Business Analogies at Church

A Hermeneutical Study into the Use of Analogy for Missional Church Leadership

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Abstract

A significant weakness in leadership studies is the free use of cross-sector analogies without a hermeneutical standard. Churches need new approaches from other sectors but may respond with little critical method, either too freely or too narrowly. Many reject any need to learn from outside the Church. The practical goal of this paper is to provide a way to learn without risking the Church's own character. This is the work of analogy. While referencing the theological and missiological histories of this method, the argument is based on analysis of the hermeneutical principles in Jesus' parables compared with the epistemology of analogy in education and interdisciplinary studies. An analogical hermeneutic is then

applied to two business examples. The analogical hermeneutical spectrum, I propose, can nourish the wisdom of church leaders and enhance a church's collective efficacy. In conclusion, further research avenues are suggested.

The Need for New Analogies

The mainstream churches in Western countries continue to decline in numbers and influence despite half a century of resources being directed towards the challenge. One response to decline is to seek new sources of wisdom (e.g., Taylor and Nash 2008). It is common for writers on church leadership to use anecdotes from "analogous" organisations or "parallel situations," including from the sectors of the military, sports, biology, education, or business. They often assume seemingly without evidence that the comparison is valid. The stories told are compelling. However, they may also mislead the reader and carry assumptions that weaken the comparison or clash with the Church's particular goals. On the other hand, others reject the need to do this. They stake their future on continuity with the received structures of their church, and the exclusive nature of the Church having no need of wisdom from corporations.

Consequently, successful leaders in one field, say finance, who may be drafted into another relevant field, say church mission strategy, may find that their past successes are not understood or (oppositely) adopted disastrously. Taking either too much or too little, the lack of a valid hermeneutic by which to approach business analogues results in bad outcomes in an era when fresh insights are needed. This paper is a proposal for a spectrum of hermeneutical principles that interrogate the effectiveness and fidelity of organisational analogues, to foster a more nuanced missional imagination. In this paper, I use brief examples to frame an interdisciplinary proposal. I will conclude by outlining further work that might be done.

Despite Jim Collins's warning to churches and social sector leaders—"why business thinking is not the answer" (Collins

2006—naïve readers of business analogies are easily misled from their own core purpose. I recently attended a church leadership research conference. I heard a church executive repeat Jim Collins's famous maxim, "get the right people on the bus" (Collins 2001, 41). This maxim means, in short, to fire incumbents who cannot soon deliver the directives of the new management. By using this one phrase and making the narrow application of one business principle, they explained a decade of high turnover in the Church's structures. Each step was deleterious to the Church in the losses of corporate knowledge, educational expertise, missional experience, international excellence, and widespread loss of trust in management. They also lost the membership of grieving friends and family members of those who were fired without adequate process. While we can easily find such anecdotes, this paper offers a constructive alternative.

Moving beyond our anecdotes, three research projects interrogated a popular set of business principles, namely the "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" by Barry Posner and James Kouzes (Kouzes and Posner 2013). In workshop form, the authors of the Five Practices claim "from academia to government, healthcare to technology, faith-based to community advocacy organizations, The Leadership Challenge Workshop has proven to be a catalyst for change" (Kouzes and Posner 2013). The five "exemplary leadership" practices make compelling reading:

1. Model and make the way for others,
2. Find and hold to the Core Purpose,
3. Challenge the current process,
4. Enable teams to act, and
5. Encourage the heart.

This research was based on seventy-five thousand responses, thousands of interviews working in twenty languages and linked to a book that has sold some two million copies. The workshop boasts high association with business growth. Many church leaders

have adopted this compelling set of business-based practices. But is it a good analogue for churches?

Three recent studies suggest otherwise. First, Burton (Burton 2010, 117) interviewed seventy-six senior pastors in two North American protestant denominations. He concluded that "none of the five leadership behaviors were found to be significantly related to church population growth" (Burton 2010, 5, 101). Similarly, Stewart (Stewart 2012, 119) and Hines (Hines 2012, 125) found no statistical difference between the Five Practices and the size of Church, the growth of the Church and the educational status of their ministers. These three empirical studies show how easy it is to make inept interpretations about transformational leadership.

