

STEWARD LEADERSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STEWARD LEADER IN CHRISTIAN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

(Chapters 1-4 Included. Other chapters available from the author)

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ABSTRACT

A recent and minimally researched model of leadership centered in the role of the steward offers potential for a focused and expedient model for leadership of Christian nonprofit organizations. The purpose of this research is to add knowledge to nonprofit leadership by defining the primary characteristics of leadership that is focused around the role of the steward. It will secondarily describe the extent of awareness and implementation of steward leader characteristics among leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations.

This study researches the characteristics of the steward leader through two major phases. The first phase of research involves the exegetical study of the history and characteristics of the historical steward as revealed in the ancient documents of the classical Greco-Roman and biblical steward. This study results in the development of a preliminary typology of historic steward leader characteristics.

Phase two of the research refines the characteristics of the steward leader by conducting field research using survey and in-depth interviews with contemporary leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations. The preliminary characteristics of the steward leader derived in phase one were presented to contemporary Christian nonprofit leaders through a quantitative survey to confirm a typology of contemporary steward leader characteristics and to pre-qualify participants for in-depth interviews. The survey also functioned to assess the extent to which leaders formulated their leadership role through such characteristics. Ten participants were chosen for in-depth qualitative interviews from the survey participants who self-identified their personal leadership style as steward leadership. The interviews engaged the leaders more deeply in the subject, sought to elicit their understanding, perceptions, and attitudes about steward leadership, and further refined a typology of steward leader characteristics.

The research confirms that a primary typology of distinctive leadership characteristics exists among senior leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations who visualize and demonstrate their role as stewards.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

BDB	Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. <u>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.
ED	Executive Director
ICC	International Critical Commentary Series
ILS	Dessau, H. <u>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</u> . Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1989.
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic text
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament Series
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series
NIV	The New International Version
NPO	Nonprofit organization
NTC	New Testament Commentary Series
OTL	Old Testament Library Series
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Series
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Series

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Looking back, I realize that my lifelong interest in the nonprofit sector began with the faithful example of my grandfather (Lucas) and my father (Donald). Each displayed a steward's heart towards others and volunteered on many nonprofit boards. Their example engrained in me that serving others and giving back is a normal part of life. I am also grateful for many other mentors who walked with me through years of developing leadership: notably Alex Strauch, Paul Sapp, and Lauren Libby.

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INTRODUCTION

The nonprofit sector is a major employer of both paid and volunteer workers in the United States and United Kingdom. For example, in the U.S. alone there were more than 1.6 million tax-exempt organizations in 2008, which together accounted for 14 million paid and volunteer workers (10.5% of the workforce) and nearly \$2.6 trillion in total assets (Wing, Pollak, and Blackwood 2008). Nonprofit employment is scattered across a wide variety of fields, from information and scientific services, to religion and civic affairs. The bulk of this employment is in human services, and within that broad category, in health services (Salamon and Sokolowski 2006, 8). Nonprofits have the confidence of the general public, who are almost three times more likely to believe that the nonprofit sector can do a better job providing social services for the needy than government agencies.¹

It is also a sector that has significant leadership challenges. Nearly two-thirds of nonprofit executive leaders are in the role for the first time, and 51% of nonprofit executives have been in their role for 4 years or less (Peters, Wolfred, and Allison 2001). Multiple studies of the nonprofit sector have also raised disturbing trends in the turnover rate of nonprofit executives and rising rates in leadership transition due to aging,² which has led Halpern (2006, 3) to conclude: “Recent national demographic trends present another pressing issue the nonprofit sector must face, especially as it relates to leadership transition and leadership development.” The nonprofit sector has unique leadership challenges that strongly suggest the need for a specialized approach to leader development and training. Some of the leadership challenges include missional focus, fund raising, volunteerism, multiple stakeholders, social objectives, and distinctive performance criteria. But nonprofit leadership research and resources focused on non-church leadership are relatively recent and only surface with any significance after the 1980s.³ In addition,

¹ In an August 2009 Pew Forum, 65% of U.S. citizens polled stated that religious and nonreligious nonprofit organizations did a better job at helping the needy compared to 25% who believed that government agencies did a better job. See <www.pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/faithbased09/faithbased09.pdf>.

² For example, both Peters, Wolfred, and Allison (2001) and the follow-up study by Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred (2006) found that three quarters of nonprofit executives plan on leaving their jobs within the next five years.

³ Resources that are specifically written for pastors and leaders of churches date back well over a century and are specific to the issues and challenges that church leaders face in ecclesial leadership.

sources on nonprofit *management* are far more frequent and predate literature specifically focused on nonprofit *leadership*. Nonprofit leadership research and development is a field in need of greater emphasis, prompting Peters, Wolfred, and Allison to conclude:

There are ample reasons to invest in nonprofit leadership development. The sector will always need talented leaders. Yet there is a convergence of factors—expectations for performance, senior-level retirement and turnover, competition for talent, increasing service, and management demands—that have highlighted the importance of developing leadership within the sector.
(3)

This dissertation, and the years of research preceding it, is the author's contribution to some of these challenges in nonprofit organizational leadership and to knowledge. Nonprofit organizational leadership is a broad field, and significant studies do exist that contribute understanding to a select group of challenges that nonprofit executives face. Such challenges include differences between nonprofit and for-profit organizational leadership, nonprofit management skills, the primary roles of nonprofit leadership, and an executive leader's relationship to the board of directors and stakeholders. However, in spite of the number of resources that have come out in the last thirty years on nonprofit leadership, the field is still woefully under-researched and under-reported compared to what is available in general business leadership studies.

Of all the potential subjects the author could have selected for original research in the field of nonprofit leadership, the author has chosen a subject that has been a personal challenge for over thirty years in his own nonprofit leadership experience, and a frequent topic of conversation with other nonprofit colleagues. It is an aspect of nonprofit organizational leadership that the author will attempt to prove that goes to the heart of the distinction between leading the for-profit corporation versus the nonprofit organization (NPO). Though there are countless varieties of for-profit and NPOs which impact the nature of executive leadership, in the nonprofit world there is one factor that has a significant impact on executive leadership that is true of *all* NPOs: NPO executive leaders manage organizational resources that they do not and cannot own. Compared to the regular world of business, where ownership is clearly delineated, in the nonprofit world organizational ownership is much more ambiguous and spread among groups who are considered to be "implicit owners" such as stakeholders, the community, or government at

large. In the nonprofit world, *every* executive leader is responsible to manage the assets and activities of the organization on behalf of the ambiguous “implicit owners.” Nonprofit executive leaders are trustees or stewards of the organization along with members of the board of directors who share in this ambiguity.⁴

The author is also motivated to research nonprofit leadership because for over thirty years he has been immersed in Christian-oriented NPOs, which constitute a major segment of the U.S. nonprofit community.⁵ Within the Christian nonprofit community, three factors provide additional challenge to the nonprofit executive. The first is the Christian community’s general recognition that God ultimately “owns” or claims sovereignty over all that exists—including the NPO—and is the ultimate “owner” to whom the nonprofit executive must be accountable to. Second, the Christian community generally recognizes that *all* followers of the faith are called to be stewards of God’s world and tasked with the responsibility to manage God’s world and its resources on his behalf. Thirdly, the modern history of stewardship in the Christian church has created a limited social context of stewardship that still shapes modern Christian thought. Stewardship is mostly related to charity (the practice of benevolent giving), economics, or global concerns, but rarely is it associated with nonprofit leadership or organizational management. Therefore, the Christian nonprofit organizational leader has divine relationship and accountability added to his or her relationship with human implicit owners. The leader also is responsible to manage other employees who believe that they too are stewards of God’s resources and are accountable to God, transcending or equaling their accountability to the executive leader. But the Christian NPO leader is not taught how to personally lead like a steward.

