

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 6

Volume 6 • Number 2 • October 1982

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews selected from publications
worldwide for an international readership,
interpreting the Christian faith for contemporary
living.*

GENERAL EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



Published by
THE PATERNOSTER PRESS

history. It is he who calls us to *righteous* history: “Let justice roll down” and “Let the righteous do more righteousness still.”

Justice-righteousness is realized fully in the consummation of history. But that consummation does not negate the historical process. Righteous and just judgment will be pronounced, not upon the human finiteness which limits human possibility, but upon the selflove which broke faith with man and creation.

... According to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness-justice dwells.

[\(II Peter 3:13\)](#)

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A Pastor's Workshop: The Gospel of Mark and Conflicts with Evil Today

Cor Bronson

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A Case Study of a small group Bible Study whose method raises important hermeneutical questions on the relationship of text and context.

INTRODUCTION: AN INTENSIVE TEE COURSE ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Flexibility, surprise, variety, challenges and risk describe theological education by extension (TEE). I know of no better way to say “amen” to those words than to describe an intensive TEE class I taught recently. Although conventional TEE demands a lot of flexibility to begin with, this six-hour class on the Gospel of Mark pulled the students and myself in directions that surprised, sometimes frightened and always challenged us.

First of all, as a self-respecting North American missionary, I might have been celebrating U.S. Thanksgiving Day with my family and friends instead of spending three days with Indian pastors from the denomination I work with. Alas, the pastors had planned this session without taking into consideration my designs on a turkey dinner. Secondly, this workshop, while not part of an established TEE program, was an intensive course for pastoral enrichment and Biblical orientation to some pressing social and political issues confronting the denomination of these pastors. They were all pastors from one of the many tribal groups in their country, members of a church whose majority is Indian, but whose powerful minority is Spanish speaking. Thirdly, to deal with such issues as racism, majority rights, political freedom and so on in their country and church invites misunderstanding at best and accusations of wrenching the gospel into categories alien to it at worst. Fourthly, most of the fifteen pastors at the workshop had no more than a

fourth-grade education. Finally, we had to communicate in Spanish, a second language for both the pastors and myself. Such was the framework within which we worked for three exciting, challenging and even threatening days.

THE TEMPTATION EPISODE AS KEY TO THE GOSPEL'S CONFLICT MOTIF

I arrived at the workshop armed with a sheaf of printed Bible study guidelines that gave an overview of the Gospel of Mark by listing **P. 276** forty-one passages from the book.¹ I introduced the passages by claiming that all had the central common element of Jesus taking part in some kind of conflict.² In order to help the pastors focus on the core of the conflict and unify the Bible study, I listed the following questions to answer when studying each passage:

1. Who are the characters here?
2. What does Jesus do here?
3. Is there a representative of evil here?
4. If so, what or who is that representative?
5. What does the representative of evil do?
6. How do Jesus and that representative struggle against each other?
7. What is the outcome of the struggle in this episode?

Since we had only three two-hour sessions to work through these passages, the pastors divided into five small groups, each taking eight passages. In that way we covered all the passages in the small groups. We came together to share results and to study in the full group selected passages that I considered key links in the long chain of Jesus' conflicts.

Although this was an inductive Bible study, my role as a teacher here was to help the group discover for itself an important theme in Mark. Here "to help" required that in the first steps of the process I direct the study by following a strict method applicable to all the passages under consideration. One might, I suppose, complain that my direction forced the group into a hermeneutic straitjacket. I think, however, that the following results speak for themselves. Once the pastors grasped the system, they went off on their

¹ Here follows the list of passages: [1:12, 13](#); [1:21-28](#); [1:29-31](#); [1:32-34](#); [1:40-45](#); [2:1-12](#); [2:13-17](#); [2:18-22](#); [2:23-28](#); [3:1-6](#); [3:20-25](#); [5:1-20](#); [5:21-43](#); [6:1-6](#); [7:1-13](#); [7:24-30](#); [7:31-37](#); [8:11-13](#); [8:22-26](#); [8:31-33](#); [9:14-28](#); [10:1-10](#); [10:17-22](#); [10:35-45](#); [10:46-52](#); [11:15-19](#); [11:27-33](#); [12:1-12](#); [12:13-17](#); [12:18-27](#); [12:28-34](#); [12:35-40](#); [14:1, 2](#); [14:10-11](#); [14:34-42](#); [14:43-50](#); [14:53-65](#); [15:1-20](#); [15:21-32](#); [15:33-41](#); [16:1-8](#).