Despite this misuse of business analogies, there is a major opportunity. In recent decades of global change, the sectors of business, education, and the military have all undergone radical internal change. All three sectors have not only experimented with leadership models but also researched the effectiveness of that work. If the Church can translate soundly from research on turnaround in those sectors, that is, if they interpret analogous situations into high-order learning, then leadership-change insights may offer valuable learning for the Church.

In this paper, I analyse the use of analogues, and compare them with the interpretation of biblical parables, in order to construct a tool of cross-sector interpretation which holds theological integrity.

A definition of "analogy," from the Greek *analogia*, describes a cognitive process of transferring information or meaning from a particular subject (the analog, or source) to another (the target), or a linguistic expression corresponding to such a process (Online Etymology Dictionary). It differs from the forms of simile or metaphor. It is ordinarily (as here) a simple figure of speech, but post-war elaborations of the concept of metaphor in critical discourse have broadened this term (Ortony 2012, 1) in ways that this paper will not pursue. By comparison, an analogy holds a wider field of view, including multiple points of comparison. Only the act of interpretation can determine how many points there are.

Analogue is not as thoroughgoing as allegory, a form that implies a near-complete and detailed valid comparison.

For example, to say that the Milky Way is like a saucer is a simile or metaphor, validly holding true with a single point of comparison: shape. To say the Milky Way is like the internet makes an analogy referencing massively numerous and complex separate users, uses, physical centers, and types of influence. However, it fails as an allegory because it lacks what the simile gave: the physical shape of an entity organized by greater forces. It lacks a sense of boundary that helps us work with the concept of a galaxy since the "centers" of the internet are much more numerous than stars and galaxies and growing daily in number.

Observing these limitations leads us to ask how analogy works.

The Track Record of Analogy in Theology

At a basic level, an analogy builds understanding thus: "What does this remind you of?" and "How is this (the source) like that (the target)?" Analogy is a method widely used by teachers, proving to be powerful in many subjects and at all levels. One critical study observed, "the most dramatic and visible role of analogy is as a mechanism for conceptual change, where it allows people to import a set of ideas worked out in one domain into another. Analogical reason is patterned thinking, not deductive" (Forbus 1998, 231–57).

The analogical approach is not new to the field of theology. The influential Alexandrian theologian Origen (184–253 CE) used analogy as a higher-order interpretive device, preferring allegorical interpretation to historical exegesis because it was more ascetic (some say "mystical").

More recently, the American Catholic theologian David Tracy traced the long history of systematics and observed twin counterpoised methods—analogical imagination and dialectical analysis. Neither should be an overlord of the other, he claimed (Tracy 1981, 421).

This paper cannot pursue this history. Instead I simply note that Christian theology has always employed the rationality of analogy. Hence, there can be a deep confidence that this form of interpretation is germane to the faith of the Church and goes beyond the invention of small illustrative devices.

Further confidence in the use of analogy is evident in the field of missiology. In the mission of the Church, interpretation across cultures is also not a new question and not an easy one. The Church has, since its beginning, translated the gospel from one culture to another (Luke 4:27; John 3–4; Acts 17). That task has proven very fruitful for the Church as she has taken root in so many new language groups (e.g., Donovan 1982; Bevans 1992, 57–62). Cross-cultural transmission of the gospel is not simply a verbal message, but is always "incarnate," always embodied, always within a culture (Bevans 1992). Ethnic cultures are unique patterns of thinking, acting, and feeling that sustain the richness of their life and faith. Not just for expansion but for insight, it has been a two-way process. Each new culture uncovers hidden treasures in the gospel by bringing a different light. For example, Liberation Theology came out of South American barrios and now informs mission in suburban Australia.

The tools of contextual theology can also be applied to professional cultures, such as business or education. This is because business sectors and even single companies develop strong local cultures or strong overarching cultures. They can be complex and nuanced. As in all contextualization theory, some new things can be seen in those cultures as God-given while some things could be challenged with the gospel (Goheen 2014, 287). This influence is two-way, like all contextualization, and the hermeneutical work in both directions can only be discovered with careful engagement. To avoid the risks of engagement is to consign the Church either to irrelevance or loss of integrity. It can be said in missiological terms, then, that churches may be practicing an incautious syncretism in their use of power, definitions of purpose, forms of participation, and so on.

