Exegetical and Theological Reflections on John 10:1–18: Implications for Contemporary African Christian Leadership

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Abstract

One of the major challenges facing the contemporary African society (and church) is ineffective leadership. The problem of leadership in Africa has led to an increased scholarly interest in the theology of leadership; yet, the problem of ineffective leadership still persists in many African communities. This literature-based research, therefore, was conducted to explore how leadership principles embedded in the Good Shepherd pericope of John 10:1–18 might inform the behaviors, styles, and leadership philosophies of African leaders and hence serve as an antidote to ineffective and mediocre leadership within the African society. Through a historical-critical analysis and theological study of the text, the study argues that Christian leaders must serve, guide, protect, and provide for their followers, who in turn must hear their leaders' voices and adhere to their directives.

1. Introduction

One of the major challenges facing the contemporary African society (and church) is ineffective leadership. Many African leaders are characterized by pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, corruption, mismanagement, and misappropriation of funds. The concept of leadership is defined in the context of this study as: "leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns, cited in Hickman 2010, 68). From this definition, leadership is a dynamic phenomenon that seeks to move a group of people towards a certain goal. It may also be considered as a transformational force

in an organization that motivates change. Leadership is dynamic in that it adapts to changes in the environment in which it operates.

For some time now, Africa has been depicted as a continent ruled by authoritarian leaders who often exercised very tight control over their followers (Costantinos 2012). While this might not be true of all leaders, there are many leaders whose leadership standards fall far below average. Many political/leadership ideologies have emerged in Africa—including Senghor's *negritude*, Nkrumah's *African personality* and *consciencism*, Nyerere's *ujaama*, Kenyatta's *uhuru*, Kaunda's *African humanism*, and Mobutu's *Cultural Revolution*—as means of dealing with Africa's leadership challenges. Yet, misuse of political power with the net effect being dictatorship, militarism, racism, ethnicity, tribalism, corruption, and moral and spiritual degeneration still abounds in many African societies. The church, which is expected to develop and promote biblical principles on leadership, is also in a leadership crisis. Many studies have emerged in response to Africa's leadership needs. However, the problem still persists because most of such studies fail to engage Scripture and deduce contextual and practical applications for the African context. This study is an exegetical and theological study of John 10:1–18 aimed at bringing out key leadership principles to enhance the quality of leadership in the African church and society. What follows is an outline of the context within which the text in question emerged.

2. Background to John 10:1–18

Church tradition attributes the Fourth Gospel to the Apostle John (Ayegboyin 2015, 134). Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Polycarp, Eusebius, Clement and others maintained this position (Burge 2008, 842). The statement about "the disciple who Jesus loved" (21:20, 24) is widely considered as referring to John the Apostle, who was the son of Zebedee.

The content of this gospel implies a Jewish writer who understood Jewish practices and had adequate knowledge of the Old Testament. That the writer was an eyewitness of some of the events is also evident (1:14; 2:6; 19:33–35; 21:11) (Ayegboyin 2015, 134). The author also seems to be quite familiar with the disciples of Jesus (4:33; 6:17; 11:54; 17:2, 22; 18:2). Considering these facts, it seems fitting that the Apostle John be identified as the author of the Fourth Gospel.

The date for the composition of the Fourth Gospel is debated. A date before AD 70, a date in the second century, or a date toward the end of the first century are all possible (Ayegboyin 2015, 136). However, the argument that the gospel was written in Ephesus between AD 85 and AD 95 seems more convincing. As a result of persecution, Christians had fled into Asia Minor (c. AD 68–70) but were now undergoing the beginnings of more severe persecution under Emperor Domitian (c. AD 81–96). This was perhaps the worst persecution in Church history (2 John 1–8; 3 John 9–10; Rev 1:9; 2:9–13; 13:7–10) (Amevenku and Boaheng 2020, 44). The persecution had destroyed Israel's national aspirations, leading to a polarization between Jewish and Christian communities (Amevenku and Boaheng 2020, 44). This period also witnessed the death of most first-generation Christians. This situation prompted the writing of the Fourth Gospel, to serve the catechetical and evangelistic needs of the early church (cf. 20:30–31) (Amevenku and Boaheng 2020, 44).

The Johannine Gospel can be divided as follows (Burge 2008, 841): The prologue (1:1–18), the book of signs (1:19–12:50), the book of glory (13:1–20:31), and epilogue (21:1–25). Of particular interest to the present study is the book of signs which can be divided further into four parts: the testimony of John the Baptist (1:19–51), Jesus and the institutions of Judaism (2:1–4:54), Jesus and the festivals of Judaism (5:1–10:42), and foreshadows of death and resurrection (11:1–12:50) (Burge 2008, 847). The

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book of signs has seven specific signs: The changing of water into wine (2:1–11), the healing of the royal official's son (4:46–54), the healing of the lame (5:1–9), the feeding of more than five thousand people (6:1–14), walking on water (6:15–25), the healing of a man born blind (9:1–41), and the raising of Lazarus from death (11:1–46). The passage under consideration, that is, the Good Shepherd Discourse (10:1–18), is found in the third division of the book of signs. The section within which the passage under consideration falls, that is, Jesus and the festivals of Judaism (5:1–10:42), is set within the context of Jewish festivals like Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and Dedication.