² The idea of elucidating a conflict in Jesus' ministry is by no means original with me or with this group Bible study I am describing. Especially helpful in broaching the subject and suggesting some possible pathways to follow are these sources: Rubén R. Dri, "*La Conflictividad en la Vida de Jesús*," *Iglesias*, April, 1980, Mexico City: CENCOS; pp.7-17. F. Ross Kinsler, *Estudio Inductivo de Marcos*, San Felipe, Retalhuleu, Guatemala: Seminario Evangélico Presbiteriano, n.d. William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974, pp.59-62; 91-120, *et al.* Helmut Thielicke (*Between God and Satan*, C. C. Barber, tr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973) deals extensively with the temptation episode in Matthew and views it there as a cosmic struggle. Some of Thielicke's general insights apply equally to Mark's Gospel-long conflict motif.

own, using the [p. 277](#) guidelines freely to raise perplexing questions and point to some answers.

Our first full-group session began by dealing with Mark's brief temptation account, [1:12, 13](#). As we followed the prepared questions, I asked one person about the temptations Jesus endured. He listed the three from Matthew's and Luke's accounts, and noted that for some reason Mark does not mention them. I thought that was a sophisticated insight into Synoptic studies, so I asked him why he thought that Matthew and Luke detail the temptations while Mark does not.

That question led nowhere until I asked the pastors *where* Matthew and Luke place the temptation episode and *how* that differs from Mark. Someone responded that Mark leads off with the temptation whereas Matthew and Luke relate the story as part of Jesus' life. To reinforce that, I pointed out how Mark's temptation report—hardly an episode—concludes the introduction to Mark's gospel. Matthew and Luke tell a longer story about the temptation itself as part of their own narratives, outside the respective introductions.

When the pastors agreed that Satan himself was the representative of evil in this passage, I told them that I considered [Mark 1:12, 13](#) a key to the entire book of Mark and that the other forty passages related directly to the temptation report. After that the Bible study flowed in some expected and some surprising directions. I will summarize some highlights that show how the pastors began both to come to grips with the Gospel of Mark as a unit and to see themselves as contemporary participants in the struggle against evil that forms just one motif in Mark.

FOCUSING THE FIRST CONFLICTS IN EXORCISMS AND HEALINGS

Our group discussions on succeeding passages introduced us to Jesus, fresh from the difficult first encounter with Satan in the wilderness. The pastors were not sure of the outcome there (question 7). We reached a consensus that Jesus won the first round of an extended match, helped along by the ministering angels, much as by seconds in a boxing match. Two people protested that of course we knew that Jesus won that first encounter with Satan himself because he beat death in the last chapter; he simply could not lose because he was God's Son. Others put a stop to such hasty conclusions. The victory was yet to come. For now, all we knew was that a crucial fight was on, one that could not be won simply by declaring *a priori* that God's Son would win automatically before the battle was fought. To [P. 278](#) do that would not take seriously either why Jesus came to earth or the struggle in which he was involved.

In the first and second chapters the succeeding rounds in the struggle give Jesus no time to rest. Without help from the angels, Jesus hits the various representatives of evil head-on, although Satan himself does not appear in person. Jesus casts out demons, heals Peter's mother-in-law, a leper and a paralytic. One pastor pointed out that the way Mark tells this, Satan was able to rest at times, letting his subalterns carry on while Jesus never got a break. Everyone clearly saw Satan at the root of the struggle. One person made a timely reference to the experience of all the pastors by pointing to the way in which many village medicine men still treated all sickness as coming from evil spirits. The spirit world, I thought, is much closer to these people than it is to me.

With the opposition gathering in the spirit world, the jump to the realm of civil and religious authorities as a second focus in Jesus' struggle was harder to make. No one had difficulty identifying the Pharisees as Jesus' opponents in [Mark 2:18–22](#) and [23–27](#). Still they were not ready to lump them together with Satan's forces. Our study of [Mark 3:1–6](#) proved the turning point.

