

## BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTER OF GOD

**Edwin Melky Lumingkewas**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Klabat University, Indonesia*

*emlumingkewas@unklab.ac.id*

### Abstract

*Spiritual leadership has become a growing interest among Christians. Among leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, It is important to have a basic perspective of Christian leadership based on leadership principles from God as found in the Bible. The Bible indicates that God is leader. Although Bible is absent of trinity word, the description of the triune God is clear. In this trinity relationship, the nature of divine leadership is implied. As God the Father sent Jesus Christ, then Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in the salvation context, the concept of leadership is there. God leading the nation of Israel also provides additional information about the nature of God's leadership. Then, God's act of organizing, executing, and evaluating the creation of this world's represents a part of the biblical leadership process. Furthermore, spiritual leadership traits such as: Loving, humble, and care are shown by God.*

**Keywords:** *Character, Leadership.*

### Introduction

This article presents the biblical-theological perspective of spiritual leadership behaviour. Specifically, this will discuss selected leadership models from the Bible and other theological literature about God. The Bible presents many different types of spiritual leadership and the accompanying spiritual leadership behaviour. Even though they are written in contexts that are different from the contemporary society, the spiritual leadership principles exemplified in the Bible are still applicable to the contemporary situation. This article highlights the concepts of spiritual leadership from the Godhead.

### God as a Leader

The Holy Scripture clearly states that God is the Source of everything in the world. According to Jas 1:17 (NIV), “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” One of the gifts that God has bestowed to His people is the gift of leadership (Rom 12:8). In any organizations, leadership is very significant. How leadership is practiced and the way it is used—whether to glorify or to offend God—is worthy of discussion. However, one cannot avoid the truth that God is the Source of leadership.

The first book in the Bible (Genesis) describes the creation of the heavens and the earth. It states that God is the Creator of this world (Gen 1:1). The main purpose of Moses in writing the creation account is to express to the Israelites that God is the Source of their existence as a nation in this world<sup>1</sup>. It indicates the sovereignty of God over His creation.

As the author of the book of Genesis, Moses uses the word *Elohim* for God around 139 times. In Hebrew grammar, *Elohim* is a noun in the plural form. The ending *im* is an indicator of plural<sup>23</sup>. Even though it is plural, a singular verb often follows<sup>45</sup>. Merrit<sup>6</sup> confirms this idea by adding examples of the word *angel*. As stated by Merrit<sup>7</sup>, “Acherub is one angel; cherubim are several angels. A seraph is one angel; seraphim are several angels. *El* is God singular; *Elohim* is gods plural” (p. 47). To discuss further, Merrit<sup>8</sup> explains the plurality and singularity of God in Gen 1:26-27. Merrit<sup>9</sup> points out the plurality of God in v. 26 which states, “Then God said, „Let *us* [emphasis mine] make mankind in *our* [emphasis mine] image, in *our* [emphasis mine] likeness” (NIV). Specific personal pronouns (*us* and *our*) refer to God as plural. However, v. 27 states that “God created mankind in his own image” (NIV). The phrase *his own image* implies singularity of God. This means that the noun can be taken as singular.

This understanding leads Christians to believe that God is one yet consists of three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit<sup>10</sup>. This idea becomes one of the foundations why Christians acknowledge plurality in the unity of God and they call it Trinity<sup>11</sup>. According to Unger (1981)<sup>12</sup>, “Implicit in *Elohim* from the first verse of divine revelation is the Trinity” (p. 7). It is important to note that the statement regarding God in a plural form speaks of

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, J. F., & Zuck, R. B. (Eds.). (1983). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor.

<sup>2</sup> Andrews, E. D. (2016). *Understanding the creation account: Basic Bible doctrines of the Christian faith*. Cambridge, OH: Christian.

<sup>3</sup> Merrit, J. (2011). *God, I've got a question: Biblical truth for our deepest concerns*. Eugene, OR: Harvest.

<sup>4</sup> Bergant, D., & Karris, R. J. (1989). *The Collegeville Bible commentary: Based on the New American Bible with revised New Testament*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical.

<sup>5</sup> Unger, M. F. (1981). *Unger's commentary on the Old Testament*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> Merrit, J. (2011). *God, I've got a question: Biblical truth for our deepest concerns*. Eugene, OR: Harvest.