Therefore, the author has chosen as the general area of study the challenge related to leading the Christian NPO as a trustee or steward. More specifically, the author will research the primary characteristics of leadership that is focused around the role of the steward within the Christian NPO. Among the many models and theories of leadership proposed in contemporary research, the steward leadership model that conceptualized the

⁴ The author will use *trustee* and *steward* synonymously, recognizing that both terms can sometimes convey different legal definitions.

⁵ According to the latest published figures by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2010), religious organizations account for 22% of all U.S. NPOs and is the single largest category, but this figure only takes into account purely religious NPOs and doesn’t account for those that fall into other categories that are also religious in nature (e.g., health organizations). No figures are available regarding the percentage of Christian NPOs.

leader's role around stewardship was first articulated by Clinton (1989), but little has developed subsequently in this approach to leadership, and few researchers have applied it to the challenges of nonprofit leadership. If an understanding of the characteristics and behaviors of leadership focused around the role of stewardship exists in contemporary leaders, the author postulates that it exists at least among Christian nonprofit leaders who potentially have the strongest theological foundation, opportunity, and community support to develop an understanding of steward leadership. Therefore, the author proposes the following thesis for this research: *A primary typology of distinctive leadership characteristics exists among senior managers of Christian nonprofit organizations who visualize and demonstrate their role as stewards.* The purpose of this research will be to develop a typology of characteristics of steward leaders and to analyze whether these characteristics exist in contemporary nonprofit Christian leaders and managers. It will do so by applying multiple research methods, resulting in a behavioral description of steward leadership.

There are two primary research questions that will drive the direction of this study. Both questions were deduced from many potential research questions that will surface from the review of literature (chapter 1), and both will focus the direction of the research according to the previous thesis, purpose, and boundaries of research:

1. What do contemporary leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations perceive are the primary characteristics of leadership that is focused around the role of the steward, and how do these characteristics compare with historically defined characteristics of stewards?
2. What is the extent of awareness and implementation of steward leader characteristics among leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations?

The research methodology that will be used in this research will be a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, using survey to canvas opinions from a larger number of subjects followed by in-depth interviews with ten subjects to add nuance and texture to their opinions on stewardship and steward leadership. The research will conclude with the articulation of a typology of characteristics of steward leaders and final comments concerning future research direction.

Having briefly reviewed the nature of the thesis, its subject, and research setting, the remainder of this introduction will now provide a more detailed context for understanding the background, setting, methodology, and significance of this study. The chapter will first review the origin of the idea for the research as revealed in the author's personal history and commitment to the research. It will review the context and setting for the study, clarify important terms, and review the nature of related fields of study. Attention will then be drawn to a brief review of the research methodology chosen along with the choice of subjects and sources accessed. The significance and aims of the research will finally be covered, concluding with a review of the structure and style of this dissertation.

Origin of the Idea

The author has spent the last 30 years of his working life in the nonprofit world, primarily among Christian-oriented nonprofits. He has worked for a children's camp, a church, a foundation, and a nonprofit publishing company, and almost all eventually in the capacity of executive director. He also has served on the board of directors of six NPOs, half of those in the capacity as Chairman. He holds a masters degree in biblical studies from an evangelical seminary and has mentored and coached nonprofit leaders for the past twenty years.

However, in spite of such an immersive background in the world of Christian NPOs and nonprofit leadership, the author's primary exposure to professional leadership development has been dependent on reading general business and leadership books, attending occasional leadership seminars, and studying nonprofit management books by a handful of practitioners. Like the experience of most nonprofit leaders, the for-profit world has provided the majority of the models and resources in leadership for the author. Those for-profit models provide a wealth of knowledge and exposure to organizational leadership and management, but the author became increasingly aware of significant differences in the for-profit and nonprofit worlds of leadership. His own experience persuaded him that the nonprofit leader's motivation to produce excellent results had a different basis than for

his for-profit counterparts. He also had to learn the unique nuances of accountability to his board and to organizational stakeholders. Having sat in both the executive director's chair and the board chair, the most significant challenge that the author experienced was the implication of leading the organization, its people and resources, as a trustee or steward, and never an owner. He also was challenged by leading employees and volunteers who also viewed themselves (or needed to view themselves) as stewards as well.

Through most of his 30 years of nonprofit leadership, the author labored to develop an understanding and approach to leadership that conformed to this image of being a steward leader as an emergent concept. There were almost no books or resources to read, and no seminars to attend, that highlighted the stewarding role that nonprofit leaders performed.⁶ As a result, the author talked to other peers and tried to develop principles of steward leadership on his own in each organization he led. He read dozens of books on general stewardship by Christian authors, but found only one at the time that barely applied stewardship to the growing presence of NPOs in the Christian community.⁷ As a trained Bible exegete and evangelical Christian, the author's bias towards an understanding of the role of the steward and stewardship was largely based on the parables of Jesus in the New Testament. The author also was influenced both positively and negatively by examples of other nonprofit leaders under whom he served. Those that led effectively and articulated stewardship concepts in their leadership encouraged the author to emulate their style and approach. Those that led as though they owned the organization and ignored the interests of the board and stakeholders, increasingly concerned the author that they were violating fundamental principles of nonprofit leadership. He increasingly spoke about the role of stewardship to his staff, particularly at the 100-employee nonprofit publishing company that he served through various senior leadership roles for 21 years (11 of those years as Executive Director). That organization was fertile ground for testing both his developing concepts of steward leadership and how to encourage stewardship behaviors in other employees. The majority of this current research was conducted while still serving as the executive leader of that organization. Wanting additional independent research to develop

⁶ The first full-length source published on stewardship in the NPO was Brinkerhoff (2004).

⁷ Jeavons ([Bottom Line](#) 1994).

the field of steward leadership, the author became convinced that he could lead a portion of that research on the stewardship role that nonprofit leaders perform.