The cross-cultural task is always attended by fears of syncretism. Henning Wrogemann cites the Indian scholar M. M. Thomas's advocacy to take the risk: "It is vital bravely to step out in faith and to adopt and adapt such elements and forms" (Wrogemann 2016, 336). Mike Goheen advocates a model he calls "faithful contextualization" (Goheen 2014, 284–86), balancing effectiveness in the world with fidelity to Christ. These missiologists encourage critical examination of analogues that might resource the Church in mission, and the need for this task is almost universally accepted, the risks, as well as the expectation of enrichment, well observed.

How Analogy Works

Given this brief examination of analogical interpretation in theology and mission, let us uncover how analogy works. Several principles will be identified then summarized.

Analogy works when the analogy says, "this (complex area) is like that (simpler picture)"; it has restricted the field of view from the full complexity of this in the real world. It also relies upon a comparable pattern between the two referents in that aspect only. That is, analogous reasoning only works when the comparable pattern of concepts thus generated is made to interact with a wider conceptual frame. People learn from analogy only when that pattern is restricted in some ways. Analogy therefore works well only when in view of a wider context and in view of the particular stage or focus of learning. The philosopher David Chalmers confirms the "sensitivity to context" that is critical to the argument of any analogy (Chalmers 1991, 20–24).

Adding to these two principles, several more describe how analogy works in learning. First, analogies serve a particular purpose. Interpreters must identify the core purpose within which the analogues are framed, and the prior awareness of the audience about the analogue that illuminates the target at this stage of learning. This is not a simple metaphorical process, because the object of the learning is to move beyond pre-existing perceptions. They

expose gaps in knowledge and provoke the need for a new thought or movement into action.

Second, analogies are used to bridge a gap or conflict in paradigms such as those required in interdisciplinary studies. These are essential when large complex problems have not been solvable by single professional approaches.

While observing that interdisciplinary collaboration is in its infancy, Paul Jeffrey describes these four analogical methods in a particular cross-sector collaboration thus:

> A number of tools are identified that characterize and support the collaboration process, including the use of storylines and metaphor, choice of vocabulary, the nature of dialogue and the role of mediating agents (Jeffrey 2003).

While he includes the nature, language, and role of those participating in the collaboration, he also identifies four "products" of collaboration: "process," "understanding," "utility," and "knowledge integration" (Jeffrey,2003). The work of making and interpreting useful analogies includes all these characteristics. Seeking an apt analogy is therefore a good strategy for making discoveries and building trust for a shared task. Like all strategies, they require prior agreement of a common desire or goal, which may then move to a further elaboration of that goal (Jacobs and Frickel 2009, 43–65).

This is why Jeffrey reminds us that analogical work requires person-to-person work, not just mind-to-mind work. An analogy born in one complex sector does not lend itself to simplistic comparisons. For instance, professionals often lament the dominance of "business principles" or "business language" in the contemporary practice of medicine or education. The managers complain about the "bottomless pit" of money that medical staff must think they have, which is more a description of the compassion that motivates medical professionals. On the other hand, the teacher or nurse may feel that the "efficient" reduction in staff has made it impossible to impart confidence to patients or pupils, an essential part of the healing/learning process. Thus, the definition of the

problem to be solved and the motivation to solve it are different from the outset. Part of the people-work of analogical interpretation is to find a beginning point.

For a cross-sector analogy to work in practice, therefore, requires some people-principles beyond the words and content. A dialogue is required that listens carefully to the others, respects their differing goals and views, and creates a way of speaking that solves the uncovered problems. If they avoid the conflict in that process, it is possible that they will paper over the challenges with an agreed "form of words," which leads to no new outcome.