<sup>7</sup> Merrit, J. (2011). *God, I've got a question: Biblical truth for our deepest concerns*. Eugene, OR: Harvest.

<sup>8</sup> Merrit, J. (2011). *God, I've got a question: Biblical truth for our deepest concerns*. Eugene, OR: Harvest.

<sup>9</sup> Merrit, J. (2011). *God, I've got a question: Biblical truth for our deepest concerns*. Eugene, OR: Harvest.

<sup>10</sup> Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1957-1978). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary* (Vols. 1 & 7). Washington, DC: Review & Herald.

<sup>11</sup> Merrit, J. (2011). *God, I've got a question: Biblical truth for our deepest concerns*. Eugene, OR: Harvest.

<sup>12</sup> Unger, M. F. (1981). *Unger's commentary on the Old Testament*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

the Trinity which cannot refer to the angels<sup>13 14</sup>.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, it is seen that God is the Source of everything. By simply studying the word *Elohim*, it is evident that there is plurality of Persons in the Godhead. However, in spite of plurality, They are still one. As stated by Jemison<sup>15</sup>, “What the Bible teaches concerning the unity of the members of the Godhead would lead us to infer that the Three [are] closely associated in the work of creation” (p. 109). This indicates unity in the Godhead.

God is the Source of spiritual leadership principles. The first leadership principle that can be drawn from the Godhead is unity. The spirit of unity in leadership should be evident in the church organization. In conclusion, Christian leadership is the effort to bring unity in the church organization.

**Relationship in the Godhead.** This section discusses the relationship within the Trinity. First, it shows the love of God to humanity by sending His only Son to save His people (John 3:16). Second, upon accomplishing His work on earth, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to guide His disciples in continuing the work that He started (Acts 1:8; 2; John 16).

**God the Father sent Jesus.** As mentioned earlier, the Godhead consists of three Persons—God the Father (the first Person), Jesus as God the Son (the second Person), and the Holy Spirit (the third Person). A careful study of the Bible shows that each Person in the Godhead has an important role. As the second Person in the Trinity, Jesus is the One who executes the creation role. According to the apostle John, “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3, NIV). This is confirmed by the apostle Paul as he writes to the Colossians saying,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Col 1:15-16, NKJV)

In addition, while living in this world, Jesus acknowledged that it was on the will of God the Father that He based all His activities. While he was talking with a Samaritan woman, His disciples came and offered Him food to eat. Jesus replied by saying, “My food . . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34, NIV). When He spoke about judgment, Jesus described His judgment as just because He “seek not to please [Him]self but him who sent [Him]” (John 5:30, NIV). In this context, *Him who sent [Him]* referred to God the Father.

Furthermore, Luke describes Jesus in the synagogue—while He is reading from the book of Isaiah about the prophecy of the One who is sent by God—as the One who proclaims freedom to humanity. Luke emphasizes how Jesus acknowledges that the prophecy is referring to Him (Luke 4:17-21). This is His own way of introducing Himself as the One who comes and is sent by God. In John 6:38-39, the apostle John asserts this as Jesus says,

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent

<sup>13</sup> Louth, A., Conti, M., & Oden, T. C. (Eds.). (2001). *Genesis 1-11*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

<sup>14</sup> Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary: Gen 1:26*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>15</sup> Jemison, T. H. (1959). *Christian beliefs: Fundamental biblical teachings for Seventh-day Adventist college classes*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press.

me. And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. (NASB)

Other testimonies by the apostles also confirm the mission of Jesus while He is on earth and being sent by God. The apostle John points out that God shows His love to humankind by sending Jesus (1 John 4:9). In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explains that Jesus's death for the remission of human sins is "according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4, NIV). Similarly, in his letter to the Philippians, Paul advises the Christians to emulate the humility of Jesus who leaves His heaven's glory and humble Himself to become a man. He experiences all of these in order to redeem humankind.

To explain more of the suffering of Jesus, Paul points out how Jesus "became obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8). This expression indicates the impression of obedience to an order or an assigned task. As stated earlier, Paul addresses Christians in the Philippian church to imitate Christ in their attitude (v. 5). They have to follow Jesus's humility (vv. 6-8) and obedience (v. 8). Jesus obeys until He finishes the *task* of saving humankind.