The final impetus to launch this research came when the author read a copy of Block's 1993 milestone book on stewardship and leadership. That book thrust the issue of steward leadership in the forefront, but for the author it was primarily viewed as a missed opportunity. Block's book never addresses leadership in the nonprofit sector, and it equates steward leadership with the redistribution of power, purpose, and wealth. His book does provide useful emphases on servanthood, rethinking the structure of the workplace, and democratizing empowerment. But in the view of this author, Block misses the essence of stewardship, which is to manage the resources of others to accomplish their desires or goals. That experience set in motion the author's commitment to contribute to the dialogue through research of his own.

The Research Context

The process that the author followed to narrow the subject and scope of the research was a progressive refinement based on research exigencies, academic advice, personal expertise, and constraints of time. As the research advanced through different stages of proposal, feedback, refinement, and ongoing research, the subject of steward leadership was bounded by a number of factors that each provided specificity and achievability to the research. First of all, the research was limited to the study of leadership in *Christian-oriented NPOs*. Studying steward leadership in the broader nonprofit community—and even in publicly-traded companies—is certainly feasible since all share the same challenge of trusteeship and non-ownership. But the author has open access to the Christian nonprofit community and it forms a viable, relatively homogeneous community to study. Second, the research was focused on *English-speaking leaders* of Christian NPOs throughout the world. The author expanded his network to include leaders in as many countries outside of the U.S. as possible, but the author's extensive network within the U.S. and the limited constraints of time created a natural majority of U.S. based organizations.

Third, participants in the study were limited only to *senior management*, which included the Executive Director, President, CEO, Vice President, and other similar levels. The top level of organizational management was chosen to engage the maximum number of issues related to leadership, accountability, and control. Fourth, the research focused only on *leaders who visualize themselves as stewards or trustees* of the organizational resources. Although the research began with a survey of the broader community of Christian NPO leaders with no prior limitation of their understanding of steward leadership principles, out of that larger universe a smaller number of leaders were selected who identified themselves as leading with the mindset of a steward.

Last of all, out of many different sub-topics of steward leadership that could be investigated, the author narrowed the scope of study to investigating the *characteristics of steward leadership* in these organizations. By characteristics, the author means the distinctive features and attributes of the leader respective to his or her leadership role, which may include descriptions of principles, behaviors, values, and/or skills. The author initially considered using the term *traits* of steward leadership but rejected that word because of biases on the part of some to trait theories of leadership.⁸ Leadership *behaviors* comes closer to the author's intentions for research, but once again the term does not convey the breadth of description the author is hoping to identify to ground the theory of steward leadership. The author is seeking to investigate factors in steward leadership that describe not just the leader, but also the leader in relationship to followers, stakeholders, context, and outcomes. The term *characteristics* captures that intention best.

There are many other potential spheres of business and culture where the existence of steward leadership could be researched, but most simply have to be left for future research. The following potential areas were eliminated from the scope of this study early on in the process to ensure achievability and deducibility of the final research.

Potential research topics *not* included in this research:

- Other expressions of stewardship, such as environmental, personal, or political stewardship

⁸ See chapter 1 for a review and critique of the trait approach to leadership. The author holds the position that trait approaches to leadership are valid if applied in conjunction with other situational and relational approaches. Trait theories of leadership are frequently criticized for their failure to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits, to take situations or leadership context into account, its subjective approach to trait identification, and the inherent fixed nature of psychologically based traits (Northouse 2007, 25-26).

- A comprehensive historical review of the steward and stewardship in pre-twentieth century sources⁹
- Steward leadership in other non-Christian and non-religious NPOs
- Steward leadership in ecclesial organizations such as churches (which comprise a significant portion of Christian NPOs but also involve many unique leadership challenges).

The scope of this research is also understood by reviewing related studies and topics that will be included in the research context. One subject area included in this research will be a review of *theories of NPOs, governance, and management*. Although an investigation into nonprofit organizational distinctives and theories could be quite extensive, the researcher will primarily focus on those that compare the distinctive features of for-profit and NPOs, and compare Christian with nonreligious NPOs.

Second, a review of the various *theories of stewardship and stewardship accountability* in NPOs will be included in this research. The stewardship theory of leadership and governance will be specifically reviewed because of its strategic importance as an alternative theory to the more common agency theory of governance. Theories of Christian stewardship will also be reviewed because of their foundational basis for many Christian leaders' assumptions about stewardship and their role as stewards.

A third group of related subjects that significantly defines the research context are various *theories of nonprofit leadership*. After reviewing general theories of nonprofit leadership, a review of two specific theories or models of leadership that are closely related to the subject at hand will follow: spiritual leadership and servant leadership. These models will set the stage for a final review of published research concerning the model of steward leadership.

Lastly, a study of the historical context of the steward will comprise an entire section of this dissertation. Research will review *the historical steward and the steward's characteristics* as revealed in source documents concerning the Greco-Roman and biblical steward. A study of the steward in many other historical periods could also have been conducted, but these two periods contain the greatest wealth of information and provide

⁹ The Greco-Roman and biblical periods *will* be included in the scope of this study because both offer significant background into the cultural and theological milieu of Christian stewardship.

the necessary basis for formulating a preliminary typology of historic steward leader characteristics.

It would also help clarify the research context by defining some of the important terms and phrases that will frequently be used throughout this dissertation. All of the definitions that follow are the author's own and are proposed as a starting point for this research.

1. ***Nonprofit organization***: The term will be consistently used to speak of a *non-governmental organization chartered and generally given government sanction to accomplish a common good for its members or the community*. This specific term (and its corresponding spelling) is chosen by the author out of the myriad of complementary terms—not-for-profit, voluntary, independent, charitable, non-governmental, or third-sector organization—primarily for its majority adoption by academics and practitioners alike and for its scope which generally encompasses nuances of the other terms. The author recognizes the primary weakness of the term in that NPOs can and should strive to generate a profit, but as a term it still conveys the simplest and most universal reference to organizations that operate for other than profit-making purposes.
2. ***Stewardship***: This term is formally defined as “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care” (Merriam-Webster 1999).¹⁰ However, the author believes that this definition needs additional development to fully express what stewardship means, and thus offers the following operating definition of stewardship: *The management of the property or resources belonging to another in order to achieve the owner’s objectives*. This definition follows the classic understanding of the role of the steward and his or her lack of resource ownership. It also emphasizes the importance of the knowing the objectives of the resources owner which will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters of this study. This definition

¹⁰ Standard dictionaries define who the steward is, but rarely provide a separate definition for stewardship. Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary (2001) defines the steward as “a person who manages another’s property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.”

will be scrutinized in this research, comparing it against other definitions of stewardship in the review of literature and the field research.¹¹

