

A REVIEW OF ROBERT BANKS AND BERNICE M. LEDBETTER'S BOOK ON REVIEWING LEADERSHIP

PAUL ANDREW BOURNE*

Reviewing Leadership by Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter published by Baker Academic is among the many books on leadership; but this one has a twist as it takes into the discourse about leadership the matter of spirituality and/or religious theorizing. The book is simply written with a plethora of illustrations and references, and unlike many of other texts on leadership, this one provides a non-textbook like approach with examples from both the secular and religious settings. Reviewing Leadership consists of 171 pages, of which 36 pages are references and notes, and the rest is organized into six chapters including a conclusion. The Chapters are 1) The Growing Interest in Leadership Today: Definitions, Causes and Issues; 2) Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives on Leadership; 3) The Emerging Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Leadership; 4) Popular and More Substantial Faith-based Approaches to Leadership; 5) Practicing Leadership through Integrity, Faithfulness, and Service; and 6) Christian Leadership in Action: Some Exemplary Case Studies. The book commences with a dilemma in leadership and the growing dissatisfaction of people with leaders and leadership across the globe. Like Barbara Kellerman [11], Banks and Ledbetter believed that leadership is at a crossroad and that despite the voluminous articles, fora, seminars and consultants in the area, "Voices on many sides deplore its absence or mediocrity, betrayal or corruption" [1 (p.15)]. It can be

deduced from Banks and Ledbetter's perspective that leaders and by extension leadership, has failed to deliver the expected outcomes of people and explains this sentiment, that "To one degree or another, every age has probably exhibited some interest in leaders. It has to, for sometimes it lived or died, or at other times was better or worse off, at the hands of such people" (p. 15). Kellerman [11] aptly summed up Banks and Ledbetter's comment in the title of her book, *The End of Leadership*. While Banks and Ledbetter did not use the words 'The End of Leadership', they noted unequivocally that leadership as it is known today is a farce of people's expectations and time has come for us to broaden the present paradigm based on a secular approach to that of servant-leadership, a religious approach to leadership.

Banks and Ledbetter [1] postulated that little attention has been placed on the present area of leadership as it relates to servant-leadership, because the cosmology is centered on a secular theorizing of the phenomenon. They lambasted the inadequacy of a Christian treatment of the subject matter of leadership and in so doing provided a comprehensive perspective on the matter in their book. Before delving into a Christian treatment of the subject of leadership, Banks and Ledbetter provided definitions for leadership, made a distinction between leadership and management; brought out some gender disparity in leadership, provided a historical perspective of leadership

*Department of Graduate Education and Leadership, Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Correspondence E-mail Id: editor@eurekajournals.com

in the Church and stated some parameters for leadership. In Chapter One, the authors stated that the issue of leadership can be defined from within in three broad perspectives-1) personality, 2) position or status, and 3) the influence the leader has on followers. It is clear from Banks and Ledbetter's three tenets of leadership that the matter is complex and no single definition has been agreed upon that can conceptualize the phenomenon. Such a perspective is widely held by many scholars in the area of leadership and even among experts like the authors and Barbara Kellerman. A definition has been elusive in spite of the many books, seminars, journal publications and consultants in the discipline of leadership. With the three tenets approach to the definition of leadership, Banks and Ledbetter [1] progress into a distinction between leadership and management. They indicated that management is about coping with the complex environment of people, tasks, aims and objectives, and order and stability. Leadership, on the other hand, is about change and is proactive instead of responsive like management (p. 17). This led to the issue of effective leaders and followers. In Banks and Ledbetter's work, because leaders must inspire followers, the leader must take into consideration 1) feelings, 2) beliefs and 3) thoughts of the followers, and place those squarely into the perspective of the role of a leader, which goes beyond that of a manager. However, they opined that a manager may be a leader; but that a leader can be likened more to an artist, scientist or creative thinker than a manager.