In Phil 2:8 (NIV), the Greek word for obey is ὑπήκοος (BGT). In this version of the Bible Greek Septuagint, the word is used four times (Phil 2:8; Prov 4:3; 13:1; 21:28). In the same manner, Prov 13:1 uses this word in describing an intelligent son who "heareth his father's instruction," "*accepts his* [emphasis in original] father's discipline" (NASB), and "heeds his father's instruction" (NIV). It is important to note that the usage of obey in these passages helps indicate the concept of leadership in the Trinity. Moreover, as the second Person in the Trinity, Jesus is the One who is active in the creation work (Heb 1:2; John 1:1-4). He performs this as an *obligation* or *task* that He needs to accomplish within the Trinity. As the first person in the Trinity, God the Father appoints the task to Him (Heb 1:2). In turn, He shows obedience to accomplish the responsibility given to Him as a wise son hears, accepts, or "heeds his father's instruction" (Prov 13:1, NIV) or discipline.

While Jesus was on earth, He repeatedly told His people that whatever He did is in accordance to God's will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40). He asserted that God is the One who sent Him to earth. His disciples confirmed this statement in their letters to the Christian churches. Indeed, God sent Him to bring salvation to humankind.

The Trinity relationship reflects the concept of leadership. God the Father encourages Jesus to do a certain role to accomplish their mutual purpose (John 10:30; 17:21). In this context, Jesus creates the world (Heb 1:2), saves humanity (John 3:16), and proclaims freedom to the captives (Isa 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18-21). For accomplishing His assigned tasks, Jesus is able to please God. This concept of pleasing God has been the best motivation of humans in their work.

***Jesus sent the Holy Spirit.*** During His stay on earth, Jesus mentioned about the Holy Spirit. He discussed several themes related to the Holy Spirit. For instance, He mentioned about speaking against the Holy Spirit. That is, if someone spoke something against the Holy Spirit, it would be considered a grievous sin and he/she "will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matt 12:32, NIV).

Jesus also mentioned the Holy Spirit when He was about to leave the earth. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide His disciples so they could continue His work. Jesus made it clear in John 16:7 as He stated, "But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (NIV). He added that "when the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me" (John 15:26, NIV). This promise of Jesus was seen to be fulfilled in the Pentecost account in the book of Acts.

Jesus's sending of the Holy Spirit, to some degree, helps illustrate leadership relationship within the Trinity. Although They are three Persons,<sup>16</sup> They are one in nature and purpose. That is, they have a definite purpose for the welfare of humankind.

**Relationship with created beings.** In His relationship with created human beings, God is always in action to make sure that everything is in order. That is, He leads His people, plans for them, organizes everything, and evaluates His works and the work of His people. These are discussed in the following subsections.

**God leads.** The Scripture portrays God as a leader. The Bible shows many occurrences of God's leading. According to Davidson<sup>17</sup>, "The vast majority of the references utilizing these [leadership] terms refer to God as the One who leads—almost two hundred occurrences" (p. 11). In the words of Doukhan<sup>18</sup>, "The Bible makes it clear from the very beginning that no one has a right to positional leadership. Only God, the Creator, the only One who came before, has the right and the power to lead" (pp. 32-33). Thus, in spite of all the biblical characters who are portrayed as leaders, it cannot be denied that they are also being led by God. Indeed, from the very beginning, it is God who leads His people. God's leading was seen when Abraham sent Eliezer to find a wife for his son, Isaac (Gen 24:4). In doing this task successfully, Eliezer asked the Lord for His guidance (v. 12). When he found a wife for Isaac, he immediately praised God and acknowledged Him for His leading. In v. 27, Eliezer acknowledged and praised God for "his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives" (NIV).

**God leads the Israelites.** One major biblical theme is the exodus of the Israelites when God brings them out of Egypt to the land of Canaan. As mentioned in Exod 13:18, "So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt ready for battle" (NIV). After His leading to them, they are reminded in Deut 8:2 to "remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands" (NIV). The same reminder is given by the apostle Paul in Acts 13:17 when he says, "The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country" (NIV).