The kind of thinking that is being advocated here is complex relationally, yes, but also philosophically. Analogy is a powerful high-order logic (Heick 2019). As noted above, teachers routinely use a "this is like that" form of learning to construct an informative point for students to be able to grasp. Educational psychology claims that this creative act is also a critical path. Not only do students grasp new learning but in the process of finding apt analogues assimilate it. The process of analogical reasoning is not, therefore, a simple metaphor-assignment task. Rather, it is an iterative process of trying what works better or best as they move back and forth between the known and the unknown. Terry Heick observes:

> As students create incorrect analogies, analyse the relationships their analogies are suggesting, and then correct them accordingly, students are grappling with ideas, monitoring and revising their thinking, and otherwise actively considering the often-complex relationships between disparate things (Heick 2019, 9).

While this is a traditional technique of school education, we now see it in epistemology and engineering, valued as high-level logic. Analogy is now recognized as a key form of logic in the building of artificial intelligence (Forbus 1998, 231–57; Chalmers 1991, 185–211).

We have seen in the epistemology of analogue the importance of understanding and including context, discerning the core purpose of communication, the necessity of provocation to

discern new learning, the importance of the persons in the act of dialogue, and recognition of the stage or strategy of cross-sector enquiry. This list begins to define how an analogical situation may be aptly interpreted.

One way to examine this question is the parables of Jesus, where we will see these same principles. I will summarize the principles obtained as a hermeneutical method using the metaphor of a prism of light. After that, two concrete examples of "parables from business" will test the method.

Analogies Are Like Parables

Jesus' use of parables provides the strongest argument for why and how churches can learn from business practices. In thirty-three separate stories, Jesus referred to business practices, mostly agribusiness, as analogy for the kingdom of God, for example (Mark 4:26 NIV): "He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like a man scatters seed on the ground . . .'" The following table lists the parables and their work-place theme.

From the Synoptic Gospels	The Sower Mark 4:1–20, Matt 13:3–23, Luke 8:5–15 Not every innovation succeeds	The Seed Growing Secretly Mark 4:26–29 Growth simply takes time
The Mustard Seed Mark 4:30–32, Matt 13:31–32, Luke 13:18–19, Start small	The Tenants Mark 12:1–11, Matt 21:33–46, Luke 20:9–18 Hold authorities accountable	The Faithful Servant Mark 13:33–37, Matt 24:42, Luke 12:35–48 Reward good service
The Wheat and Tares Matt 13:24–30 Nothing grows perfectly. You have competitors.	The Hidden Treasure Matt 13:44 Invest where and when it really matters	The Pearl Matt 13:45–46 Act upon nice surprises

The Unmerciful Servant Matt 18:23–35 Create a culture of fair dealing	The Labourers in the Vineyard Matt 20:1–16 Employees have lives	The Two Sons Matt 21:28–31 Deeds matter more than words
The Ten Virgins Matt 25:1–12 Be prepared for when it takes longer	The Talents Matt 25:14–25:30 Each person's capacity differs, so treat them differently to be fair	The Two Debtors Lk 10:30–37 Debts can be forgiven to create loyalty
The Good Samaritan Luke 10:30–37 Social value interrupts routine	The Rich Fool Luke 12:16–21 Plan without a sense of grandeur	The Unjust Steward Luke 16:1–8 Practice justice for the least
The Rich Man and The Beggar Lazarus Luke 16:19–31 Your social responsibility lies nearby		
From the Gospel of John	The Harvest John 4:35–38 The Mission of God produces a profit or harvest	The Apprenticed Son John 5:19–20a Follow the Master's instructions closely
The Shepherd John 10:1–5 Lead like a shepherd	The True Vine John 15:1–17 God acts like a gardener. Disciples act like fruiting branches.	The Foot Washing John 13:1–15 Lead as a servant

Table 1. Parables from business practices

Ten parables include analogies about leadership in business. If they were taken as business aphorisms only, they would not be remarkable. All these parables are wise sayings that address core leadership questions in the kingdom of God.

The close similarity between "analogue" (above) and "parable" can be easily seen. A parable is usually a short story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle (Merriam-Webster

Dictionary). The story itself may be taken from a news story or ordinary life-events.

The interpretation of Jesus' parables is a wide field of study that cannot be adequately encompassed here. With the help of Luise Schottroff and Klyne Snodgrass, I locate the importance of this form of learning and compare it with the way analogy works.