3. **Leadership:** The broadest and most basic definition of leadership adopted by the author is provided by Northouse (2007, 3): “The process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” Although opinions vary widely concerning the differences between management and leadership, the author recognizes the value in distinguishing between the two terms while at the same time recognizing significant overlap between the two. For the sake of convenience and clarity, this dissertation supports the definitions of management and leadership proposed by Bennis and Nanus (1985): “There is a profound difference between management and leadership, and both are important. ‘To manage’ means ‘to bring about, to accomplish, to have charge of or responsibility for, to conduct.’ ‘Leading’ is ‘influencing, guiding in direction, course, action, opinion.’ The distinction is crucial. Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing. The difference may be summarized as activities of vision and judgment—effectiveness versus activities of mastering routines—efficiency” (21). Another valuable source that distinguishes between leadership and management is Rost (1991) who contends that leadership is a multidirectional influence relationship, and management is a unidirectional authority relationship. The two concepts *are* different, but not necessarily distinguished with any precision in the moment-by-moment activities of the average leader/manager who is generally called to exercise both in the course of their responsibilities. Leadership and management are like hats (or roles) that one trades back and forth repeatedly throughout the day as interactions require. It will be subsequently seen that stewards also lead *and* manage.

¹¹ A contemporary definition of stewardship used in common among churches is: “Stewardship is discipleship. It is the care and use of all that we have been given by God” (Hope Associates, 2010). Another approach to defining stewardship that is more recent in origin and common to fields such as environmental stewardship is: “The care, preservation, and sustainability of resources.” The author will begin with the more classical approach to stewardship in this paper and will reflect on its final definition in the conclusion.

4. ***Leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations:*** Identifying individual subjects as “Christian” is a challenging process fraught with conflicting theological, cultural, and political definitions. Therefore, this dissertation will assume that as long as the NPO publicly identifies itself as Christian, the leader will most likely share the same persuasion. This report will generally refer to the participants as “leaders of Christian NPOs.” However, participants occasionally will be called “Christian nonprofit leaders” (generally for grammatical reasons), but both phrases are to be understood by the reader as synonymous.
5. ***Stakeholder:*** The most commonly accepted definition is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman 1984, 46). The author believes that the general definition of stakeholders is too broad to be useful for the nonprofit sector, and suggests the following definition that will be used throughout this dissertation: *Any group or individual that has an implicit claim or share in the organization’s outcome by virtue of a direct contribution to or engagement in the organization.* In the nonprofit sector, stakeholders may vary from organization to organization, but can include the board of directors, staff, funders, clients, the communities served, and the general public. The author uses this more specific definition in order to distinguish stakeholders from mere constituents or customers who are affected by the actions of the NPO but may not have any implicit share or claim in the organization. This distinction will become important when this report addresses issues of accountability to stakeholders.

Main Arguments of the Thesis

Since the focus of the thesis of this research concerns the identification of distinctive leadership characteristics among Christian NPO leaders who visualize their role

as stewards or who model steward leadership, it is fitting at this point to reveal the main arguments of the thesis as foretokens for the reader's awareness and focused attention.

- Distinctive leadership characteristics do exist for stewards leaders that have not been well articulated by other trait approaches to leadership (e.g. self-sacrificing, non-owner mindset, faithfulness/trustworthiness).
- Although there are other models of leadership that are more dominant among Christian NPO leaders (e.g. servant leadership), steward leadership does exist as a cogent model among the research group.
- Since the steward leadership model is relatively new and undeveloped, there is general confusion among practitioners as to the model's basic definition, principles, and behaviors.
- Because the role and behaviors of the steward are not well understood today, it is beneficial to go back and recapture an understanding of the classical steward to give context and meaning to stewardship roles today.
- A distinct approach to nonprofit organizational leadership is needed because of the unique challenges and requirements of leading the NPO.
- Steward leadership is not the same as servant leadership, although both models share many similar characteristics.
- Steward leadership has the potential to articulate distinct perspectives and practical principles to assist the NPO leader in managing key relationships with the NPO board, stakeholders, employees, and constituents.
- Steward leadership is a model that applies well beyond the limits of nonprofit organizational leadership, and can equally apply to leadership of publicly-traded companies as well as professional management of privately-held companies (i.e. to any leadership position where one manages the resources belonging to others).
- Ownership and accountability are two critical perspectives that define steward leadership.
- As a developing model, steward leadership does have its challenges and ambiguities that need further research and clarification.

Research Methodology

This study will review existing research and conduct field research into the opinions of leaders of Christian NPOs. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be used in a two-part approach to the field research, thus providing triangulation of data through the use of multiple methods in a single study. The field research will begin with a quantitative survey of a larger population of target subjects—Christian nonprofit organizational leaders—and conclusions will be drawn from that survey regarding the subjects' knowledge and expressions of steward leader characteristics. In addition, the results of the survey will facilitate the identification of a smaller number of subjects who fit a more targeted profile—those who have a developed understanding and perception of themselves as steward leaders.

The survey will be a combination of questions seeking demographic and attitudinal measurement. Attitude scales will be used in the survey to assess the cognitive and affective component of statements that reveal a full range of steward leadership attitudes. A self-administered descriptive survey was chosen as the quantitative method for this first stage of field research because of its accepted role in establishing baseline characteristics and attitudes as a set of cumulative generalizations from a pool of subjects. Coding will be used to prepare the data from open-ended questions for analysis. The survey data will be analyzed and presented statistically, and the relationships between variables will also be analyzed to establish interdependencies where they exist.

A smaller pool of subjects identified through the results of the survey will be the focus of the second qualitative phase of field research through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This second phase is intended to triangulate and enrich the survey findings. The semi-structured interview method was selected for this phase of the research because of the undefined nature of steward leadership terminology (which required greater interaction with subjects) and the complicated nature of how leadership expresses itself in reality. Multiple in-depth interviews will be conducted because of the undeveloped nature of the research subject (which necessitated more in-depth investigation of the concepts), the lack of existing documents on the subject that could be studied, and the need to define a common vocabulary of steward leadership terms among subjects for comparison purposes.

The process of interviewing will begin with identification of the major themes to be investigated in more depth based on the categories and issues discovered during the historical research and the written surveys. The interview questions will focus on issues that need clarification, explanation, or elaborated answers. All interviews will be transcribed and coded using classification schemes initially developed in the first phase of the research. The coding schemes will be applied to the in-depth interview data through an iterative process of refining and elaborating further codes and sub-codes that surface out of the data. The final coded interview data will be analyzed to discover themes and patterns, to make linkages between categories, and to highlight non-conforming sets of information about steward leadership.

Ethical principles will be carefully observed in this research by following the university's ethical guidelines for research. Subjects will be fully informed of the purpose, methods, and possible uses of the research, and copies of informed consent and permission documents will be obtained from each interview subject. Confidentiality will be guaranteed through the anonymous reporting of the survey results and through the use of pseudonyms. All participation will be voluntary, and no harm will come to research subjects, either real or perceived. All research will be designed to conform to standards of quality and trustworthiness, and internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity will be maintained.