**God leads His people.** As mentioned earlier, God is the One who leads His people from the very beginning. He does it without any help from any other gods. As stated in Deut 32:12, "The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him" (NIV). However, in spite of His leading, His people keep on transgressing again and again. Thus, Jeremiah is used by God to rebuke His people by saying, "Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way?" (Jer 2:17, NIV). Moreover, in the NT, the apostle Paul encourages the people to be "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom 8:14, NIV) for them to become His children.

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<sup>16</sup> Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1957-1978). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary* (Vols. 1 & 7). Washington, DC: Review & Herald.

<sup>17</sup> Davidson, R. M. (2014). Leadership language in the Old Testament. In S. Bell (Ed.), *Servants and friends: A biblical theology of leadership* (pp. 11-30). Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Doukhan, J. B. (2014). The creative narration. In S. Bell (Ed.), *Servants and friends: A biblical theology of leadership* (pp. 31-48). Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.

Furthermore, in leading His people, Piper<sup>19</sup> believes that God practices the four D<sup>s</sup>—decree, direction, discernment, and declaration.

#### 1. Decree

The essence of decree in God's leading is that He is the One who puts His people to where they should be in accordance to His plan. When someone put his/her trust in Jesus and surrenders his/her life unto Him, then that person believes that Jesus is the one who chooses and places him/her to that position. The apostle John says, "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16). This is evident when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and tries to convince them that it is God's plan for him to be sold to Egypt (Gen 45:5). This is how God uses the decree in His leading.

#### 2. Direction

Through His Word, God has revealed His directions to His people. The Bible contains His teachings and His commands—the Ten Commandments—that can guide His people in their everyday living. In addition, if people allow the Holy Spirit to work in them, they can be surely guided in the right path.

#### 3. Discernment

Since God gives His people freedom to choose, it is important for them to be led by the gift of discernment. In Rom 12:2, the apostle Paul urges people "not [to] be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (NASB). The text indicates the importance of the Spirit in shaping the mind and heart of people through His word and prayer, making God glorified in whatever they do.

#### 4. Declaration

"This is the least common means of God's leading wherein He simply declares what His people should do" (Piper, 1996, para. 5). This is illustrated in Acts 8:26 when Philip is asked to "get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza" (NASB). Then, later on in v. 29, he is asked to "go up and join this chariot" (NASB).

**God plans.** Even before the Creation, God had already planned the salvation of humanity. Out of His great love, "he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV). He did this even when the world had turned away from Him. Indeed, no one could fully understand His incomprehensible love for His people.

According to Rinehart<sup>20</sup>, "Relationship is at the core of the Godhead, and in that relationship we see the fundamental spiritual principles regarding leadership" (p. 88). Thus, the planning is a work done by the Trinity. The Son has to be "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8) to be the Savior, and "the Holy Spirit would act as Comforter and Teacher, indwelling those who embrace the Lamb by faith and continuing to reveal the Christ" (p. 88)<sup>21</sup>. In

<sup>19</sup> Piper, J. (1996). *Four ways God leads His people*. Retrieved from <http://www.desiring.org/articles/four-ways-god-leads-his-people>

<sup>20</sup> Rinehart, S. T. (1998). *Upside down: The paradox of servant leadership*. Quezon City, Philippines: Navigator.

<sup>21</sup> Rinehart, S. T. (1998). *Upside down: The paradox of servant leadership*. Quezon City, Philippines: Navigator.

Luke 14:28-32, it can be noted that the texts point out the importance of preparation in planning such as in building a tower and going to war. Thus, even before the fall of man into sin, God has already prepared Jesus (Eph 1:4-5; 1 Pet 1:18-20). To release His people from the bondage of Egypt, God prepares Moses. Long before the Israelites get freed from Egypt, God has already laid a plan for their freedom (Gen 15:13-14). Because of the transgression of the Israelites, God prophesies that they are going to be under the authority of Babel for 70 years (Jer 25:11; 29:10). After that period, Daniel prays for the fulfilment of the prophecy (Dan 9:2-19), that is, for his nation's freedom. Immediately, God answers the prayer and reveals to Daniel the plan of releasing His people from Babel (vv. 20-25).

**God organizes.** God is well ordered. This nature of God is reflected in the many events that transpired in the Bible. It is noted in the OT how God creates the world out of nothing. That is, "before God began to create the universe, nothing else existed except God Himself"<sup>22</sup> (p. 263). This statement is understood that this earth and the universe have not existed until God creates it. Indeed, no other things exist before God creates everything.