INCLUDING POLITICAL-RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES IN THE CONFLICT

When the group answered the seven questions in reference to [Mark 3:1–6](#), they disagreed about who represented the powers of evil here. Some thought that it was the disease that had withered the man's hand, while others said that the Pharisees and Herodians were the culprits. When they discussed what the agent of evil was doing, they decided that this was a struggle on two fronts. Here both disease and people were fighting against Jesus. Here too they appreciated that the final outcome of the struggle appeared to be in doubt. Whereas Jesus could handle himself against sickness, powerful people were another matter.

The meaning of Jesus' struggles grew for the participants here because not everyone was certain who the Herodians were nor how they related to the Pharisees. Two pastors rightly suggested that Herodians supported Herod. Still, they were surprised that the Herodians and Pharisees joined forces against Jesus. That was precisely the point, I emphasized, since normally the Pharisees wanted nothing to do with the compromising political games that the Herodians played. According to the Pharisees, they were trying to get the best of two irreconcilable worlds—Hellenism and Judaism—as they supported Herod, a scion of dubious lineage, while dismissing unconditional [p. 279](#) allegiance to Jewish law. Under all other circumstances the Pharisees and Herodians were enemies, but common opposition to Jesus made them pragmatic allies during Jesus' ministry.

LINKING BIBLICAL NARRATIVE AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ISSUES

There it was: the normally taboo question of Jesus' association with political forces was broached. To appreciate how dangerous this particular conclusion was, one must recall that in much of Latin American Protestantism, any attempt to relate Biblical teachings and Christian political responses meets with stunned silence or fearful rejection. Additionally, in the area from which these pastors came, numerous Roman Catholic priests and catechists had been forced to leave their parishes or had been kidnapped and killed because local governmental military authorities had accused them of doing the very thing we had just begun to do in the workshop: relate Biblical narrative to contemporary political conditions. In such a situation, large sectors of the area's Protestant churches reinforce their traditional anti-Catholic identity by emphasizing the physical safety that their own supposed apolitical stance offers, in contrast with the daring stance taken by some of their Roman Catholic counterparts.

I had two choices: either ignore the issue and accept the traditional division between spiritual and political struggles or try to see Jesus' struggle including these elements as part of a much wider spiritual warfare. One pastor's question did not permit me to take the first choice. Apropos of the context and related to a question that had been nagging the entire pastors' group due to one member's political activity, he asked me: "Can Christians be members of political parties and actively campaign for candidates?" I knew he was baiting a fellow participant, since the two men's political leanings represented opposite ends of the limited spectrum recognized in their country. Regardless, there was no escaping the implications of the question. Unwilling to play along with personal disagreements, I decided to take a tack that I hoped would bring us back on Mark's course by briefly touching on related Pauline territory.

We concluded the session by reading and reflecting on Paul's summary of spiritual warfare in [Ephesians 6:10–20](#). I asked the pastors how the principalities and powers took on concrete forms in their lives. All were ready to reply that they had seen enough

corruption in their political leaders and witnessed enough oppression from the military to identify at least some of Paul's message with those sad parts of their own lives. With that step our Bible study began going in [p. 280](#) a direction that I was sure was following lines of Biblical political thought. It was precisely where I had hoped the pastors would want to go with Mark's Gospel. Nevertheless, given the political climate that the men had just talked about, I was uncomfortable. Our Bible study was touching on risky ground.

SHIFTING THE FOCUS TO DISCOVER POLITICAL GUIDELINES FROM MARK

Following sessions of our Bible study on Mark left out many elements of Jesus' conflicts. The pastors were convinced by that time that Jesus was almost always in conflict with someone or other of Satan's team. They felt that they had sufficiently treated in their small groups the conflicts as represented in the many healing episodes, opposition from family and disciples.³ They were particularly interested in focusing on this political element.