Having provided an extensive account of a leader and a manager, Banks and Ledbetter indicated that cultural analysts have sought to explain certain types of leadership and why they arise in time. Using the period of the 1960s and the Frankfurt School of Social Research, particularly Theodor Adorno, the authors postulated that there are some traits

that were found to have been in the personality of an authoritarian leader. The explanation of personality traits in a leader brought the discussion of factors that account for present interest in leadership. Those factors were 1) time of crisis and this was explained by using Rudy Giuliani, the former Mayor of New York, following the 9/11 crisis in the United States; 2) time of war-requiring a military leader; 3) time of economic downturn, wanting a commercial leader; 4) time of uncertainty and change, requiring a futuristic leader and 5) time of failure. Banks and Ledbetter [1] did not center the discussion of leaders only on effective leaders, good leaders and productive leaders; they also examined the other side of the coin, bad leaders. The matter of bad leadership was discussed from the perspective of why people tolerate such a leader. They forwarded seven reasons as explanations for why people tolerate bad leaders-1) it is too difficult and takes too much effort to unset them; 2) not having the necessary support to oust the leader; 3) may be too risky to plan an overthrow; 4) crisis may arise; 5) leaders may be unable to lead and unable to evaluate their leadership and as such may overcompensate by creating greatness through the exercise of power and control; 6) social and cultural realities and 7) fascination with leadership [1 (p. 22)].

The authors went into a discourse as to whether leadership is a science or an art. They were not biased on the matter as they forwarded the two perspectives with clarity, brevity and some illustrations that showed the two schools of thought. The authors glided and delved deeply into issues of leadership, ranging from women in leadership; critical tensions and power. The issues were comprehensively discussed along with an examination of discriminatory practices against women in leadership [1 (p. 29)]. The authors highlighted the discriminatory practices in the world by way of using John Naisbith and Patricia Aburdence's

work. While the issue of women in leadership has increased over the decade of the 1990s, Banks and Ledbetter noted that only 1.1% of the top positions in the Fortune 1000 companies are held by women. Women in leadership are still discriminated against, which was supported by Swiss' theory [1 (p. 30)]. The resistance to women in leadership has continued into the 21st century and two theories were used to substantiate this position. The authors used 1) pipeline theory-the limit of women in leadership positions, with them having to work twice as hard as men in the same position, and 2) work-family myth theory-“...women will be able to advance professionally when organizations provide flexibility and services support of mothering and other family responsibilities” [1 (p. 30)]. Hagberg [1 (p. 32), 7] provided the context for discussing power, its usage, and its application in leadership.

Janet Hagberg offers a well-integrated approach to the expression of power that works well for both women and men of faith. “Personal power is the extent to which one is able to link the outer capacity for action (external power) with the inner capacity for reflection (internal power)” [7 (p. 21), 1 (p. 32)].

Not only did Banks and Ledbetter aid in the discussion of power, they extended the matter into faith-based leadership, which is outside of a secular theorizing on the matter. The authors were not necessarily concerned with power from a secular perspective; but they were concerned about servant-leadership and how responsibility, authority and power must be understood in faith-based leadership, particularly in the church.

They opined that “In the first place, the church has been and still is riddled with leadership practices based on control, even in circles committed to leadership based servant-hood” [1 (p. 33)]. The crisis of leadership, therefore, is

one of values as when leaders ignore values and ethics, the matter of their practices and expressions will not be in keeping with servitude; but one of the difficulty to control power. It is at this point that Banks and Ledbetter offered the perspective that there is a stark contrast between the cosmology of leadership and that of God's approach (p. 34). Such discussion sets the framework for servant-leadership, which is presented and discussed in Chapter 2-Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Leadership.