The Good Shepherd Discourse of John 10:1–18 comes after Jesus's indictment of the Pharisees' spiritual blindness in 9:39–53. The audience for chapters 9 and 10 is the same. In chapter 9 one reads of the Pharisees' expulsion of a formerly blind person from the synagogue because of his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (9:34; cf. 9:22). Chapter 10 opens a new theme; namely, Jesus is both the Good Shepherd and the gate. Jesus's use of the shepherd imagery is meant to differentiate his leadership from that of false shepherds. The text under consideration can be divided into two parts, a figure of speech (vv. 1–5) and an extended reflection or commentary on it (vv. 7–18) (Köstenberger 2004, 297). The passage also contains many allusions and metaphors rooted in first-century Judaism (Burge 2008, 841).

There is much scholarly argument regarding the source behind the material found in the shepherd pericope. The similarities between the Johannine shepherd and the Old Testament shepherd are used to support the idea that John borrowed his theme from the Old Testament. However, Bultmann expresses a different opinion. Bultmann (cited in Lewis 2008, 9) admits that the shepherd motif in John 10 is based largely on the Old Testament tradition, but notes further that "There is, however, a decisive difference in John 10, namely that the shepherd is not considered as the Messianic ruler; there are no traces whatsoever of the kingly figure." Bultmann (cited in Lewis 2008, 9) argues again that the people Jesus refers to as his sheep are not the people of Israel but his "own." In Bultmann's view, the Fourth Gospel borrowed from the Gnostic tradition which connects the messenger to the image of the shepherd. The Mandaean literature in particular, like the Johannine text, depicts the shepherd not as a regal figure, but as a heavenly being with a redemptive task (Lewis 2008, 9). In both texts, the shepherd gathers "his own" rather than "his people." The shepherd has great affection for his sheep, carries them on his shoulders, calls them by name and redeems them from the hands of a predator (Lewis 2008, 9–10). There is, however, the lack of mutual knowledge about each other (Lewis 2008, 10). Keener (2003, 799) argues against a Mandean background for this text because he believes the Fourth Gospel was written many centuries before the earliest extant Mandean sources. The argument surrounding the source of the shepherd pericope is such that no position can be conclusive. With this background, the study now proceeds to read the text closely.

3. Close Reading of John 10:1–18

3.1 Verses 1–6

The first five verses depict a morning shepherding scene; the sixth verse is a comment about the disciples' failure to understand Jesus's discourse. These verses read:

> 1 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; 2 but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice,

and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. 6 This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. (RSV)

Jesus begins the discourse with the formula Ἀμὴν ἀμήν ("Truly, truly" or "Most assuredly") to indicate that the message is a solemn assertion. In this subsection, Jesus sets two criteria for identifying fake leaders. The first criterion is the approach to the sheep (vv. 1–2) and the second is voice recognition by the sheep (vv. 3–5). Fraudulent leaders' entry into authority is wrong (v. 1). In the Greco-Roman world, sheep were kept in a pen (usually made of stone walls) with a door through which the shepherd or the flock may enter or exit. The pen provided protection from wild animals, thieves who used trickery, and robbers who used violence—none of which cared for the welfare of the sheep. A doorkeeper guarded the pen at night to protect the sheep from predators and thieves (Keddie 2001, 388; cf. Keener 2003, 803). In the case of a small flock there was no need for a gatekeeper; therefore, what Jesus has in mind here is a large fold where a large flock was housed (Brant 2011, 160). Any person who climbs the wall into the pen does not have good intent (v. 1). The real shepherd of the sheep (and for that matter the legitimate leader) always uses the gate. The Greek text does not have the definite article before "shepherd" (ποιμήν) and so the NAB renders it, "is shepherd of the sheep." Other translations (like the NIV, RSV, NRSV) prefer, "is the shepherd of the sheep"; that is, "the one who takes care of the sheep." The gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd and the sheep come to him as he calls his own by name (v. 3). This shepherd has the right to enter the pen.

A shepherd whose entry is not ordained by the gatekeeper or a shepherd who "climbs over the wall" or "climbs over at some other place" (enters into the sheep pen by some other means) is to be feared and not followed (v. 3). By this statement, Jesus challenges the legitimacy and authenticity of Pharisaic leadership of Israel, who are God's flock. The Pharisees have climbed into the pen and are now wreaking havoc among the flock. The leadership situation at the time Jesus made this assertion was comparable to the corrupt leadership of the priests of the Maccabean period. God's people followed the false leaders of the Maccabean period with Messianic expectations which were never realized (Burge 2008, 861). These people were indeed thieves and bandits, and in this verse, Jesus affirms that the Pharisees are no better. The way Jesus depicts and contrasts the shepherd and the thieves (or robbers), underscores the legitimacy of his Messianic identity, unlike the false or lesser shepherds and false messiahs. Israel had many false prophets and ungodly kings; Jesus, however, emphasizes that he alone is the legitimate shepherd with true authority over the sheep because he has received the gatekeeper's invitation.