Dealing with homegrown politics as a result of Bible study was something entirely new, strangely attractive and risky to them. All had seen previously some political struggle within the Gospel narrative, but only a few had ever before thought of looking for principles for their own political activity from Bible study. They felt that for the first time they were able to deal with something that was a fiery issue among themselves as pastors who were reflecting on the Bible, their source of spiritual strength, and not merely arguing political differences without some common base. Here they saw a way to discuss their differences using some elements from the Gospel as a guide. Thus they chose to focus on something they had not dealt with in this way before and let other elements of Mark's Gospel (e.g., healing, exorcisms) that were more or less common coin among them pass for the time being.

MARCAN VOCABULARY HIGHLIGHTING AUTHORITIES AS SATAN'S REPRESENTATIVES

Thus it was natural that we spent more time on [Mark 8:11-13](#), [10:1-10](#) and [12:13-17](#) than on other passages in the conflict motif. These three passages share elements crucial to a full understanding of Mark's conflict theme. These are the familiar episodes in which some Pharisees come to Jesus asking him for a sign ([8:11-21](#)). They later question [p. 281](#) him about divorce ([10:2-12](#)), and finally about paying taxes to Caesar ([12:13-17](#)). Mark's treatment of these episodes differs significantly from Matthew's and Luke's.⁴ Because of this, they form indispensable links in the chain of conflicts that Mark presents.

³ Although we did not treat this in detail, Satanic opposition from within the disciples' ranks helped us see how pervasive were Satan's attempts to thwart Jesus' ministry and task. Nowhere was that more dramatic than in [8:31-33](#) where Jesus lashes out at Peter's well-meaning rebuke when Jesus predicted his own death, "Get behind me, Satan."

⁴ Of the Synoptic reports, only Mark's treatment permits us to make a Gospel-long thematic relation between the temptation episode and the three episodes that highlight the Pharisees' opposition because Mark uses *peiradzō* (to tempt, try, test) only in those four passages. (See below for more detailed explanation.) Additionally, the Marcan temptation episode governs all other conflicts as Mark places it in the introduction to his Gospel and not as a part of the general flow of narrative as do Matthew and Luke. As part

First of all, the passages depict the Pharisees trying to ensnare Jesus with questions relating to application of Jewish law or accommodation to an occupying political power's demands. Secondly, the Herodians again team up with the Pharisees in the tax question episode.⁵ As we have seen, Mark introduces them early in the book (3:6) and then again in this episode that occurred by all Synoptic accounts during the last week of Jesus' life. Together the accounts give us the picture of a surveillance operation that had possibly hounded Jesus throughout his ministry. Thirdly, Mark unites these three episodes with the temptation episode (1:12, 13) we mentioned earlier by stating that the Pharisees (and in chapter 12 the Herodians also) were following Jesus to "tempt" (*peiradzo*) him.⁶ The result of this vocabulary unity among the four episodes is that the activity that characterizes Satan—i.e., *tempting* Jesus to do wrong—in 1:12, 13 is what the Pharisees, and later the Herodians, do three times in rapid succession. Thus Mark unmistakably portrays the Pharisees as Satan's personal representatives in the all-out struggle against Jesus.

As one could expect, our careful examination of these three passages took more than a full two-hour session. Nevertheless, the pastors were able not merely to follow what's suggested, they also contributed several points that had earlier escaped my notice. As they were using the 1960 version of the Spanish Reina-Valera Bible translation, they readily picked up Mark's use of the temptation motif p. 282 that links the Pharisees with Satan.⁷ Furthermore, one pastor pointed out the by now long alliance between the Pharisees and the Herodians.

Finally, not contented with this complex only, other pastors noted that the tax question (12:13–17) was tied closely to Mark's description of Sadducees (12:13–17) and Scribes (12:28–34) in the two episodes immediately following. One person ventured the solid opinion that in this triple complex of episodes in chapter 12, along with those from chapters 8 and 10, all the ruling classes in Jesus' Jewish society came together against him. Besides that, in chapter 12, they attack Jesus on a political issue (Pharisees and Herodians on taxes to an occupying power); a religio-doctrinal issue (Sadducees on the resurrection); and an ethical-legislative issue (Scribes on the greatest commandment).

SEEING THE CONFLICT IN CONTEMPORARY TERMS

of the introduction, the temptation episode carries more thematic weight than it can as part of the narrative.