Chapters 1 and 2 laid the premise for faith-based leadership which Banks and Ledbetter dissected, and used various illustrations to provide a justification for such as theorizing and its relevance in the discourse of leader. The authors drew on the works of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament to provide a context for historical leadership that has occurred in the church. Using Colossians 1 vs. 18 and 1 Corinthians 14 vs. 40, the authors argued that Paul spoke of the leadership of Christ and that this is an example of what leadership ought to be about. They brought up the issue of servant-leadership, which Christ so aptly embodied in his actions and which was later employed by the Apostle Paul. Many other scriptures in the New Testament, which were written by the Apostle Paul, were used to indicate servanthood and how servant-leadership must be an embodiment of those who lead in the church. Banks and Ledbetter [1], in examining the life of the Apostle Paul, noted that there are qualities of servant-leadership: courage; decisiveness; encouragement; faith; capacity to listen; integrity; humility; modesty of self-appraisal; magnanimity; patience; self-discipline; passion and wisdom (p. 42). The Apostle Paul admonished the church to possess these characteristics as these were embodied in the head of the Church, Christ. They continued that Paul employed many metaphors to speak to servant-leadership in the early church (to the

Corinths, Ephesus; et cetera) from example family-“Just as God is viewed as ‘Father’ and believers as children,’ so Paul describes himself as a ‘father’ to his ‘offspring’ in faith (1Corinthian 4 vs. 14-15)” (p. 37). Despite the role one plays in the Church, the authors noted that Paul admonished the members of the church to see all roles as equal and none higher than the other as in the human body (p. 38-39).

Speaking about the church, historical use was made of the institution in explaining what obtained in leadership at different stages in the life of the church. While the early Church in the New Testament was used to establish non-secular approaches to leadership, the author categorized church leadership into five traditions (or models or approaches). These were Benedictive; Lutheran; Presbyterian; Quaker; and Pentecostal [1 (p. 48)].

BENEDICTIVE APPROACH

This approach was contextualized around the monks as the people who were the keepers of ‘tradition.’ (p. 43). The monks were engaged as writers of manuscripts during the era of the Dark Ages. Banks and Ledbetter [1] opined ‘monasticism’ for some fifteen hundred years across different cultures in the world.

The leader of the monastery was the Abbott who was “...expected to hold together the creative tension between organizing and pasturing, between attending to the common good of all and particular good of individuals (p. 43), suggesting that he must be futuristic, visionary, knowledgeable of the culture and worldview.

LUTHERAN APPROACH

The Lutheran model was totally different from the Benedictive Approach and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the exemplar of such tradition. This model epitomizes the Creator’s workings in the world and how grace forms the

basis of understanding actions, interpretations and behavior of followers by way of the word of God to include baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and “conversations and consolation of community”. (p. 44).

PRESBYTERIAN APPROACH

The Presbyterian model embodies the expression of Christ being the priest, prophet and king (p. 45). In attempting to explain this approach, the authors went as far back as ancient Israel in the wilderness, Old Testament, in which leadership was fulfilled by way of a priest, prophet and king. Like what obtained in ancient Israel, during their sojourn through the wilderness, Banks and Ledbetter compared the functions of different people in the Old Testament and all of those activities being carried out by one man, Christ (p. 45). As a result, the Presbyterian approach explains the need for empathy as displayed by the priestly function of Christ; Effective Communicator, which ties into the prophetic function and ruling or kingly function that is “...akin to the direction-setting ability of a leader”.

QUARKER APPROACH

The Quaker model of teacher is completely different from the other types of leadership styles as they were based on a hierarchical structure, and for this approach the leader is the follower and the follower is the leader with decision-making being a collective good and not solely resting in the hands of a single agent or entity (p. 46). Such an approach comes from the premise that life is interdependent and that all must be equally responsible for a decision-making process, in a participatory style leadership [13,1 (p. 46)].

PENTECOSTAL APPROACH

The Pentecostal Movement is principally based on an understanding of God in order to

recognize self. Hence, leadership is based on a divine rather than a humanist setting (p. 46). Here a leader commences with being a follower of Christ and the chart of leadership is bestowed by 'sovereign operations of God' (p. 46)-spiritual calling, which is awarded to the faith follower. As such, the leader is developed over time and a deeper understanding of his/her function is based on the learning process by way of mentorship (p. 47).