The subjects chosen for participation in the field research will be individuals in leadership positions within Christian NPOs. Individual leaders are the focus of the research, not their organizations. Participation is focused on leaders of Christian NPOs because of gaps in knowledge concerning how the Christian belief system affects leadership characteristics and behavior in nonprofit management, and because of the author's familiarity with a sufficient number of research subjects that are aware of steward leadership. Potential subjects were initially identified through the author's own network, published lists of the leaders of Christian NPOs, and referrals suggested by other leaders in the author's network. The sampling criteria used to select prospects for the survey will be *homogeneous* and *criterion* sampling strategies. This will focus the results of the survey and ensure quality by adherence to a set criterion. Choice of the type and number of subjects for the qualitative in-depth interview was based on *intensity* sampling to provide

information-rich data. A total of 77 Christian nonprofit leaders participated fully in the survey and 10 in the in-depth interviews.

Contribution of the Study

This research has a wider significance for knowledge. It contributes to an understanding of the challenges of nonprofit leadership and governance, social pressures on the nonprofit sector, growing accountability policies, and trends in nonprofit leader development.

First, this study will add knowledge to the development of a theory of leadership called steward leadership tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the NPO and leader, and in particular to the Christian nonprofit. As will soon be seen, only a handful of sources address the unique aspects of leading the nonprofit organization, and most adopt an approach to leadership formulated around for-profit leadership models. Some of the current gaps in knowledge are the unique role of nonprofit stakeholders, NPO accountability to stakeholders and God (in Christian NPOs), delineation of the principles and characteristics of steward leadership, and the stewardship relationship between the board and the ED. It will be demonstrated that several models—transformational leadership, team leadership, and servant leadership—are currently popular among nonprofit leaders, but none are specifically designed to address the unique challenges that NPO leaders face due to the unique features of that organizational structure. This study will add knowledge particularly to the initial research on steward leadership conducted by Block (1993), Goodspeed (1998), Brinkerhoff (2004), and Rodin (2010).

Second, by increasing awareness and implementation of steward leader characteristics, the author anticipates that this will contribute in some degree towards better nonprofit leadership and nonprofit organizational effectiveness.¹² As NPO leaders familiarize themselves with and develop steward characteristics that more directly address

¹² Although the assumption of increased leader effectiveness is not confirmable in the scope of this study, the author's own experience and anecdotal feedback from other nonprofit leaders gives the author confidence that this is a viable outcome of the research. However, this is an area that must be confirmed with further research.

the unique challenges they face in NPO leadership, it is hoped that they will be better empowered to lead and develop others within their sphere of influence who are also stewards—employees, volunteers, and even customers.

Third, this research has the potential to contribute understanding of the stewardship role to other key participants in NPOs. Board members, donors, and stakeholders each have their own expression of stewardship in the nonprofit organization. Members of the board of directors are stewards who hold in trust the resources of the organization on behalf of the donors, stakeholders, and the community. Since they have governance responsibilities over the organization, board members need to understand their own motives and roles as stewards. They also need to appreciate the challenges faced by the executive director in his or her stewardship role. Donors often provide the resources for the establishment and operation of NPOs. They too can benefit from a clearer understanding of their stewardship role and the role entrusted to the directors, executive leaders, and staff. Finally, stakeholders other than donors also develop an implicit engagement with the organization and need to be educated with a fuller understanding of their stewardship role.

Fourth, this study will contribute to gaps in knowledge in the developing model of steward leadership. Steward leadership is a relatively young model of leadership and needs more research concerning the characteristics of the steward leader, the relationship of the steward leader to the stakeholders, and its application to nonprofit leadership. Because of the continued growth of the nonprofit sector, there is a growing social demand for greater accountability and performance by the nonprofit sector. This research will demonstrate that nonprofit leaders are demanding greater clarity with regard to issues such as stakeholder ambiguity, the board/executive director relationship, and leadership motivation. As the steward leadership model is more fully developed through research, time will prove whether it has the potential to address these concerns more than other models of leadership.

There are also a number of specific gaps in knowledge that this research will contribute to:

- **Distinctive features of nonprofit organizations:** A number of distinctive features of the NPO have been identified in previous research, but few have looked at how these characteristics influence the need for a unique approach

to nonprofit management and leadership. This body of research will contribute to knowledge by evaluating how steward leadership in the NPO provides much of the context for understanding most of these distinguishing characteristics.

- **Stewardship theory:** Organizational economics and governance theory have long been influenced by agency theory, which theorizes that managers often will not act to maximize returns to owners because of divergent interests unless appropriate governance structures are implemented. In the last two decades a new stewardship theory of governance has been proposed to address deficiencies in agency theory. Stewardship theory theorizes that there is no inherent problem with managerial motivation, and that managers can have an intrinsic desire to maximize organizational performance because of a sense of duty, altruism, and identification with the organization. This research is not intended to focus its study on stewardship theory, but it will contribute knowledge to this theory by investigating the types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that drive Christian nonprofit leaders.
- **Application of stewardship to leadership and the workplace:** The review of current research will show that significant opportunities have been missed in applying stewardship to corporate leadership, to the workplace, to organizational management. This dissertation expands on an understanding of the scope of stewardship and contributes to an understanding of its application to nonprofit organizational leadership and management.
- **Primary leadership models applied by Christian nonprofit leaders:** Little is known about which theories or models of leadership Christian nonprofit leaders predominantly use or how the models they have chosen affect the organizations they oversee. Since no research has been published on the prevalent model or models applied by leaders of Christian NPOs, this research will contribute to this understanding.
- **Servant leadership versus steward leadership models:** Two distinct models of leadership are sometimes confused with one another—servant

leadership and steward leadership. But there appears to be no research that has attempted to compare these two models which share many similar characteristics. This research report will attempt to contribute to these gaps in knowledge, concluding with a refined definition and contrast of the steward leadership model.

Therefore, the principle aims of this research study are:

1. To propose a typology of the primary characteristics of the steward leader.
2. To examine the extent to which leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations visualize and formulate their role through stewardship.
3. To synthesize a description of steward leadership as a cogent model for Christian nonprofit organizational leaders.
4. To explore the predominant models of leadership applied by leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations.
5. To contribute to the ongoing dialogue concerning the stewardship theory of governance.
6. To stimulate further research into the model of steward leadership and nonprofit leadership.

Structure and Style

This dissertation is organized around three major sections. Section 1 provides the foundations of this research as found in a review of contemporary literature and the research methodology used. It analyzes contemporary research sources for the theories and gaps in knowledge related to nonprofit leadership, stewardship, and steward leadership. Section 2 develops an understanding of the role and responsibilities of the *historical* steward in the Greco-Roman and biblical records. Section 3 presents the author's field research into the characteristics of the contemporary steward leader. Through two approaches to this research, it collects and examines field data to answer the research

questions identified in the first section and derive a final typology of steward leader characteristics.