It was important to note that, in the creation process, God worked systematically. God did not create this world like a magician. He did not just say a word and everything was completed. Indeed, by His words, He created (Ps 33:9). However, God created step-by-step and not all at once.

To show the well-ordered creation of God, Grudem<sup>23</sup> made a parallel arrangement of the creation as shown in Table 1. As illustrated in the Scripture, this world was dark in the beginning. On the first 3 days of creation, God formed what were

Table 1  
*Parallel Arrangement of the Creation*

Days of forming		Days of filling	
Day 1:	Light and darkness separated	Day 4:	Sun, moon, and stars (lights in heaven)
Day 2:	Sky and waters separated	Day 5:	Fish and birds
Day 3:	Dry land and seas separated, plants and trees	Day 6:	Animals and man

*Note.* Adapted from *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (p. 301), by W. Grudem, 1994, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

needed in the dark world. Then, He spent the next 3 days by filling those things with more creations. What God had done on the first to the third day was parallel to what He had done on the fourth to the sixth day. In particular, the forming of "light and darkness" on the first day was parallel to filling them with "sun, moon, and stars" (Grudem, 1994, p. 301)<sup>24</sup> on the fourth day;

<sup>22</sup> Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>23</sup> Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>24</sup> Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

“sky and waters” formed on the second day were filled with “fish and birds”<sup>25</sup>(p. 301) on the fifth day; and “dry land and seas” formed on the third day were filled with “animals and man” (p. 301) on the sixth day. Evidently, everything was done in order.

As a leader, God is portrayed in the Scripture as the One who organizes. God is keen on making everything work effectively. In addition to the creation, the Bible shows that God leads the animals into the ark orderly. As a human being, Noah cannot manage all the animals to get into the ark. The process to come up and go into the ark is beyond human capability to perform. According to White, “Animals obeyed the command of God, while men were disobedient. Guided by holy angels, they „went in two and two unto Noah into the ark,’ and the clean beasts by sevens” (p. 98)<sup>26</sup>.

Furthermore, God was the one who commanded Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. In the wilderness, they needed to be arranged in a special way on how to walk. In addition, there was a need to arrange their encampment. They were instructed when to walk and when to stop walking.

In the context of worship in the NT, God desired a well-arranged program. The Christians in Corinth were in favour of exercising the spiritual gifts. This kind of worship created chaos. It was observed that everyone was practicing their own spiritual gift. Then, the apostle Paul came and advised them to arrange in order so that “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor 14:40, NIV). Similarly, God said, “If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command” (v. 37, NIV).

**God evaluates.** When God finished His creation, He examined them carefully. At the end of the sixth day of His creation, God could be seen evaluating every detail of His creation. Not to mention the second day of His creation, God ended each day of the creation with His assessment by looking at them and checking if they were good. As stated in the Scripture (Gen 1:10, 12, 21, 25), “And God saw that it was good” (NIV).

When He was done with His creation, God was very pleased and ensured that His whole creation would be cared for. Thus, He placed His creation under His loving care. With God’s evaluation of His own work, there is an assurance that all His works are perfect and complete. That is, His accomplishments are flawless and His works are done completely. In spite of the salvation of His people through His Son, God keeps on working for the perfection of His people in Christ Jesus and He is going to finish it until Jesus comes (Phil 1:6).

From the above-mentioned discussion, it can be seen that God knows everything and nothing can be hidden from Him. He knows the deepest thoughts of man, the spoken and even the unspoken words, and every act they do. According to Schlessinger and Vogel<sup>27</sup>, “We must see every act, both good and bad, as the one that tips the scale of judgment. It is through each act that God evaluates us” (pp. 20-21). Thus, His people should make sure that whatever they do is “all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31, NIV) and that they have to think of “anything [that] is excellent or praiseworthy” (Phil 4:8, NIV). God provides for the needs of His people who have

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<sup>25</sup> Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>26</sup> White, E. G. (1958). *The story of patriarchs and prophets: As illustrated in the lives of holy men of old*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.