Jesus's references to the shepherd leading out his sheep until he has brought out all his own and going before them (v. 3–4) possibly alludes to Numbers 27:15–18 (see also Ps 80:1; Ezek 34:13). Here, Moses prays for a future figure who will go out before and come in before God's people so that God's people "may not be as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num 27:17 RSV). The next verse mentions Joshua (Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus") as that successor (Num 27:18; cf. Heb 4:8–10). Joshua therefore typifies Jesus. The typological relationship between Jesus and Joshua is significant in understanding Jesus's role as the Savior of the world (cf. Matt 1:21).

Furthermore, the authenticity of one's leadership is determined by whether or not the sheep (the followers) recognize his voice. The sheep hear, recognize, and follow the voice of the true leader; the false leader's voice

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is not recognized (v. 5). The intimacy required for the sheep to recognize the voice of their true shepherd is a well-known phenomenon in Palestine where sheep could bear personal names (Burge 2008, 861; see also Blum 1983, 309). If a stranger enters the pen, the sheep will not follow him because they do not recognize his voice (v. 5). Even if the stranger decides to dress in the shepherd's clothing, use the shepherd's call and imitate his tone, the sheep will immediately detect the difference and scatter in fear. The emphasis that only Jesus knows and is known by the sheep is crucial in understanding Johannine discipleship which requires one to discern Jesus's voice and abide in him (Burge 2008, 861).

The behavior of the sheep, if applied to humans, has at least five ethical dimensions; namely, discernment (that is, the ability to distinguish between who to follow and who to run away from), the ability to translate discernment into action (follow or run away), following the leader's footsteps, the corporate dimension of the followers' response to the leader's voice, and the followers' act of following the leader without knowing specifically where they are going (Collins 2017, 55–56). This requires obedience on the followers' part and faithfulness on the part of the leader. Jesus was making the point that the Pharisees, who were spiritually blind, needed to be like his sheep who follow him as he leads them to the truth which leads to eternal life (cf. Keener 2003, 801). The Pharisees were to learn from the obedient and submissive character of the sheep so that they could yield to the leadership of Jesus, which alone is true leadership.

The narrator pauses to make a comment that gives his audience a glimpse into the cognitive state of Jesus's opponents, and by so doing provides the reason for Jesus's second version of the story. He also describes the story as a παροιμία, the meaning of which has been debated vigorously among translators. The word παροιμία is variously translated as "parable" (KJV and ERV), "allegory" (MFT), "illustration" (PHPS), and "figure"

(RSV). It is important to note that the word παροιμία (used also in John 16:25, 29 and 2 Pet 2:22) is not the word rendered as "parable" (παραβολή) elsewhere in the gospels. This "parable" is different from the Synoptic parable which usually has a connected story. The allegorical interpretation may be opposed by the fact that in an allegory one person can hardly be represented by two figures—in this case Jesus is both the shepherd and the gate. The Septuagint (LXX) uses both words (παραβολή and παροιμία) to translate the Hebrew word מָשָׁל (which refers broadly to all kinds of figure of speech), indicating that there is no perceptible difference between the terms παραβολή and παροιμία used by the Synoptic writers and John respectively. It is therefore possible to translate παροιμία as "parable," or an extended metaphor which uses selected allusions to illustrate aspects of the truth conveyed by Jesus's discourse. The explanation given by Jesus (v. 7 ff.) makes allegorical interpretation less plausible. As a parable or an extended metaphor, the interpreter "must not look for more meaning in the details that Jesus is willing to furnish" (Keddie 2001, 385).

Even though Jesus used common imagery of the shepherd and gate in verses 1–5, verse 6 shows that this relatively simple figure of speech was not understood by those spiritually blind. "If they would not recognize his claims, they would not accept him as a shepherd; and their assumption that they were God's flock because they were descendants of Abraham (8:39) would eliminate the necessity of personal faith in Jesus for salvation" (Tenney 1981, 108). It is in light of this that Jesus puts this figure in another way that might make it more comprehensible (vv. 7 ff.).