In section 1, the first chapter reviews recent theories of stewardship and nonprofit leadership through a traditional review of existing literature sources. It analyzes contemporary research on the nonprofit organization, stewardship, and NPO leadership. Existing research on three specific models of leadership—spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and steward leadership—is highlighted because of the close relationship each model has with contemporary Christian theories of organizational leadership.

Chapter 2 reviews the research methodology that will guide all phases of the field research. This chapter proposes the attributes, distinctives, and rationale important to the quantitative and qualitative methods chosen for this study.

The second section starts with researching the history and typology of the classical steward through original source documents of the Greco-Roman cultures (chapter 3). The documents that will be studied provide the first historically comprehensive explanations of the steward's role and responsibilities. This chapter provides a foundational understanding of the characteristics and role of stewards during a time when they were wide spread as contributing members of society. It concludes with a typology of classical steward characteristics from the Greco-Roman cultures.

Chapter 4 continues the same theme but now focuses on the characteristics and responsibilities of the Judeo-Christian steward as recorded in the Old and New Testament writings of the Bible. The biblical documents provide some of the most detailed descriptions available on the ancient steward and fill out the profile of the historical steward begun in the previous chapter. In this biblical study, both cultural and theological observations are made about the steward, and provide the spiritual context for the later field study of the contemporary Christian nonprofit leader.

Section 2 concludes with a short chapter that synthesizes a preliminary, consolidated typology of the characteristics of the historic steward leader. This preliminary typology launches the field research of contemporary nonprofit leaders in the third section by providing an introductory list of characteristics that will be proposed to Christian organizational nonprofit leaders through the author's field research.

Section 3 contains the field research data and analysis of contemporary nonprofit steward leader characteristics. It begins in chapter 6 with a detailed methodology, data, and analysis for the first phase of the field research, the quantitative survey. It details how contemporary Christian NPO leaders around the world were surveyed through a combination of questions seeking demographic and attitudinal measurement. This initial phase of field research quantifies the knowledge, expressions, and extent of stewardship characteristics among contemporary Christian NPO leaders, confirms a typology of contemporary steward leader characteristics, and pre-qualifies participants for phase two of the research.

The second phase of field research is documented and analyzed in chapter 7. This qualitative phase of field research involves in-depth subject interviews with a smaller pool of subjects—Christian NPO leaders who have a basic understanding and perception of themselves as steward leaders. It is intended to illuminate, enrich, and add texture to the survey findings and to provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the steward leader and steward leadership.

The dissertation concludes in chapter 8 with a summary of the research findings and the extent to which the research questions and aims have been achieved. Several appendixes are included which contain copies of the survey, interview guide, and coding guide.

The writing and documentation style that will be followed throughout this dissertation is the 1999 edition of the Modern Language Association, or MLA (Gibaldi 1999).

PART I

RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

1. LITERATURE REVIEW: CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF STEWARDSHIP AND LEADERSHIP IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

This dissertation is concerned with understanding the influence that stewardship, and the characteristics of the steward, have on leadership in the Christian nonprofit organization (NPO). Most research on stewardship and leadership has focused around for-profit organizations, and in particular, very large and complex publicly traded companies. Steward leadership in Christian-oriented NPOs—the unique subjects of this dissertation—is likely to differ from these publicly traded companies in significant ways, not only because they are NPOs but also because they operate with a Christian ethos and values.

This chapter evaluates contemporary 20th and 21st century theories, research, and literature sources related to the steward, stewardship, and nonprofit leadership.¹³ Only contemporary sources that speak directly to the above subjects have been considered, and gaps in knowledge will be identified with each source to progressively develop a case for additional research. At the end of the chapter, the potential research questions and gaps will be reiterated to identify the primary and secondary research questions that will guide the remainder of this research.

A wide range of potential topics and sub-topics suggested by the thesis are viable for a review of literature. However, this review will encompass only a handful of primary fields that impact the thesis directly to provide some limit to the scope of this study. The chapter starts by looking at NPOs, governance, and management. It will briefly compare for-profit organizations with nonprofits, and will then review current theories on nonprofit governance, nonprofit management, and the unique aspects present in Christian NPOs. The chapter then reviews the various theories of stewardship. It will review the relationship of stewardship and accounting, the stewardship theory of governance, and the history and unique theories of Christian stewardship. It will then analyze general leadership theory and

¹³ Although this dissertation could focus on historical documents of stewardship and the steward *between* the 2nd century and 20th century CE, the author has chosen to focus on the primary wealth of sources that exist pre-2nd century and post 20th century. A study of the steward and stewardship in the medieval period and the 19th century would be a valuable contribution to knowledge, but for the sake of focus must be left to other researchers.

trait theory to provide the context for a review of theories related to nonprofit leadership. The chapter will finally look at three specific leadership theories common among Christian researchers and writers: spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and steward leadership. The chapter will conclude by summarizing the gaps in research that have been identified, the preliminary research questions that have arisen based on those gaps, and the primary and secondary research questions that will guide the active field research.

There are many potential spheres of stewardship theory that will not be included in this review based on the need for focus and feasibility. Spheres that were not reviewed include environmental stewardship, cultural and historical sources of stewardship, stewardship ethics, and political stewardship, just to name a few. These are all worthwhile subjects for future study.

Theories of Nonprofit Organizations, Governance, and Management

Research sources on for-profit and NPOs are quite extensive and beyond the limited scope of this review. Hence only the immediate and pertinent subjects of nonprofit organizational theory, nonprofit governance, and nonprofit management will be considered.

For-Profit and Nonprofit Organizations Compared

This section first looks at those who have attempted to define the unique *characteristics* of NPOs compared to for-profit organizations. It will briefly review several *organizational theories* that have been postulated for the NPO distinct from for-profit organizational theory. It will conclude that significant differences exist between the two sectors both in characteristics and theory, that a new approach to nonprofit management is necessary, and gaps in knowledge can be addressed through greater development of the

stewardship role of nonprofit leaders.