<sup>27</sup> Schlessinger, L., & Vogel, R. S. (1998). *The Ten Commandments: The significance of God’s laws in everyday life*. New York, NY: Cliff Street.



been faithful to Him and He makes “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28, NKJV).

**Characteristics of God as a Leader.** Since God is the Source of leadership, He has set a good example of a leader through His characteristics. Among His many good attributes, this study only focuses on God’s humility, care, patience, trustworthiness, and uprightness. In the following subsections, these leadership characteristics of God are discussed in detail.

**Love.** Love is one of God’s ultimate characteristics. The Scripture clearly states that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). According to Paago<sup>28</sup>, “God is not merely loving; God is love! Love is the very character that God wants His children to have in their lives” (p. 20). Even the Son of God, Jesus Christ, asks His disciples to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12, ESV). Compared to other spiritual gifts, “love is greater than faith and hope, because love is the character of God, whereas *faith and hope* [emphasis in original] are the spiritual gifts granted to those who believe in order for them to reflect God’s character” (p. 20)<sup>29</sup>.

God’s love is evident when He deals with human beings. Since the creation, God’s love to man has been revealed. Suh<sup>30</sup> asserts that “God’s intention in creating the world is to have love-communion with His creatures. Because God is love, He wants to manifest the glory of His love to *human being* [emphasis in original]” (p. 237). God’s love is also evident at the cross. He sacrifices His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and redeem the fallen humanity. According to White,<sup>31</sup> “Through the cross we learn that the heavenly Father loves us with a love that is infinite” (p. 210).

Moreover, the Scripture portrayed a loving God who created man with the capacity to love. This character of God was manifested in man and became a sign whether the man knew God or not (John 4:8). In addition, God required the man to love Him and his fellowmen (Matt 22:37-39). In the words of Graves<sup>32</sup>, “It must have been a part of the divine design included in God’s image and likeness that would enable man to love God more than man loves himself” (p. 93). Furthermore, Mendoza<sup>33</sup> commented that “God created us in his image; we are given the ability to create life from love, just like God does” (p. 162).

Therefore, love is considered as one important character that should always be observed in Christian leadership. According to White<sup>34</sup>, “God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character” (p. 35). A genuine loving leader is the one who is willing to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of his/her subordinates.

**Humility.** According to Hebblethwaite<sup>35</sup>, “Christianity shares with many other religions

<sup>28</sup> Paago, S. (2012). *God’s law*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow.

<sup>29</sup> Paago, S. (2012). *God’s law*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow.

<sup>30</sup> Suh, C. W. (1982). *The creation-mediatorship of Jesus Christ: A study in the relation of the incarnation and the creation*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi.

<sup>31</sup> White, E. G. (1911). *The acts of the apostles*. Mountain View, CA: Ellen G. White Estate.

<sup>32</sup> Graves, O. E. (2012). *God created man in His image and likeness*. Bloomington, IN: Trafford.

<sup>33</sup> Mendoza, J. A. (2010). *Heaven on earth: A guide to the kingdom*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

<sup>34</sup> White, E. G. (1958). *The story of patriarchs and prophets: As illustrated in the lives of holy men of old*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.

<sup>35</sup> Hebblethwaite, B. (1987). *The Incarnation: Collected essays in Christology*. Cambridge,

belief in an infinite and transcendent God, the source of the world's being and of all its values" (p. 21). These divine characters are not shared with man. On the contrary, as God's creation, man is finite and inferior.

God's humility is seen when He becomes a man. That is, the ultimate revelation of this character is the Incarnation—God becomes a man. Because of sin, man has been separated from God. However, in His great love to humanity, God desires to save man. In order to do this, Jesus Christ—the second Person in the Trinity—humbles Himself and becomes a man.<sup>36</sup> Hebblethwaite<sup>37</sup> believes that God has revealed Himself to human beings in order that they may be able to know Him completely. The Scripture simply says that by *knowing* Him as the true God and knowing Jesus as the Savior, man can have eternal life (John 17:3, NIV). For this purpose, God by Himself takes the form of humanity.