⁵ *Hrōdianoī* appears only three times in the New Testament: once in [Matthew 22:16](#); twice in Mark—[3:6](#) and [12:13](#).

⁶ Here we must note that Matthew and Luke also use this word in the parallel episodes included in their gospels. However, given the almost unanimously presumed priority of Mark, we must assume that Mark "invented" the literary motif that Matthew and Luke later borrowed though used differently. For example, Mark is more chary about using *peiradzo* or the derivative *peirasmōs*, employing the words only five times in all. Matthew and Luke, however, less choosy because their purposes differ, use the words eight and nine times respectively.

⁷ Instead of attempting to broaden the idea of *peiradzō* by rendering it "tenderle a Jesús una trampa" ("entrap Jesus") or something similar, as both the Versión Popular in Spanish and modern English versions do, the 1960 revision (and the King James Version in English) maintains the simple and accurate, if limited, translation of "to tempt".

For some pastors, the conflict in which Jesus found himself was now fully developed. They had read all of Mark together and arrived at some conclusions that were new to them. Other members of the group were not satisfied to stop with those conclusions. They insisted that we deal with some elements of obvious conflict in the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Again in this series of discussions, by now familiar points were made, with the added feature that Jesus' conflict with political authorities broadened beyond his relatively narrow circle of the Jews and reached to Herod and Pilate—the representatives of compromising Judaism and the occupying forces of Rome respectively.

The pastors who carried our discussion in this direction prevented a sectarian, and thus at root unbiblical, interpretation from carrying the day. Besides emphasizing the political opposition, they connected that with the ultimate opposition that death brought. However, instead of leaving it there, the group was then able to integrate the varied complex of opposition and draw some implications from it that began to sound like a traditionally Reformed ethical teaching of transforming their society.

THE CONTEMPORARY ISSUE FINDING SOME CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS

The risks inherent in dealing with Mark's Gospel in a way that [P. 283](#) focused so closely on *Jesus'* conflict were that pastors would again revert to a merely moralistic and individualistic interpretation. Regardless of that danger, the pastors as a group were willing to come to some tentative conclusions that avoided that pitfall. For example, despite the constant institutionalized political repression in which half the men at the workshop lived, the group was willing again to look at its own society in order to try to identify concrete manifestations of the "powers of this dark world" ([Ephesians 6:12](#)), as well as manifestations of the other side. The physical risk of doing this is obvious, but their commitment overrode the threat.

To make lists and concretize always runs risks of oversimplification. It can encourage more of the lamentable "them-us" mentality so prevalent among evangelicals in Latin America who so strongly separate themselves from "worldly" people or "things of the world," defining those terms in narrow moralistic ways. Or it can readily be manipulated into an equally hideous aberration, that of considering all authorities connected with rightist dictatorial powers as Satan's puppets, while evaluating any opposition to them as activity uniquely blessed by God.

A third option being taken by some Christian groups in several Latin American countries shares more with the latter position than the former and hence is fraught with the same risks. After analyzing their situations, some Christians are forming temporary strategic alliances with groups that follow the second option described above. Yet those who choose a temporary alliance do so precisely because they know they will not bring on God's Kingdom. Still, having chosen to oppose undeniable viciousness and brutality of the powers ruling their countries, these "third option groups" hope to take part in a concrete way in changing the course of their countries' history in a direction giving greater chance for justice than is possible under present systems. By working for justice with revolutionary groups, some of whose ultimate aims they do not share, they will still gain a future right to criticize, to act as spokespersons for the Kingdom and for God's people within the society they help bring on.

Given the limitations we were working with, I am convinced that the pastors chose neither the first nor second options. Most, but not all, shared cautious affinity with the third option, for which reason I sketched it in some detail. Due to their particular situation and the suffering that a large section of the Roman Catholic Church in their region and some of their own people were undergoing at the hands of the national army, the pastors

characterized the ruling authorities as the people who could be expected to subvert the progress of the p. 284 Kingdom over which Jesus rules and which he will bring. It was precisely that felicitous phrase—the “Kingdom of God”—that prevented the group from caricaturing Mark’s message.

