

**Book Review of "Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission: A Social Identity
Perspective on Local Leadership Development in Corinth and Ephesus"
by Jack Barentsen**

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Jack Barentsen offers a fascinating view of leadership as a group phenomenon involving people who share a sense of 'us,' a psychological process of belonging. He seeks to analyze the emergence of leadership through the lens of maintenance and succession to understand how group members become leaders. The study aims to compare and contrast chronological geographical patterns from the communities of Corinth and Ephesus. These are two significant areas in Paul's ministry where he and his missionary teams planted churches. The study applies the Social Identity Model of Leadership (SIMOL) to historical and ideological factors to explain how other group members position them as leaders within the group.

In this study, SIMOL merges psychological theory with biblical studies to communicate leadership theory. By examining this, Barentsen hopes to present a hermeneutically derived socio-historical concept derived from Paul's ideological rhetoric. This is important to understand because SIMOL is well theorized and could shed light on Paul's leadership styles, which may help leaders assist struggling churches today. Focusing on social leadership positions is broader than focusing on leadership offices.

A quick survey of the chapters provides a glimpse of the research project's theoretical use of SIMOL. Chapter two addresses the ideological challenges of church leadership studies by examining the Monopiscopacy patterns of the early church. Viewing these patterns of the emergence of single-area bishops advances the use of SIMOL as a theoretical, social, and psychological study of leadership as a dynamic group phenomenon.

Chapter 3 presents the SIMOL, reviewing its origins in the 1960s and its gradual acceptance as a useful model. This chapter is vital for understanding how a "sense of us" is developed, whether belonging to a group or not, and whether as part of the in-group or the out-

group. A second concept of the SIMOL presented in this chapter is a leader who manages social identity while embedding it within the group.

Chapters 4 through 8 apply SIMOL to 1-2 Corinthians (chapters 4-5), Ephesians (chapters 6), and 1-2 Timothy (chapters 7-8). Applying the SIMOL theory model will hopefully codify patterns within groups and leadership roles and uncover and address existing debates about leadership patterns in Paul's groups. Throughout these chapters, he seeks to answer these questions: What is the role of leadership? How is leadership shaped? What are people's patterns of leadership concerning form and norms?¹

The breakdown of 1-2 Corinthians shows that the leadership of the emerging community of believers was strained by tensions stemming from social status within the young community. This included Paul, but he encouraged the community to receive Stephanas as one of his coworkers.² To further address leadership maintenance, Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to imitate his model of Christ's identity as a servant and his role as a founding father, while pointing out the structure of leadership for apostles.³ Paul's attempt to install Stephanas as a successor to leadership stemmed from a shift in influence and the formation of subgroups.⁴ Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthian community, which also suggests his approach to presenting Timothy as a prototypical leader like himself. One point of concern in Chapters 4-5 is the author's language, which aligns with Paul's vision for Christian Social Identity in either the Lord's supper or a

¹ Jack Barentsen, *Emerging leadership in the Pauline Mission: A Social Identity Perspective on Local leadership Development in Corinth and Ephesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011) 10-15.

² Ibid, 105-106.

³ Ibid, 107.

⁴ Ibid, 109.

collegial level of city-wide oversight.⁵ I believe the author meant to say that this was Christ's vision guided by Paul for the Corinthian community. If not, he has created a red herring issue for the Christian leadership within the church to overcome. Thus, from his perspective, the church of Christ is led by a man-made structure and vision, not by Christ, and is preparing us for the bridegroom to come.

When communicating the Ephesus community's social identity, he shows that, due to its age, it had overcome subgroup formation and was already operating under a collegial leadership model when Paul wrote Ephesians. This issue raises the question of whether social identity theory can help explain Ephesus's leadership structure. Ephesian leadership is seen as apostolic and accepting of Paul's authority, unlike the Corinthian leadership. Thus, his comparison and contrast of 1-2 Corinthians with Ephesians showed that the Ephesus community had accepted Christian social identity as guided by Paul.⁶ This lack of tension and competition for leadership allowed for the development of Christ's identity in the Christian society in Ephesus, led by Paul.⁷ His pointing out God's sponsorship through Christ in connection with our response of praise shows community formation.⁸ Furthermore, Paul encourages members of the group to guard against the erosion of permanence and unity under irregular influences by emphasizing the centrality of household relationships within the church.