3.2 Verses 7–10

> 7 So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and

robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. 9 I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11 I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (RSV)

Jesus suddenly shifts the shepherd metaphor to the gate metaphor (v. 7). Though there are other New Testament passages which use the gate metaphor (e.g., Luk 13:24; Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9) it is only in the present text that the gate metaphor is applied to Jesus. Jesus changes the scene from the village sheepfold with its gatekeeper (cf. 10:3) to the field in summer, where there "is neither roof nor door, but thorns along the top of the rock walls protect the sheep from wild animals, and the shepherd himself sleeps in the entrance, providing a door" (Whitacre, cited in Keddie 2001, 390). In the *evening* when the sheep returned to the fold after a day of grazing, the shepherd stood in the doorway of the pen, inspecting each one as it enters. Those who were scratched or wounded by thorns were anointed with oil to enhance healing (cf. Ps 23:5–6); those who were thirsty were also given water to drink. After all the sheep had entered the pen, the shepherd lay down across the doorway to prevent any unauthorized access. By so doing the shepherd became the door/gate. This was not an abandonment of the shepherd metaphor, but rather a further clarification of it. In this case, Jesus absorbs the shepherd's occasional function as a gate for the sheep into his composite picture of himself as the shepherd of his people.

The care and protection offered by Jesus (the Good Shepherd), and his discernment of worthiness for entrance contrasted him with the "thieves and robbers" (v. 8, 10), false messiahs, and religious leaders who had come prior to him (Tenney 1981, 108). The "thieves and robbers" who came before Jesus are not the Old Testament figures (e.g., Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, Elijah, or his immediate forerunner, John the Baptist:, who were appointed by God before Jesus to prophesy about his coming. Many factions appeared after the death of Herod the Great (4 BCE) to contend for the leadership of Israel; these leaders attempted to use violence to free the nation from Roman rule (Tenney 1981, 108). Jesus's purpose was not political, as that of these leaders. These leaders, and all who deny that Jesus is the divine Messiah, fall in the category of "thieves and robbers."

Jesus's main purpose was the salvation of the sheep (vv. 9–10) which he depicts as free access to pasture and fullness of life. Both the shepherd and the gate metaphors have salvific significance. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus cares for his sheep and provides them with salvation at the cost of his life; as the gate, he is the one and only legitimate way of entrance into salvation. The gate metaphor is reminiscent of the *ladder* metaphor which pictures Jesus as connecting heaven and earth (1:51), or *the way* metaphor, which depicts Jesus as the path that leads people to the Father (14:6). Scott (2003, 1187) traces the door metaphor to Jewish apocalyptic ideas of the "gate of heaven" and the idea of σοφία, both of which the Wisdom literature depicts as "means of access to knowledge, life, and salvation." The basis of the gate metaphor (v. 7, 9) may also be found in a messianic reading of Psalm 118:20, which says the righteous may enter through the gate that leads to the LORD. Therefore, the door metaphor is not only meant to portray the Pharisees as false teachers but, more importantly, to affirm Jesus's status as the only true saving leader.

The discernment characteristic of the Good Shepherd and the salvific significance of the gate are further revealed in verse 9 as the sheep are saved when entering by Jesus, the door to salvation. The expression "will go in and out" (v. 9b RSV) echoes covenant terminology, especially the

Deuteronomistic blessings for obedience (see Deut 28:6). At the same time, this expression means that all who will follow Jesus to the field will safely come back to the fold under divine protection (Keddie 2001, 391).

The expression "find pasture" is a common expression in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Chr 4:40; Ps 23:2). God's people are commonly referred to as "the sheep of his pasture" (see, for example, Pss 74:1; 79:13; 100:3; cf. Lam 1:6). Jesus had earlier told the Samaritan woman of the satisfaction provided by the water he provides (John 4:14). He had also talked about the satisfying bread he provides (6:35). His promise that those who enter through him will find pasture (v. 9b), therefore, alludes to the spiritual food that satisfies every spiritual need and ensures spiritual growth. Jesus therefore speaks of his blessings for his sheep in terms of secure pasturage which is the highest good for his sheep. In addition to providing their spiritual needs, Jesus also provides the material needs of the sheep.

In verse 10 Jesus states that the false teacher, the thief, comes "to steal [κλέψῃ] and kill [θύσῃ] and destroy [ἀπολέσῃ]" but he (Jesus) has come that the sheep "may have life, and have it abundantly" (RSV). Jesus's use of a series of nearly synonymous verbs adds poetic weight and emotional force to the contrast between himself and the thief. The thief takes life, but Jesus gives life. The thief cares only about feeding himself whereas Jesus cares mainly about feeding and building the sheep. The thief steals sheep in order to kill and destroy them; Jesus has come for the wellbeing of the sheep by providing an overflowing life to them. At the same time, the choice of these verbs helps John's audience to recall the devastation of the First Jewish Revolt which was characterized by killing and destroying (Brant 2011, 161).