The latter part of Chapter 2 focused on contemporary studies in leadership and these like the former settings were informative, illustrative, and outlined the issues from an academic vantage point (p. 49-56). Works of scholars such as James MacGregor Burns; Ralph Stogdill; Robert Blake; Jane Mouton; Paul Hersey; Kenneth Blanchard and Dewey Johnson were analyzed herein as they provided pertinent information on the leadership discourse and development from a scholastic perspective, including Christian scholarships. Those discussions began with what occurred during the 1940s, differential traits of leaders-self-confidence, intelligence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Ralph Stogdill)-into the 1950s and 1960s-leaders' behavior and style (Robert Blake; Jane Mouton); 1970s and 1980s-context of leadership including style, situation and power (Fred Feilder)-to transformational leadership-leader-follower relationship (James MacGregor; Bass, 1985, 1998) to the last twenty years. Banks and Ledbetter [1] postulated that leadership discourse has transitioned from those theories of old to more complex ones-situational, relational, cultural, personal interactions, values and responsibilities as well as the execution of leadership in an organizational setting including the sophisticated model on transformational leadership developed by Bass [2,3 (p. 52)].

The authors wrote Chapter 3 less critical than the previous two, with it being more subjective

while not losing its simplicity, academic rigor and scientificity. This chapter focuses on emerging spiritual and religious dimensions of leadership. Banks and Ledbetter noted that while many contemporary studies have been written on the matter of leaders, there is a paucity of research in the area on the spiritual dimensions. Hence, they used a case study done by Stephen Covey (1991; et al., 1994) and other works written by Vaclav Havel [8,9]; Patricia Brown and Max De Pree to provide a scholastic premise for their reasoned perspectives on Christian leadership. Banks and Ledbetter offered a perspective that while some scholars on leadership have not explicitly included in their writings a religious dimension on leadership; they have questioned a spiritual ethos.

"While some writers have incorporated hints of spiritual concerns into their writings, others have engaged in a more explicit discussion of spirituality and work" [1 (p. 62-63)], suggesting that the issue of spirituality and leadership has been examined for its associational relationship although a bias is geared towards one and not both phenomena. This led to definitions of spirituality and then a comprehensive discourse of the two phenomena. They outlined that spirituality is to "...enable people to transcend their normal selves or to give expression to the multiplicity of selves within them" [1 (p. 63)], indicating that there is some antedotal relationship between it and the workplace. Like other chapters in the book, the author reviewed other scholastic works to present their position from a reasoned perspective on the matter of spirituality and leadership. It was a normative approach instead of scientificity on the matter that Barns and Ledbetter employed to evaluate the relationship between the two phenomena. This is supported by the issue of statements such as "...the fact that leadership often suffocates spirit, and the need for leadership that is not only inspiring but also

inspiring.” (p. 64), suggests that this lacks the rigor of science and no deductions should have been made on the associational relationship between spirituality and leadership; but they wrongfully did.

Even by way of using a case study from Havel, the authors sought to establish how the human spirit is associated with performance. The case study used an ethnographic research designed to carry out data collection and while it provided insightful and rich information, it cannot be generalized, replicated or argued to cross other groups than the researched participants. Instead of finding empirical studies that sought to evaluate the associational relationship between spirituality and leadership, the authors used Brown’s work [1 (p. 69)], that normatively looked at the human spirit as it relates to leadership, documenting that at the core of leadership is the human spirit (see also, De Pree [6]; Pattison [12]). While this undoubtedly may be the case, even in reference to De Pree’s and Pattison’s works, the relationship between spirituality and leadership was not scientifically established, particularly from an undisputable quantitative referent.

