

## SECTION 2 CRITIQUES AND NEW VISIONS OF LEADERSHIP



### Editor's Introduction

As John Senior noted in his essay the previous section, “Leadership is a slippery concept.” I would add that this is because not all leadership is the same, even if it is effective. One person’s effective leader is another person’s tyrant. Even tyrants can be effective leaders, if the definition of leadership is limited to “mobilizing people into action for change.” This section invites readers to think more critically about leadership and to look at leadership from a moral perspective. Our question should not be simply, Is a particular religious leader or leadership style effective? We should also ask, Is it good? Does it create goodness?

There are a variety of perspectives or terms that reflect these issues. Some leaders are “dysfunctional.” To one degree or another, they fail at mobilizing people for change. Perhaps, however, they are effective at maintaining the status quo. Is maintaining the status quo always a bad thing? Other leaders are effective in the sense of mobilizing people but are “toxic” leaders in the sense of how they treat people, abusing people and/or often motivating people by fear, hate, or jealousy. And, ultimately, mustn’t leaders be evaluated on the basis of what they are mobilizing people toward? Some leaders might be effective leaders but are leading people or an institution in the wrong direction, in a direction not based on the common good. Or, to put it more simply, not all change is good. And how do we or any particular religious or theological tradition define goodness?

In an earlier generation of research on leadership, social scientists, particularly in the context of styles of parenting, distinguished between democratic leaders, authoritarian leaders, and laissez-faire leaders and sought to examine the results of each approach upon the children/followers. As the world has become more globalized and culturally diverse, it has become more challenging to make broad generalizations about effective and non-

effective leadership styles or even parenting styles. Leadership styles vary according to religious tradition and cultural context. What is an appropriate or expected leadership style in one religious context may not be appropriate in another religious or cultural context. Furthermore, I would argue that effective pastoral leaders do not limit themselves to a single leadership style. Teaching, administrating, caregiving, and community work all require a slightly different set of leadership skills if not leadership styles. It is difficult, therefore, to identify a single religious or pastoral leadership style. I am convinced that the uncritical borrowing of leadership models from the world of business fails to appreciate the unique demands of religious or pastoral leadership and certainly fails to ask the moral and ethical questions necessary for these times.

What follows in this section are three essays from three very wise people who, in one way or another, look at religious leadership through a moral or ethical lens.

Herbert Anderson, editor emeritus of *Reflective Practice*, in his essay "Connective Leadership: Loving Those We Lead," highlights the competing polarities of interdependence and diversity in modern life. He calls for a rebalancing of these polarities in how we understand pastoral leadership. He identifies the essential dilemma of honoring boundaries while at the same time serving a God who calls us to cross boundaries. He argues for a new or renewed vision of pastoral leaders as connective leaders who, with a form of "double vision," are skilled at both fostering bonds and honoring boundaries. He concludes that these times call for pastoral leaders who are both differentiated leaders and compassionate lovers.

Valerie Miles-Tribble is associate professor of ministerial leadership and practical theology at American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, California. In her essay "Leading with High Notes of Compassion and Harmonic Chords of Justice," she invites us to think about the nature of leadership. Miles-Tribble also highlights a polarity, a balancing of compassion and ethical and just leadership. Using the metaphor of music, she argues that leadership for these times must be a harmonic blending of compassion rooted in spirituality and sensitivity to the ethical and justice issues present in a given situation. In order for ministerial leaders to strike this balanced tone, they must possess compassion rooted in spirituality and the ability to self-reflect upon their own biases and cultural assumptions, triggered by the leadership praxis.

Teresa Jefferson-Snorton is the presiding bishop of the Fifth Episcopal District and an ecumenical officer of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She is a retired ACPE supervisor (educator) and served as executive director of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education from 2000 to 2011. Knowing CPE work so well, and now having the perspective of a denominational executive, Snorton is uniquely situated to offer a vision for the kind of religious leaders the world needs in the twenty-first century. In her essay "There Is an 'I' in Leadership," she highlights five words that begin with the letter "I" as reflective of the kinds of leaders the church needs and the world requires. She challenges us, as practicing supervisors, mentors, and teachers of tomorrow's religious leaders, to reflect on how we might form such qualities in today's seminarians.

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