Jesus then proceeds to develop the sheep/shepherd figure further, stating, "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (v. 11). The word "good" (καλός) is synonymous with "true" in other "I am" sayings of Christ and serves to create a contrast between true

divine shepherding and false leadership (Scott 2003, 1187). The life of the shepherd could be in danger when he encounters wild animals like lions, wolves, jackals, panthers, leopards, bears, and hyenas (see Gen 31:38–40; 1 Sam 17:34–35, 37). The Good Shepherd was sacrificial, even laying down his life for those in his care (v. 11); he (the Good Shepherd) contrasts not only with those who would harm the sheep, the thieves and robbers, but even those who are not invested in the sheep such as the hired shepherds (vv. 12–13) (Tenney 1981, 109). These people would desert the sheep in the face of danger or pressure. Jesus, the "Great Shepherd" (Heb 13:20–21) and "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet 5:4), never withdraws from the sheep no matter the situation. The expression "lays down his life" is unique in Johannine literature and refers to a voluntary sacrificial death (10:11, 17, 18; 13:37–38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16). The word τίθημι (lay down) is also used in John 13:4 to mean "lay aside, strip off." The word ὑπέρ (for) is used generally to connote sacrifice (John 13:37; 15:13; cf. Luke 22:19; Rom 5:6–8; 1 Cor 15:3) (Tenney 1981, 109). "Life" (ψυχή) goes beyond mere physical existence to include personality (Tenney 1981, 109). The Good Shepherd is willing to die for the sheep, in contrast to thieves, robbers, and hired men, who either destroy the sheep themselves or allow them to be destroyed. The death of the Palestinian shepherd is a disaster for the sheep, but the death of Christ means abundant life for his sheep.

3.3 Verses 12–18

12 "He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, who's own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, 15 as the Father

knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So, there shall be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." (RSV)

At the initial stages in Israel's life, shepherding was a primary occupation and one of importance since sheep were indicators of wealth and sources of food, clothing, and sacrifice. Later, when cultivation increased in Israel, slaves and younger sons took over the role of shepherding, so shepherds were often the uncommitted hired hands Jesus spoke about in verses 12–13. The laborers were at the bottom of the Mediterranean social order and not always trusted. The hirelings would not risk their lives for the flock as the Good Shepherd would (vv. 12–13). The hireling lacks not only the pride of ownership of the sheep but also the concern that proceeds from ownership. Jesus, being the Good Shepherd, owns the sheep, cares for them, feeds and protects them, and does not flee in the face of danger, but protects them even to the point of laying down his life (v. 15) as a demonstration of his radical love for his sheep.

Jesus then reveals the basis of his care and sacrifice for his sheep as a deep relationship of trust and intimacy between himself and the sheep, comparable to the relationship he has with the Father (vv. 14–15). The verb γινώσκω ("know") connotes "intimate acquaintance with" (see Scott 2003, 1187). The Good Shepherd discourse continues with the theological broadening of his "one flock" to include others not of the fold (v. 16), that is, the Gentiles, for whom Jesus would also lay down his life and to whom he sent his disciples (Matt 28:19; see also Isa 56:8; cf. Scott 2003, 1187). Jesus's desire to unite his other sheep to this fold is also highlighted in his farewell prayer (John 17:20). The statement, "there shall be one flock, one shepherd" alludes to God's providential care for his united people (cf. Jer 3:15; 23:4–6; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Mic 2:12; 5:3–5; Psalms of Solomon 17:40).

The discourse ends with Jesus's assertion that his death, though voluntary in nature, was part of God's plan for salvation (vv. 17–18). The power to lay down his life and take it again is a statement about Jesus's death and resurrection. Jesus's mission will end in death; yet, since his "resurrection is truly the purpose of his death" (Brown, cited in Scott 2003, 1187), he will take up his life again to live forever. Since Jesus has sovereign authority over his own destiny, he is not to be considered a "victim" or a "good martyr," but a "victor" (Scott 2003, 1187). Rainbow (2014, 204) notes that what Jesus illustrates by saying that he lays down his life "for [ὑπὲρ] the sheep" (John 10:11, 15), "requires not only that the sheep benefit from the shepherd's protective action, but also that the shepherd interpose himself between them and the threat, so that the shepherd takes the brunt of it on their behalf, in their stead." This means that the shepherd ensures that the sheep face no threat at all.

The laying down of the shepherd's life established a new covenantal relationship through which one unites with other sheep in the fold; one's membership in the new covenant community requires a new ethical behavior. The word τίθημι is the same word Jesus used in 11:34 when he found out Lazarus had been buried and asked, "Where have they put him?" (Skinner 2017, 30). Again, the verbs "laying down" and "taking up" allude to the Jesus's action of laying down and taking up his towel in the feet washing narration (John 13:1–17; Culpepper 2017, 85).

From the exegetical study above there is no doubt that John 10:1–18 is of high soteriological value. It creates a clear distinction between false saviors and the true Savior of the world, Jesus, the Christ. The fact that Jesus is the only way to the Father and that his work on the cross is rooted in his love for humanity and his commitment to ensuring that the Father's will is done were also highlighted. Jesus's use of the shepherd and gate metaphors was meant to make his discourse accessible to his audience who were familiar with shepherding in first-century Palestine. This approach by Jesus underscores the value of contextualization in the propagation of the Christian gospel. This is something that missionaries should learn and apply as they seek to make their message relevant and applicable to their audience.