Moreover, Hebblethwaite<sup>38</sup> and Rae<sup>39</sup> agree that the incarnation of Jesus has become a central dogma of Christianity. It also helps Christians to possess humility as a moral characteristic. This is because Jesus has shown humility. Being God with all His glory, He has humbled Himself and has become a servant. According to Stump,<sup>40</sup> Jesus has demonstrated His never-ending humility by His complete obedience to God through His willingness "to move from the exaltation of deity to the humiliation of crucifixion . . . and by consenting to suffer the agony of his torture because God willed it when something in his own nature shrank powerfully from it" (pp. 276- 277).

In addition, Stump<sup>41</sup> believes that as a human being, Jesus lives out a faultless obedience and meekness. This is to show that even a sinful man can live out humility and show respect to God. In turn, the apostle Peter appeals to Christians to imitate Jesus. Peter states, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21, NIV).

While Jesus was on earth, He showed His humility by inviting people to come and learn from Him (Matt 11:29). To His disciples who sought to be the first among the disciples, Jesus taught the lesson of humility. Jesus told His disciples the essence of His leadership by saying, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28, NIV). Indeed, Christ showed a good example of humility to His followers.

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UK: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>36</sup> Crisp, O. D. (2007). *Divinity and humanity: The Incarnation reconsidered*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>37</sup> Hebblethwaite, B. (1987). *The Incarnation: Collected essays in Christology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>38</sup> Hebblethwaite, B. (1987). *The Incarnation: Collected essays in Christology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>39</sup> Rae, M. A. (1997). *Kierkegaard's vision of the Incarnation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

<sup>40</sup> Stump, E. (2009). Atonement according to Aquinas. In M. Rea (Series Ed.), *Oxford Reading Philosophical Theology: Vol. 1. Trinity, Incarnation, atonement* (pp. 267-293). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

<sup>41</sup> Stump, E. (2009). Atonement according to Aquinas. In M. Rea (Series Ed.), *Oxford Reading Philosophical Theology: Vol. 1. Trinity, Incarnation, atonement* (pp. 267-293). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Thus, White<sup>42</sup> advised “all God’s servants, from those occupying the highest positions, to those in the lowliest service, [to] walk humbly before Him” (p. 15).

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul clarifies the humility of Jesus. Bystating “the humility and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor 10:1, NIV), Paul emphasizes the important principles of Jesus’s humility. To the Philippians, the apostle Paul requires them to be humble just like Jesus. Jesus does not hold His position as God; nevertheless, He is willing to take the nature of a servant and to suffer and die on the cross. Therefore, the apostle Paul believes that Jesus is the epitome of true humility.

As a leader, God showed humility through His Son, Jesus Christ. He acknowledged that while He was on earth, He served as His Father’s *Representative*. Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, NIV). In like manner, White<sup>43</sup> asked God’s followers to be “representatives of Jesus” (p. 11). Thus, Grudem<sup>44</sup> boldly said that “the abundant testimony of Scripture is that each person is fully God as well” (p. 233). In Christian leadership, humility is a very important characteristic. Jesus has set an example of a servant-leader. To be successful in reflecting humility on one’s leadership, Cooper<sup>45</sup> lists some ways that show Christian leaders’ humility:

(a) leaders need to focus on God not on self, (b) they need to acknowledge self-dependence on Him, (c) they need to make Jesus as their pattern, and (d) they have to put others’ needs above self-need. In an organization, Cooper<sup>46</sup> believes that humility can be shown when leaders have respect for others. As pointed out by Cooper<sup>47</sup>, leaders with humility show respect not only to their subordinates but also to all people. When it is time for them “to step down from a leadership role, they do so gracefully. They realize that leadership is not a right; it is both a privilege and a responsibility that is entrusted for a period of time” (p. 40)<sup>48</sup>.

**Care.** The Scripture portrays a caring God. Some biblical instances help illustrate this characteristic of God even from the creation account. After creating man in His image, God puts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and commands them to take care of it (Gen 2:15). By delegating this responsibility, God shows how much He cares for His creation.

God’s care was also seen in His original plan of keeping the purity of man. He wanted His people to remain holy, so He commanded them not to eat the fruit from the tree of good and

<sup>42</sup> White, E. G. (1985). *Christian leadership*. Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate.

<sup>43</sup> White, E. G. (1985). *Christian leadership*. Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate.

<sup>44</sup> Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>45</sup> Cooper, L. C. (2015). Code of conduct for a Seventh-day Adventist leader. In P. H. Douglas (Ed.), *Transparency and accountability: A global commitment of Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders* (pp. 33-68). San Antonio, TX: General Conference Auditing Service.