⁵ Barentsen, 98, and 136. See his statement that Paul's vision for Christian Social Identity is Paul's vision, not Christ leading through the Holy Spirit.

⁶ Ibid, 151-152.

⁷ Ibid, 157. Changing the construct does not mean it is Paul's perspective on the foundations of his vision of Christian social identity. Instead, it should say it's God's indirect action through Christ's vision, led by the Holy Spirit and guided by Paul.

⁸ Ibid, 153. This supports my position that Paul was guided by God through Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, not his vision for the community, as he was finite.

Barentsen shows that Paul's leadership in Ephesus developed more fully because of his longer stay there than in Corinth, where his ministry was shorter. However, his speculation is based on the ages of the Ephesian and Corinthian communities' transition to collegial leadership. This speculation is poorly cited and should not be used to convey this position. It is an ad hoc rationalization to make a point about collegial leadership in Ephesus, which may have been established earlier in its life, based on lessons Paul learned from the Corinthian tensions during the transition to collegial leadership.⁹ Instead, it would have been better if he had continued with Paul's longevity in Ephesus as the reason for the lack of tension during the transition to collegial leadership, rather than offering speculation about what Paul learned from the Corinthian challenges to guide his later ministries.

In his view of 1 and 2 Timothy, he begins by surveying the debate over the authorship of the pastorals and the issue of pseudonymous authorship. He concludes that pseudepigraphy is not a convincing argument for discrediting Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.¹⁰ The letter legitimizes Timothy's leadership role within the Christian community after his struggles in Corinth and later Ephesus.¹¹ According to Barentsen, Paul's letters to his close associate Timothy raise a methodological issue for the social identity analysis of the letters. Paul knows that the letter is not only to Timothy but also to the larger community, as Timothy would have shared it to demonstrate his sponsorship and succession as a leader. In the letter, Paul addresses intragroup dynamics as he mentors Timothy in his understanding of leadership. The dynamics of the Jewish

⁹ Barentsen, 171. He states the Ephesian Church could have made this switch. This shows a push to use a point that is being forced to make his hypothesis work, showing a breakdown in the SIMOL.

¹⁰ Ibid, 200.

¹¹ Ibid, 201.

and Greco-Roman worlds exerted social pressures for identification. Paul communicates through Timothy that God's mission in the world is a distinctive aspect of monotheistic belief.¹² Furthermore, this builds on Paul's instruction to encourage subgroups to see themselves as God's house or temple (1 Tim 2-3).¹³ The shift from First and Second Corinthians to Ephesians was to shape and model leadership as the key to maintaining identity. In contrast, First Timothy communicates that Timothy should be seen as a trusted leader.

The overall concept of SIMOL seeks to offer a model for understanding leadership roles within the Christian community and the impact of external influences on the leadership surrounding it. The depth of the work provides tremendous insight into the dynamics of social identity theory and how it can help us understand the early formation of the church. However, the points Barentsen speculates about concern Paul's vision for Christian identity, and the failure to connect that vision to God's identity or to God's house and temple, as in Timothy, shows that caution is warranted when using psychological theories to interpret historical records of communities. The comparison between the communities (Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Christian Monotheistic) and the letters (1-2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 and 2 Timothy) provides a wealth of insights for reading and reflecting on Paul's leadership style in the early church. Considering he wrote most of the New Testament. Barentsen shows the need to understand the leadership structure and development of the Early Pauline Church to guide the 21st-century Church.

¹² Barentsen, 207. This point connects to the fact that Paul was not communicating his vision of Christian identity but Christ's vision of Christian Identity noted earlier.

¹³ Ibid, 208.