The soteriological data gleaned from the text provide a valuable resource for leadership in the church and society at large. The next section outlines three key leadership implications deducible from the shepherding role of Jesus as highlighted in the exegesis conducted above.

4. Implications for Contemporary African Leadership

4.1 Leadership as sacrifice

First, the shepherding role of a leader requires sacrifice. The leader does all he/she can to provide for the needs of the people just as a shepherd provides good pasture to his sheep (John 10:9). Jesus approaches his calling not only in a pastoral, selfless manner but more importantly in a love-driven, sacrificial manner, even leading to his death. He speaks five times about laying down his life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17–18), something he chooses to do for their welfare. Jesus's voluntary sacrifice for the sake of his sheep

to the point of dying for their sake differentiates him (the Good Shepherd) from other shepherds. Jesus stands in direct contrast with the thief and robber who only comes to steal, kill, and eventually destroy the flock. The same is true of shepherd-leaders. Christian leaders, imitating Christ, must prioritize the welfare of their followers, demonstrating a genuine care (Adeyemo 2006, 546). The leader therefore must be like a scapegoat who carries the burden of others (546; Lev 16). This requires great sacrifice.

The leadership ideology and practices of South Africa's Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu serve as a good example of how one can lead sacrificially in both the African church and society. Tutu has contributed immensely to the social-economic development and transformation of the apartheid and post-apartheid South African society through his selfless and sacrificial leadership. He is a social activist who speaks prophetically about socio-political issues such as social injustice, climate change, corruption, and human rights abuse, among others. He is one of the few leaders who have demonstrated great wealth of wisdom, kindness, leadership, and integrity in their relationship with others. Tutu's leadership highlights the fact that one's sacrifice in leadership must be for all, not a selected few. His theology of leadership is built on the unity and common identity of the human race (Tutu 2007, 46, 60). Therefore, though he is black by ethnicity (his father being a Xhosa tribesman and his mother a Tswana), he considered himself as a minster not only for the blacks but also for every child of God. He argued and demonstrated that leadership in the kingdom of God requires one to provide service to everyone in need, regardless of the person's social, political, or ecclesiastical affiliation. This aspect of Tutu's leadership ideology echoes Kofi A. Busia's assertion that "all nations and people, in spite of cultural and historic differences, belong to the same species of [human], share a common humanity, and can dwell in brotherly amity" and, therefore, "We consider philosophies and practices based on

racial or cultural discrimination or segregation to be wrong and pernicious, and they may even constitute a threat to world peace; so we cannot wherever we find then given expression" (cited in Anane-Agyei 2017, 105).[1] As a way of sacrifice, Tutu used part of the money he received for winning the Nobel Peace Prize to establish a scholarship fund for South Africans in exile (Gish 2004, 95). This is a hallmark of a selfless and sacrificial leadership. A key lesson from this is that church leadership must not be restricted to the church environment but must be extended to all who need to benefit from it. Moreover, leaders must be ready to suffer for the sake of their subjects just as Christ did, even to the point of death.

The sacrificial character of the shepherd leader must result not only in caregiving and gatekeeping but also protection of the sheep from those who would endanger, harm, deceive, or mislead them. The contemporary world is full of deception and Christian leaders have the task of exposing false teachings through effective teaching ministry. The truth must be taught to expel falsehood, just as light expels darkness. By doing so, shepherd leadership facilitates growth, maturity, and increase. The sheep must also follow the shepherd and remain under his/her care to avoid being stolen by the thief and eventually being destroyed.

4.2 Leadership as service

Another principle from the exegesis is that leadership means service or servanthood. The shepherd metaphor suggests that the authority, power, and privileges that come with leadership are meant for service to God and to humanity. The prime goal of the leader must be to provide services that will make the society a better place to live. A servant leader is "seen as servant first" and exercises power without coercion. Greenleaf (2002, 27) asserts that: "The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead." As shepherd, Jesus renders many services to the sheep, including feeding, healing, and others. Similarly, Christian leaders must not exalt themselves or be served; they must serve God and humanity. Busia (cited in Anane-Agyei 2014, 37) makes this point in his assertion that "the ultimate goal of politics [or power] is the creation of conditions, which will give every individual the opportunity to be the best he can as a human being and as a member of a community." The services rendered must, for example, lead to the provision of good roads, potable water, health and sanitary facilities, access to education, and other amenities. Busia (cited in Anane-Agyei 2014, 104) further argues, "We must judge our progress by the quality of the individual, by his knowledge, his skills, his behavior as a member of the society, the standards of living he is able to enjoy and by the degree of cooperation, harmony and brotherhoodness in our community life as a nation." It is in this light, that the Most Reverend Prof. Emmanuel K. Asante (past Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana) maintains that all forms of authority are meant for the ultimate good of the society (Asante 1999). He served his nation (Ghana) as the chairman of the Peace Council, ensuring that political violence was condemned and reconciliation achieved to enhance peaceful coexistence and socio-economic development. He states, "People in power are trustees in the sense that the power they wield has been given to them for specific purposes, namely, to serve the human community in view of the realization of divine norms in social relationship" (Asante 1999, 69). Therefore, African (Christian) leaders must consider themselves as God's stewards who have delegated power for civil and ecclesiastical transformation through service. It, therefore, follows that any form of civil or religious authority that is dehumanizing, abusive,