Although the pastors had no time to study Mark’s concept of the Kingdom of God in detail, the breadth of the term “kingdom” permitted them to envision Jesus’ conflict and, *mutatis mutandis* their own conflicts as Christians, in personal, political and cosmic terms. Perhaps since they are people largely untainted by the extremes of Western individualism, they saw themselves and their people as representatives of God’s people today who were experiencing among themselves as a people the conflicts articulated by Mark.

One person identified, for example, the powers of darkness in the agricultural practices of one-family ownership of large land tracts, mechanization that reduced employment, migrant labour that destroyed family stability, a limited number of export cash crops at the expense of basic food crops and so on. His people suffered, he said, because they were the victims of a political force that was ruining the land and the people. Another pastor essentially agreed with him, but warned, “Our people take part on both sides. Some are the owners’ agents, others are the workers. Some are agronomists who help mechanize and overload the soil with pesticides and herbicides; others are victims of those practices.”

We did not solve that particular complex problem that arose from the mutual analysis the pastors were making of Mark’s Gospel and their own lives. But that is not the point. These people were reflecting biblically on the original Marcan motif of Jesus’ conflict and trying to incorporate themselves into the struggle. They were trying to live incarnationally as a result of a process of inductive Bible study.

The pastors found more problems than solutions suddenly arising from a new way to study the Bible. What had been to them familiar though disparate passages from Mark, turned into a series of episodes thoroughly unified and integrated into the entire book. Although they were overwhelmed by the complexity of what they were discovering—and a few confessed puzzlement by this time—they were not willing to leave the *ultimate* outcome between Jesus and Satan in doubt any more as they had earlier. They triumphantly—not triumphalistically—and joyfully pointed to the eschatological victory in the resurrection. Furthermore, several of them wished aloud that they could move their people in a unified direction to grasp the contemporary challenge they faced in their attempt to be on God’s side in the political process in which they had seen, for the first time, that Jesus had also taken part in his day. p. 285

CONCLUSION: PROCESS AS IMPORTANT AS THE CONTENT

The examples could go on and on, but the problems discovered and the solutions suggested would go on apace. What we found of immense significance here was not a consensus for a strategy. We never hoped for that, since to do so in three days would have been pretentious. Rather our workshop produced for a small group of Christians a new way to look at one book of the Bible in reference to other biblical concepts and in reference to the daily lives of the participants. A process already underway to some extent was given a needed push forward in the workshop, not through outside imposition, but through the dynamics of TEE methods and inductive Bible study. The process and the content were clearly of equal value here, since without the interpersonal dynamics highlighted above, precious little of the contemporary biblical reflection could have resulted. As a teacher I clearly directed the study in its initial direction, but I was also part of the process. I was

never in total control of where the pastors were going to go with their reflections. By the same token I could never have forced the pastors to follow my lead, even if I had wanted to.

The pastors and I came together here, worked together, discovered together in circumstances of societal repression and found concrete ministry for our communities and ourselves in reflecting on one part of God's written Word.

Cor Bronson lives in a Latin American country. p. 286

The Ministry of Management for Christian Workers: A Biblical Basis

Agustin B. Vencer Jr.

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"For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for the battle" (1 Cor. 14:4).

"Is management a carnal deviation from trusting the Holy Spirit?"

This article is a response to the above question. It has two objectives: (1) to discuss the biblical basis for management, and (2) to challenge Filipino pastors to develop management leadership.

First, let us define some critical terms.

1. Leadership is the process of securing results through and with others, according to Louis Allen.¹ Essentially, this is the same definition of *management* by Lawrence Appley² and Olan Hendrix.³ Kenneth Gangel, moreover, defines *administration* as "getting things done through people."⁴

I will be using Allen's definition. I also agree with Allen that administration is more comprehensive than management, and management than leadership.

2. *A natural leader* is a person who, primarily by using his intuitive, inborn aptitudes, skills and personal characteristics, enables people to work together to achieve objectives.⁵

¹ *The Louis A. Allen Common Vocabulary of Professional Management.*

² Olan Hendrix, *Management for the Christian Worker.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Kenneth O. Gangel, *Competent to Lead: A Guide to Management in Christian Organizations.*

⁵ Allen, *op. cit.*