When defining the NPO, one encounters numerous attempts throughout the past forty years at defining certain common elements of the NPO, but with no specific agreement. Nonprofits can be defined in a multitude of ways: in how they differ from for-profit corporations; by their missional purposes; by defining characteristics; by governmental definitions; and organizational theories. Adding to the confusion, nonprofits often look like for-profits in external ways: they can generate a profit, produce goods and services, and even compete in the same markets.¹⁴ Deriving an adequate and universal definition of the nonprofit is further complicated by the nonprofit's wide diversity of organizations, structures, and purposes. For example, notice how the nonprofit sector in the United States is summarized by Salamon (2002):

The nonprofit sector is a vast and diverse assortment of organizations. It includes most of the nation's premier hospitals and universities, almost all of its orchestras and opera companies, a significant share of its theaters, all of its religious congregations, the bulk of its environmental advocacy and civil rights organizations, and huge numbers of its family service, children's service, neighborhood development, antipoverty, and community health facilities. It also includes the numerous support organizations, such as foundations and community chests, that help to generate financial assistance for these organizations, as well as the traditions of giving, volunteering, and service they help to foster. (6-7)

Drucker, acknowledged by many as the father of nonprofit management, has written frequently about the NPO. In an attempt to summarize the greatest difference between the two types of organizations, Drucker (1990) focuses his definition of the NPO on its ultimate product or objective: "Its 'product' is neither a pair of shoes nor an effective regulation. Its product is a changed human being. The non-profit institutions are human-change agents" (Preface xiv). Despite the diversity just mentioned by Salamon, a foundational book by Anthony and Young (1999) identifies two commonly held characteristics of NPOs found in most other literature: preoccupation with something other

¹⁴ Three general surveys of the nonprofit sector serve to define the state of the nonprofit sector. Powell (1987) provides an analysis of the political, economic, cultural, legal, sociological, and management aspects of NPOs. Salamon (1999) adds to Powell's work by studying the scope, structure, and financing of the nonprofit sector while defining fundamental characteristics and divisions of NPOs. Salamon's later work (2002) goes beyond the data to interpret the state of nonprofits and identify their key challenges, opportunities, and risks. The growing trends among nonprofits towards commercialization, government-nonprofit relations, and accountability provide a focused perspective for this research.

than profit, and a tendency toward providing service. Believing these characteristics to be inadequate, the authors expand the characteristics of NPOs into the following list:

1. The absence of a profit measure
2. The tendency to be service organizations
3. Constraints on goals and strategies
4. Less dependence on clients for financial support
5. The dominance of professionals
6. Differences in governance
7. Different tax and legal considerations
8. Importance of political influences
9. A tradition of inadequate management controls.

Salamon (1999) lists only six characteristics that he considers crucial for distinguishing NPOs from businesses:

1. Formal: institutionalized
2. Private: institutionally separate from government
3. Non-profit-distributing: not dedicated to generating profits for their owners
4. Self-governing: equipped to control their own activities
5. Voluntary: involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation
6. Of public benefit: serving some public purpose. (6-7)

Given the diversity of the aforementioned attempts to define the unique characteristics of NPOs compared to for-profit businesses, this dissertation has summarized and synthesized the most germane distinguishing characteristics while interacting with the referenced sources.

Unique characteristics of the NPO are:

- **Preoccupation with non-financial outcomes:** Most NPOs do attempt to make a small financial profit to ensure their future viability and growth, but profit is not the primary “bottom line.” Therefore, Anthony and Young’s assertion that there is “the absence of a profit measure” is not accurate, but Salamon is more accurate when he states that NPOs are “not dedicated to generating profits for their owners” (although “owners” are only implicit in nature). The for-profit corporation has one

overriding objective and way to measure performance, which is to generate profit as measured on the income statement. Although other key indicators will also be used, the main criterion remains profit. For the NPO, the overriding objective is less clear, less measurable, and less objective—the accomplishment of mission.

- **Tendency towards providing service:** Drucker was on target with his emphasis on the nonprofit organizational role as “human change agents,” and most researchers speak of their public service role. Although it is true that some nonprofits do create products and operate in the commercial and competitive world with for-profit businesses,¹⁵ the vast majority provide a service to the community that is inadequately provided by government or for-profit organizations.¹⁶ Emphasizing a unique feature of some NPOs known as cross-subsidization, James (1983) speaks of how nonprofits often subsidize higher-value ventures that may be unprofitable with less desirable ventures that are profitable. “Because they [nonprofits] must operate on a break-even basis with revenues raised on a voluntary basis, nonprofit organizations typically take on activities from which they derive no satisfaction in order to subsidize activities that they regard as of higher value. As a result, the mix of services they offer and the charges they impose will generally be quite different from those of a government institution or a for-profit organization” (350). Cross-subsidization also offers a glimpse into the balancing role steward leaders must play in nonprofits.
- **Different tax and legal considerations:** Government and society in most countries have chosen to allow NPOs certain tax concessions, but such concessions usually come with unique legal and reporting requirements.
- **Private sector non-ownership:** Salamon is correct that NPOs are institutionally

¹⁵ A growing but recent phenomenon in NPOs is their engagement in commercial activities and enterprise as surveyed by Skloot (1987). He categorizes this nonprofit commercial activity into five categories: program-related products, program-related services, staff and client resources, hard property, and soft property. Nonprofit enterprise does have distinguishing characteristics that differentiate it from traditional business enterprise, and it can produce operational problems resulting from conflicts of purpose, resource allocation, compensation, and even monetary success.

¹⁶ In 1977, Weisbrod proposed a theory for the necessity of a three-sector economy (private, public, voluntary) based on consumer’s various needs for non-collective (i.e., individual) goods and collective goods, and consumer’s willingness or ability to pay for each. “A voluntary sector exists as a response to certain constraints on governmental provision of collective goods—in short, that there exists a voluntary nonprofit sector that supplements governmental provision of collective goods, helping to meet the remaining undersatisfied consumer demand” (15).

separate from government, but they are also separate from any public or private ownership. Nonprofit ownership is implicit in nature only through stakeholders such as constituents, donors, or society in general.¹⁷ This lack of direct ownership presents unique challenges for nonprofit management (Goodin 2003). The majority of literature sources on nonprofit leadership do not give this challenge justice, and yet, based on this author's experience, is one of the foundational realities that a unique model of nonprofit steward leadership must address in detail.¹⁸

- **Self-governing:** Nonprofits generally are governed by an independent board of non-executive directors who control their own activities separate from government intrusion. Board governance theories and issues have been researched in recent years (see the next section), but more research needs to be conducted with regard to the unique relationships and responsibilities between governing boards and executive directors (EDs). Boards and EDs are both considered stewards or trustees, while the former govern and the latter lead tactically.
- **Ambiguous accountability:** Boards and EDs both are accountable to the stakeholders of the NPO, but the definition of who the stakeholders are and how the organization's leadership is accountable is ambiguous, with only minimal research conducted on the exact nature of this accountability. The author of this dissertation considers the unique challenges of stakeholder ambiguity some of the most demanding in nonprofit leadership and an area needing considerable research and guidance.