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1 Professor Kofi A. Busia was Ghana's Prime Minister of the Second Republic of Ghana (from 1969 to 1972).
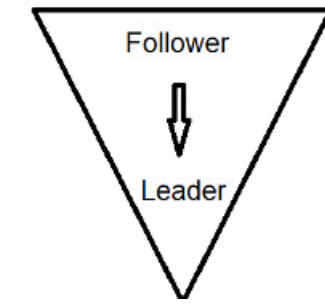
discriminative, or oppressive, contradicts the shepherd leadership model and must be condemned.

The servant role of the shepherd leader implies accountability. The shepherd reveals this principle in the daily counting of the sheep on their return from the daily grazing. Accountability requires the honest use of power. One's subjects have the right to know what the leader uses their resources for. In African traditional worldview and practice, traditional leaders account for their leadership during social events such as festivals. Not only do they account for the past year(s), they also make projections for the ensuing year. Traditional chiefs do this not only to maintain peace with the living but also to avoid the wrath of their ancestors on whose stool the chief is considered to sit. In the same way, contemporary African (church) leaders must be accountable to their followers. Being accountable will establish a relationship of trust between leader and followers which, in turn, promotes increased productivity and healthier interpersonal relationships. Resources entrusted to the care of the church/state must be used wisely and efficiently to promote God's work. Being accountable to followers offers the leader the opportunity to know his/her shortfalls and to improve upon his/her leadership role.

Furthermore, servant leadership is "supportive, with authority at the bottom of the pyramid and followers being served by the leader and subject to the nurturing oversight of the leader," as opposed to worldly leadership that is "suppressive with authority [concentrated] at the top of the hierarchy and followers being lorded over and dictated to by those in authority" (Estep 2005, 46; see diagram below).
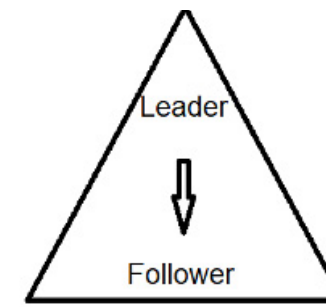
Worldly Model of Leadership   ***Shepherd Model of Leadership***

Leaders must therefore not consider themselves as having supreme power, because God can take away their leadership role and give it to other people. The concentration of power in the hands of followers goes a long way to making followers feel important and part of the process of governance, which in turn leads to commitment, solidarity, and harmony. In Africa where people have an unquenchable thirst for power and fame, this model of leadership must be given the needed attention, developed, and promoted to ensure accountability, responsibility, and socio-economic/ spiritual development.

4.3   Leadership as mentoring and modeling

Leadership involves influence and this influence must be positive. According to Asante (1999, 25), the concept of shepherd leadership presupposes the possibility that the followers will go astray, get lost, and become vulnerable. The leader must therefore be someone who can help others get back on track when they wander and go astray. From the Christian perspective then, a leader must first of all be a mature Christian who can help nurture others by word and practical examples. It is in this sense that Christian leadership can be regarded as exemplary. Christian leaders, being the "salt" and "light," are expected to be "disciplined and controlled in their private and public life, and in their exerting of leadership functions" (Ikenye 2010, 177). As the shepherd goes on ahead of the sheep, and his sheep follow him

(John 10:3–4), they follow the shepherd's steps. Leaders must recognize their role as role models for their followers. Any true leader will lead by example. A true leader does not say "do as I say, not as I do." If followers are to follow their leaders, then the leader should be trustworthy. This aspect of leadership is expressed in the Ghanaian proverb "The follower's style of walking is informed by how the leaders walks."

To be an effective role model for followers, one has to build close relationships with followers. The sheep follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd, because they know his voice (John 10:4). This is learned over time from the consistent and caring treatment of the sheep by the shepherd. This presupposes intimacy. Contemporary African (Christian) leaders must cultivate a deep sense of trust within their followers so that their voice can evoke the character and care of a shepherd-leader. As the leader moves ahead, he/she is to ensure that the followers are following along. Those who stray away must be brought back on track; those who grow weary must be strengthened; those who are discouraged must be motivated; and those who need extra guidance must be given the needed counsel. In this way, shepherd leaders exercise power with benevolence.