Despite this limitation, the authors used Covey’s work to introduce the concept of principle-centered leadership and provided characteristics therein. Eight characteristics were identified by Covey [1 (p. 61)] as being of principle-centered leadership, these were: continual learning; service orientation; radiating positive energy; believing in other people; leading a balanced life; seeing life as an adventure; possessing synergy, and engaging in holistic self-renewal. Psychologically works have been empirically established on the relationship between the affective psychological conditions and performance or behavior [10]; but this was not done by Banks and Ledbetter and this would have

strengthened the positivistic nature of the work.

The weaknesses noted in Chapter 3 were clearly stated by the authors in Chapter 4. At the commencement of Chapter 4, Banks and Ledbetter [1] wrote, “Most writers on leadership do not look to religious sources or tradition for inspiration. Instead, they rely on established theories of leadership, on personal or observed experience, or on empirical studies of how leadership works” (p. 73), which concurs with weaknesses in Chapter 3 owing to the lack of empirical studies on the matter and the failure of the authors to have conducted primary studies in order to widen the literature on the matter.

In Chapter 4, the authors were more critical in their review of the works of others as this is aptly captured in this statement, “Yet some of her [Laura Beth Jones, Founder and President of Junior Group, an advertising, marketing and business development firm] statements are couched in self-serving language” [1 (p. 76)] by the usage of personal pronouns, example I, and this degree of subjectivity was the major theme running through this section of the text. Not only did Banks and Ledbetter highlight the subjectivity of the authors used in this chapter, but they critiqued their works, while providing a reasoned perspective on faith-based leadership. Even with the usage of Jesus to provide an illustration of an exemplary transformational leader, in Chapter 4, the author provided explanations of the issues from different vantage points, highlighted some of the weaknesses, and juxtaposed the works outside of the faith-leadership paradigm, secular scholarship. In so doing, Banks and Ledbetter [1] listed a point-point framework of the actions, behavior and outcome of Jesus that could be juxtaposed on any contemporary business that those would have resulted in transformational outcomes—a mission and objectives; time management; conflict

management strategies; effective communication; power relations; curriculum and the involvement of others in planning (p. 80-81). Whether the discussion was on life-story; Christ-centered approach or Trinitarian approaches to leadership, the issues were discussed in a balanced way, with the supporting references.

Like the balanced-stance taken in discussing Chapter 4, the authors carried this approach into the writing of Chapter 5 and also outlined at the start the challenge of examining the issue of faith-balanced leadership practice through values. Unlike Chapter 2, Banks and Ledbetter provided empirical studies that evaluated intelligence, leadership and brought this to bear on leadership. They showed that intelligence is a quality of leadership and that by possessing this, leaders will be able bridge the gap between leadership and performance (p. 96). The other side was present on this and how this materialized into failure, supported by scriptures in the New Testament. Using Romans 7 vs. 18, "I [Paul] have the desire to do good, but I cannot carry it out" [1 (p. 97)], this was brought up to display that need, desire or knowledge does not necessarily transfer to actions and therefore values and practices of leaders-integrity, respect of mission, faithfulness, truthfulness, loyalty, and practicing leadership-are pivotal to faith-based leadership. The aforementioned issue was aptly summarized by Banks and Ledbetter as, "People in leadership must be committed to grappling with what it takes to change deeply ingrained habits relating to how they think, what they value, how they manage frustration, and how they act. Here lies the zone of fundamental change and strength" (p. 97).

The latter part of Chapter 5 dealt with servant-hood and stewardship types of leadership (p. 107-111). Banks and Ledbetter examined this from the perspective of managers in the private sectors, AT&T, as well as Peter Block. Those

practitioners or writers had argued for the usage of servant-leadership or stewardship, and how this has motivated followers and transformed organization's performance.

CONCLUSION

The book is an excellent read in the area of leadership, particularly servant-leadership, and offers a simple assessment of pertinent issues in the discourse of leadership. Clearly from the start to the end of the text, the authors have used simple language, provided references, critically examined the issue of leadership, servant-leadership and forwarded the perspective that the way to go is stewardship, whether in the secular area or the church.

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