of servant leadership – in light of the Christian tradition and the local church?
5. How should servant leaders identify and deal with egoistic and even destructive forms of power?
6. May servant leaders also use some form of coercive power – and, if so, (a) what kind of coercive power, and (b) according to which moral criteria?
7. In what sense is servant leadership contextual in relation to different cultures and their given social, cultural and organizational structures?

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