In parables, Jesus narrated a wide range of events and values, always artfully inviting scrutiny. Rarely, the narrative is meant to be an allegory, allowing many point-by-point comparisons. Indeed, some revel in the obscurities of finding allegory where none was intended. In some parables a "ripping yarn" provokes attention but may also provoke misunderstanding. For instance, is the somnolent judge (Luke 18:1–8) who resists the importunate widow a model of God, such that the Church must recruit earnest prayers to persuade an unwilling God to act? Many practice this sort of recruitment, but in context and in purpose the parable says exactly the opposite (v8). The age-old maxim applies here: other Scriptures outside the immediate narrative teach the reader to discern that which is simply attention-getting through dramatic effect from that which is being affirmed. They have misread both the legal context and the theological context. A complex organisational behavior like a legal system does not yield light to simplistic comparisons.

Thus, our first interpretive principle is that the analogy must be interpreted with knowledge of its wider context (Schottroff 2006, 220).

The second is that the core purpose of the story, though not necessarily stated in the narrative, must limit interpretation (Snodgrass 2018, 24–31).

The third principle is that a parable has a provocative learning purpose. The goal in the use of these analogies is to make a listener think in new ways as they puzzle the purpose, the similarities, and the differences. The stories being compared are to be intuitively mapped for patterns or points of congruence rather than mined for a detailed or allegorical congruence.

Matthew 13, for example, includes a question about the difficulty of interpreting the stories (v10). Jesus' answer is that they are designed to be difficult, to need discernment, to need the peripheral view of context and self, to disrupt habits of thought. This fulsome chapter ends with the ironic ascription to Jesus as "prophet without honor"(v57), which suggests that the disruptive work of interpreting Jesus' parables was immensely valuable yet created conflict. Thus, some parables have the immediate goal to be disruptive and to create the appetite for learning but are not themselves a good source of that further learning. For that, other sources and analogues are required, aligning with the need for a changed field of view.

It must also be stated that Jesus sometimes uproots normal business practice. For instance, he calls some people to give up working and follow him, he tells another to sell everything and walk away with him, he forgives debt too many times to be called good at accounting, he overturns the tables of foreign exchange merchants, he commends a lack of thrift towards tomorrow's food and clothing, he sends disciples out with no visible means of support, and he provides healing for free (which upsets both the lawyers and the doctors). St Paul also famously described salvation with the analogy of redemption from slavery. Lest that sound like immediate destitution, he aligned Christians with a new citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, of greater value than the much-prized citizenship in the Roman political economy.

Thus, some parables are intended to provoke reflection, promote immediate action, and may face immediate resistance, such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). Each parable renders a story from a known sector of life (this) and applies it to life in the kingdom of God (that). Therefore, there are many purposes of Jesus' parables together with an explicit warning about doing the interpretive work involved.

A Prism of Principles

From the above, the hermeneutical principles can be summarized as follows, in no order of importance:

1. Purpose: Limit oneself within the range of meanings intended and the core purpose.
2. Context: Interpret with reference to the wider context.
3. Structures: Clarify assumptions about authority or structures that are being used.
4. Stage: Be aware of staging the strategy in action or reflection.
5. Learning: Learn carefully for action or attitude, a reflective practice.
6. Spirit: Accept provocation to discern the Holy Spirit at work.
7. People: Work with the other people in the dialogue.

As soon as we list these principles we immediately see its relevance to the work of church leadership, especially regarding readiness to do the work of gaining wisdom. This allows us to move from the hermeneutics of parables to consider business practices as analogues for application to the Church.

Two Parables from Business

We will now employ two business parables, discerning them with the spectrum of the seven principles.

The Kingdom of God Is Like Kodak.

The context tells us that the Kodak company (USA) manufactured camera-films, eventually holding 70 percent of the market for family photography, for which they created the slogan "a Kodak moment." In 1981 they, with others, invented the digital form of photography that gradually made Kodak film obsolete. They missed the moment, it is often said; they did not recognize the

change that was coming, and eventually filed for bankruptcy in 2012 (Munir 2021).