<sup>46</sup> Cooper, L. C. (2015). Code of conduct for a Seventh-day Adventist leader. In P. H. Douglas (Ed.), *Transparency and accountability: A global commitment of Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders* (pp. 33-68). San Antonio, TX: General Conference Auditing Service.

<sup>47</sup> Cooper, L. C. (2015). Code of conduct for a Seventh-day Adventist leader. In P. H. Douglas (Ed.), *Transparency and accountability: A global commitment of Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders* (pp. 33-68). San Antonio, TX: General Conference Auditing Service.

<sup>48</sup> Cooper, L. C. (2015). Code of conduct for a Seventh-day Adventist leader. In P. H. Douglas (Ed.), *Transparency and accountability: A global commitment of Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders* (pp. 33-68). San Antonio, TX: General Conference Auditing Service.

evil. However, they disobeyed God and immediately fell into sin. As a result, God took them out of the garden. Then, God assigned cherubim and a flaming sword to keep the tree of life. However, because God's care is unconditional (Matt 5:45), He sacrificed His only Son to provide salvation to the fallen humankind.

Furthermore, God's care is also seen in the lives of Noah and Joseph. In His command to Noah, "You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you" (Gen 6:19, NIV). God wants to keep Noah and his family and the animals as well to be protected from the flood. The word to keep is from a Hebrew word  $\text{נִצַּחַן}$  which means to preserve. It is the same word used by Joseph when he explains to his brothers about God's purpose for them as a family and as a nation. In explaining God's purpose, Joseph says to them, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but [emphasis in original] God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive [emphasis mine]" (Gen 50:20, NASB). Thus, Noah and Joseph—with their respective families and nations—experience God's care.

In the context of His own family, Jesus also cares for them<sup>49</sup>. According to John 19:26-27,

When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, „Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, „Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. (NIV)

Even before His death, Jesus cares so much for His family and disciples. According to Shore, "When Jesus is dying, he talks to his mom and his best friend. He says to them, "Look after each other, will you?" If we get the chance, we will do the same thing"(p. 267)<sup>50</sup>. Indeed, God cares because He is the God of promises not only to one person but to the multitudes.<sup>51</sup>

Leadership is closely related to caring for others. A true leader cares but a false leader "runs away . . . and cares nothing for the sheep" (John 10:13, NIV). Thus, to be a genuine caring leader, one has to "cultivate a spirit of love and tenderness" (p. 10)<sup>52</sup>. Jesus Christ has shown this in His dealing with His people.

### Conclusion

Spiritual leadership has become a growing interest among Christians. Among leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, It is important to have a basic perspective of Christian leadership based on leadership principles from God as found in the Bible. The Bible indicates that God is leader. Although Bible is absent of trinity word, the description of the triune God is

<sup>49</sup> Shore, M. H. (2014). "Jesus, remember me": Biblical imagination and the experience of dementia. *Word & World*, 34(3), 264-272. Retrieved from [https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/34-3\\_Igniting\\_Bib\\_Imagination/34-3\\_Shore.pdf](https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/34-3_Igniting_Bib_Imagination/34-3_Shore.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Shore, M. H. (2014). "Jesus, remember me": Biblical imagination and the experience of dementia. *Word & World*, 34(3), 264-272. Retrieved from [https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/34-3\\_Igniting\\_Bib\\_Imagination/34-3\\_Shore.pdf](https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/34-3_Igniting_Bib_Imagination/34-3_Shore.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Metzger, P. L. (2011). Why should we care? *Cultural Encounters*, 7(1), 7-20. Retrieved November 3, 2015, from [goo.gl/7ydETL](http://goo.gl/7ydETL)

<sup>52</sup> White, E. G. (1985). *Christian leadership*. Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate.

clear. In this trinity relationship, the nature of divine leadership is implied. As God the Father sent Jesus Christ, then Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in the salvation context, the concept of leadership is there. God leading the nation of Israel also provides additional information about the nature of God's leadership. Then, God's act of organizing, executing, and evaluating the creation of this world's represents a part of the biblical leadership process. Furthermore, spiritual leadership traits such as: loving, humble, and care are shown by God.

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