Another factor that will enhance the leader's ability to mentor and disciple his/her followers is his/her welcoming nature. Jesus, being a shepherd leader, not only enters the pen (calmly and safely) by the door; he himself is also the door to the pen. He welcomes his flock and allows them to enter the pen after their day's work is over. Jesus said, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14). Jesus's knowledge about his sheep is not only cognitive but also experiential (Collins 2017, 56). The man that Jesus healed knew something about Jesus that the Pharisees did not know. If for nothing at all, he had experienced Jesus's healing power; he therefore became one of Jesus's sheep who knew him experientially (Keener 2003, 5).

Followers must have true knowledge about their leaders, both cognitively and experientially.

The mentoring role of the leader also requires him/her to be a visionary, identifying those with leadership capabilities and nurturing them. This makes the shepherd leader a transformational leader in that he/she transforms the follower into a leader. The leader must help build the capacity of his/her followers for positive development. Such capacity building must go beyond just improving one's abilities and expertise to include provision of incentives and opportunities to utilize those abilities. That is, in the process of mentoring, the leader must not only build the capacities of the followers but must also delegate responsibilities with the accompanying authority required to act without their having to look over their shoulders (Phipps and Prieto 2011).

The mentoring role of the shepherd leader also includes promoting love, peace, reconciliation, interconnectedness, and interdependence. As the leader builds solid and genuine relationships with their followers, he/she becomes a unifying force which ensures peaceful coexistence among the flock. To be successful in this regard, one must uphold human dignity and social justice. The unifying and reconciliatory role of the shepherd leader is evident in the leadership ideologies and practices of Busia and Tutu. Busia (cited in in Anane-Agyei 2014, 7) taught that political power must be used "to create a democratic welfare society in which all may live a life of dignity and freedom, protected from destitution and from oppression." This leadership focus was meant to restore human dignity and freedom which was lost during the colonial days. As a means of protecting the individual against political abuse, Busia (cited by Anane-Agyei 2014, 1) ensured that the sovereignty of the people and rule of law were firmly upheld. He maintained that leadership (societal or ecclesiastical) "can flourish only in an atmosphere of kindness and affection and benevolence and sympathy."

In so doing he healed people with emotional hurts and those with wounded relationships.

Similarly, in the post-apartheid South African society, Tutu worked to reconcile the whites and the blacks by his "father-for-all" leadership style. He opposed leaders (in other parts of Africa) whose rule was considered worse than the rule of their former colonial masters. He pointed out that the same African leaders who were now abusing their own people were among those who strongly opposed similar practices by the colonial masters. With specific reference to Africa, Tutu articulated that, "It pains me to have to admit that there is less freedom and personality in most independent Africa than there was during the much-maligned colonial days" (Allen 2006, 347–348). Tutu (2007, v) acknowledged the presence of some good leaders in Africa but frowned upon bad leadership practices. For Tutu (2007, 22, 25), all humans must live together by the principles of interdependence, sharing of resources, interconnectedness, and brotherhoodness, in order to fight against the evil of tribalism and ethnocentrism. Interconnectedness and brotherhoodness requires transcending cultural differences to accept all members of the human society as equals. In national politics, the shepherd leader is expected to avoid nepotism (that is, making political appointments based on family ties) because this practice leads to incompetent leadership as people are appointed to certain positions which they are not qualified to occupy. Again, it leads to political exclusion and division among followers.

In his fight against tribalism, racism, and other attitudes that hinder reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, Tutu coined and popularized the expression "Rainbow Nation" as a metaphor for post-apartheid South Africa (Hill 2007, 89). This expression, which he first used in 1989, became a household expression after 1994 under the rule of the African National Congress (ANC) (Allen 2006, 391). By this expression he was (among other things) drawing attention to different ethnicities of people all of whom originate from God (through creation and the *imago Dei*) and are required by divine command to work together for peace and development despite their diversity (Hill 2007, 90). He explained *ubuntu*[2] in terms of humanness, gentleness, hospitality, and othercenteredness. An *ubuntu* system of leadership (found mostly in East, Central, and South Africa) is a humane-oriented leadership (Brubaker 2013). For him, to be human means recognizing that without other humans there is no existence for the individual. Tutu therefore draws from the African communal worldview to encourage people to live together in unity and peace. He was appointed by President Nelson Mandela as the chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He worked hard to reconcile the nation and promote the spirit of unity among its citizenries. To sum up, the shepherd leader must be a servant of God, agent of change, parent to all, and source of motivation to the weary.

5 Conclusion

In the midst of ineffective leadership in African societies, the Good Shepherd discourse (John 10:1–18) offers a leadership paradigm which, when developed and promoted, may serve to improve leadership among African Christians. Christian leaders must serve, guide, protect, and provide for their followers who, in turn, obey their leaders' voices. The intimacy of the relationship between leader and disciple, highlighted by in the notion of recognition through naming, must inform contemporary African leadership. Contemporary African leadership, when executed along

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2 Ubuntu means "humanity" and is taken from the familiar Xhosa saying, "ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu" ("People are people through other people").

the shepherd model, has the potential to improve not only divine-human relationship but also human-human and human-environment relationships.

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