How shall the Church interpret this parable? The similarities of context include the ballast of long-standing excellence, the inrush of new ideas that are rejected, the consequent steady decline in fortunes and a management response that was inadequate. A church leader might comfort themselves by doing trend analysis and excusing themselves from responsibility or by adopting more contemporary flavors into their church services. However, Scott Anthony in Harvard Business Review cited these as "wrong conclusions."

> A generation ago, a "Kodak moment" meant something that was worth saving and savoring. Today, the term increasingly serves as a corporate bogeyman that warns executives of the need to stand up and respond when disruptive developments encroach on their market. Unfortunately, as time marches on the subtleties of what happened to Eastman Kodak are being forgotten, leading executives to draw the wrong conclusions from its struggles (Anthony 2016).

In fact, a study of context shows that Kodak did not overlook the opportunity. Anthony continues:

> Kodak created a digital camera, invested in the technology, and even understood that photos would be shared online. Where they failed was in realizing that online photo sharing was the new business, not just a way to expand the printing business (Anthony 2016).

In fact, Kodak had seen the issue, invested in the digital camera business, and they were not myopic. The online world of sharing photos overtook their redirection work, to which their response was to sell their many patents and re-configure the company. They did change but simply not enough. That is the more reliable lesson from Kodak as parable. Some interpreters with the wrong conclusions might congratulate themselves that they have "seen the need to change" but they may have failed to learn the real lesson—that a significant change or two are required. Many

business writers speak of the necessity of and nervousness around making sufficiently bold changes (Laczkowski 2019).

They did undergo the provocation of a paradigmatic change in technology, consulted the workforce and the market, but not widely enough to avoid being blind-sided. They discerned their core purpose to be color printing and made major investments in printers, papers, and inks, whereas their identity—"a Kodak moment"—said more about the capturing of images. They had been engaged in learning the new technologies and acted in a minor way to advance them. But the real lesson, as Laczkowski (2019) noted, was not making sufficiently bold changes.

In discerning the stage of the strategy, a church leader concluding from this analogue "to read the signs of the times" might fail to realize that this is an observation that applies only to the start of a response. Other stages and strategies are required that must also be relevant to the contextual limits. In terms of affecting strategy, they must navigate the differing structural authority or assumed motivations that will permit or inhibit certain actions, as Jim Collins warns in his book applying business principles to social sectors (Collins 2006).

I hope the reader, with their own prior view of the famous Kodak story, is now persuaded to apply the spectrum of interpretation to find more adequate responses to analogous situations they may face. Let us test it further with one final example, this time not directed at congregations but "church office."

The Kingdom of God Is Like Toyota.

In 1987, Toyota suffered serious reputational damage due to media reports about a "stuck accelerator" which resulted in two fatal crashes. Unfortunately, these reports came immediately before a global financial crisis. The event impacted Toyota's market share, but the coincident financial crisis reduced their capacity to respond. It threatened to crush the company. What did they do? Did they try to silence the newspapers? Did they hope it would blow over so that their historic brand-strength might see them through?

No, they apologized immediately and publicly, issued safety recalls for millions of their vehicles at great cost to themselves in a time of fiscal crisis, promised that "the safety of your loved ones" was still their first priority, gave full collaboration to an independent investigation (they were eventually exonerated), and quickly introduced a new model with a new name and withdrew that much-publicized car. Over the next few years their market share actually increased over what it had been.

So, at a contextual level, is Toyota a parable for what churches should do to recover their general reputation in public due to cover-ups of child sexual abuse, removal of babies, support of Donald Trump, or their public campaign to reject "gay marriage"? Should they manage themselves to apologize in public, set up internal ethical safeguards, and try something new for the sake of demoralized innocent clergy and parishes? Or is this their Kodak moment and they should completely reinvent themselves?

A further examination of the context will help the interpreter. Newspapers and politicians flocked to accuse this foreign-owned company. However, Toyota did not choose first to stand and rebut those voices nor lament their place in history. Behind the scenes, as they did the public things mentioned, Toyota increased their support to their dealer network, providing information and discount incentives to get them through (Silverstein 2016, 189–204). They did later contest several malicious legal cases, but they did not do that first. In other words, the way they responded to the times of trial was more important in winning public trust than the vocal opposition of media and politicians and the safety issue itself. The people factor came into priority before strategy could be decided. As Collins said, "First who, then what" (Collins 2001, 41).

This is not a lesson learned well enough by churches. With rapidly declining "market share" in public participation, the mainstream churches have generally defended their public position and left their congregations and clergy (aka dealer networks) to soldier on with the demands of new ethical regulations but without new support. Episcopal and Pentecostal churches had the structure for rapid responses like Toyota, much more so than the congregational

or democratic churches, but they have been conspicuous in self-defence. There are some exceptions. Consequently, clergy are experiencing a dramatic loss of public respect. Morale is low and church officials seem merely to want to ride out the storm (Stonestreet 2019). The Toyota parable hinges on their ability to state and practice their core purpose in their place in society—"the safety of your family," not making money. The latter serves the former. Mainstream churches have mostly lost confidence to state their core purpose—the gospel—when they make a core statement it is most often about themselves: church growth. Can churches learn to state in public a similar core purpose? Work towards an answer to this question, perhaps: Why does God still have a Church here and now?

These parables are both provocative and do not within themselves provide all the answers to the questions they raise. We have been able to describe their similarities and differences in terms of the priority to people, alignment with core purpose, reading the nuance of context and its power structures, engaging the provocation to learning both in stage and strategy. The result has been nuanced, informed, responsible, and limited, but sufficient to take the reader to the next stage of response. At that stage, the same spectrum of principles will again inform their discernment.

Moving away from parables, we can go one further missiological step. With light like this and considering the place of analogue in cross-sector learning, churches could be well placed to flourish in this fast-changing environment. Their voluntary commitment has traditionally been high because the gospel directly implies that the generosity of God's love requires a response of generosity of time and funds. The reign of God assumes an ecology (body of Christ) of nurture and trust-love and not just linear structures. Management authority Jim Collins said that while churches are low in "executive authority," they are high in "influential strength," and adds, remarkably, that they thus demonstrate "true leadership."

> There is an irony in all this. Social sector organizations increasingly look to business for leadership models and

> talent, yet I suspect we will find more true leadership in the social sectors than the business sector (Collins 2006, 12).

We note his claim that analogical learning between sectors can work in both directions, subject to the same spectrum of hermeneutics (Bolster 2008, 20–22). The two-way street of this hermeneutic is a valuable outcome of these studies. It means the Church can speak constructively, not just ecclesially or morally, in many more ways into the lives of business and, as Collins describes, it will be a rich gift.

Conclusion

From this study of parable, context, and analogy, seven principles have emerged for the critical and creative interpretation of analogues. One way to understand this is that there are seven colors in the spectrum of light. So, in any reading from other cultures or sectors, the degrees of sameness in the analogue and target can be mapped or patterned by looking through the colors of this prism. Light can be described, merged, and combined in myriad ways, but this paper echoes the warnings of Jesus to see the full light. It proposes a prism that shows how different insights can be combined to make a beam of light with more integrity than the sad examples with which I began. The seven colors must be applied iteratively in reflecting on every step of change. High-order parables can be found using these seven principles as lenses and will illuminate many leadership insights that are fresh yet biblical.

These seven principles may prevent the Church from taking analogy too far, too little, or too analytically. Even more important, these principles can provide a platform for developmental learning of leadership, a practical wisdom that can turn the Church around.

Further research is needed to position this spectrum of analogical interpretation in more detail in the larger bodies of theology and missiology. One could add an examination of the sectors of education and the military, sport, and biology. More work is also

needed to differentiate the systemic needs of community-facing churches, experimental initiatives, the birthing of new ideas, and the more aligned synod-type structures.

This paper sought to highlight the confidence that the high-order learning of analogical interpretation has had in the theological and missiological history of the Church. It has analysed together the epistemology of analogy and the hermeneutics of parables and found seven principles that can assist careful learning from emerging trends in the wider context and apply them to the leadership needs of the Church. They can nourish a leader's ongoing work and enhance the effectiveness and fidelity of a congregation and a denomination.

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