This dissertation assumes that the above characteristics are the primary distinguishing features of NPOs compared to the for-profit sector, and that each requires a unique approach to nonprofit management that will be addressed by the thesis of this dissertation through steward leadership. Anthony and Young, as well as Salamon, list other characteristics they claim are unique to NPOs, but the additional distinctiveness are problematic due to the changing and diverse nature of nonprofits. Today many NPOs

¹⁷ Crawford (2009, 24) provides a convenient chart that summarizes the categorizations of stakeholders according to three primary sources. Various stakeholders that are suggested include the board of directors, staff, funders, clients, government/regulators, the communities served, and the general public.

¹⁸ Goodin (2003) argues that governance and accountability suffered in the nonprofit sector because of the absence of any "residual owners" similar to shareholders to whom officers of the organization are held accountable.

derive a majority of their income from fees charged to clients, they operate outside of the influence of most political pressures, and are as well-run as many Fortune 500 companies. Although voluntary participation is a hallmark of most NPOs, there also are a growing number of nonprofits today that operate largely with compensated staff. Hence this dissertation will adopt the above five characteristics listed above as the primary distinguishing marks of the NPO.

Christian and Nonreligious Nonprofit Organizations Compared

This dissertation focuses on investigating the existence and value of a distinctive approach to leadership in the Christian NPO. Just as a distinction between for-profit and NPOs is important to establish the need for a distinctive theory of nonprofit leadership, a similar investigation needs to be conducted concerning the differences between nonreligious NPOs and Christian nonprofits. We have already concluded that: (1) significant differences exist between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors both in characteristics and theory; (2) a distinctive approach to nonprofit management is necessary; and (3) that gaps in knowledge could be addressed through a greater development of the stewardship role of nonprofit leaders. However, very few sources have evaluated the differences between Christian NPOs and all other nonreligious nonprofits.

Jeavons has contributed widely to the field of nonprofit management with a number of articles and books on the subject, but his 1994 book When the Bottom Line is Faithfulness derived from his PhD thesis explores the special requirements for managing the Christian service organization (CSO). He studies the contribution of CSOs to American culture and religion, how CSOs operate differently from other nonprofits, the unique organizational dynamics and theories of CSOs, and specific management challenges. Jeavons summarizes his findings by concluding: “Religious service organizations are usually distinguished by their values-expressive character, [...] witnessing as well as serving if they are to be true to their biblical heritage. [...] They are expected to provide service, but they are also expected to honor, nurture, and promote specific moral and spiritual ideals as those ideals provide the particular inspiration for their service” (58). He

goes on to detail several distinguishing characteristics of Christian nonprofit service organizations distinct from nonreligious nonprofits:

What makes the organization Christian? My own experience in and around such organizations—as a member, staff person, and researcher—tells me the key elements for shaping their character as Christian are two: the personal characteristics and commitments of their staff, especially in relation to their faith commitments; and the manner in which the staff are managed and led to maintain a Christian “organizational culture.” These two factors are, in fact, inexorably woven together because it may be that the most important thing the managers and leaders do is choose and support the staff to develop that culture. (81)

Jeavons further states that some of the faith commitments that staff members of Christian nonprofits make are based on a sense of “calling” to the mission of the organization and the particular “spiritual gifts” that each employee believes he or she contributes to the mission. These faith commitments provide a receptive culture that is absent in nonreligious NPOs for an understanding and ownership of the role of service as stewards to God (who is seen as the ultimate owner of the organization and its mission). Christian nonprofits have a cultural environment that is open to and proactive in the indoctrination of attitudes and characteristics that are fertile ground for stewardship-type behaviors: service to God and others, humility, a temporal approach to material possessions, and faithfulness, to name a few. Jeavons details ten principles (or “points of focus”) for those managing the Christian NPOs that provide direction to the distinct management style that is required in these organizations:

1. Focus on vocation
2. Focus on witness and service
3. Focus on means and ends
4. Focus on servanthood
5. Focus on stewardship¹⁹
6. Focus on engagement in ministry
7. Focus on caring
8. Focus on creating and sustaining a Christian organizational culture
9. Focus on integrity

¹⁹ Although Jeavons mentions stewardship as a focus of nonprofit management, he hardly develops the concept beyond a few paragraphs.

10. Focus on leadership. (211-218)

Although some of the points of focus listed above are also shared by managers and leaders within nonreligious NPOs (such as the focus on vocation, servanthood, caring, integrity, and leadership), Jeavons does provide principles that establish the unique nature and distinction of Christian NPOs.

Anthony and Estep (2005) go beyond Jeavons' initial suggestions and develop a brief theological framework for Christian management. At least four out of the five following components of their systematic theology of management express distinctive approaches that Christian NPOs take towards management:

- **God as leader:** God is the ultimate leader and authority of all organizations and takes the position that is not to be assumed by any human being.
- **Scripture as core document:** Every institution has a core document that serves as the foundational statement for establishing their mission, vision, and values. The Bible is the foundation for management decisions and functions that even supersedes bylaws and constitutions (41).
- **Formation of a distinctive community:** Speaking primarily concerning the church, Anthony and Estep accept that it has certain institutional qualities and structure, but the church in the Bible is largely seen as an organic community of "Christ's body." Even within Christian *non-church* NPOs, this author has observed many organizations that adopt a form of spiritual community that extends well beyond the mission and culture of other NPOs.
- **Transformation as mission and motive:** The ultimate purpose of Christian management is the transformation of individuals—both staff and customers— into spiritual maturity, or "Christ-likeness," and not just the fulfillment of human needs.
- **Humanity as valued participant:** Although Christian NPOs are not unique in recognizing the value in all human beings, the basis for the respect that Christians hold lies in the belief that all humanity possess the *imago dei* or divine image. The chapter on the biblical steward has already demonstrated

how the Biblical expression of *imago dei* lies at the heart of its approach to and understanding of stewardship.

Based on this theology of Christian management, Anthony and Estep conclude that Christians who manage out of this theological framework will approach management differently. To them, management will be ministry, performed with the mindset of servanthood and stewardship, will be a spiritual gift, and spiritual (as opposed to mundane) in nature (45-49).²⁰

Christian NPOs are distinct from other nonreligious NPOs in any combination of a number of factors: their values-expressive mission, integration of faith and service, the unique calling and contribution of their employees, the theological underpinnings of their management style, acceptance of God as leader, the Bible as authoritative text, and/or the spiritually transformative purpose of their activities. NPOs founded upon other non-Christian religions may share in the same distinguishing characteristics, but that study is beyond the scope of this research. What has been established is that Christian NPOs are formed around certain distinguishing characteristics which call for different approaches to management and leadership. For instance, this author has experienced the challenges associated with managing employees who at times have considered their allegiance to what they feel God wants the organization to do to override their obedience to human leadership. Can steward leader characteristics and values address these challenges and provide a different approach to Christian leadership? A valid research question is: What are the primary characteristics of leadership that is focused around the role of the steward within a Christian nonprofit organization? Also, does steward leadership address issues of conflicting loyalties and accountabilities (between God and man) in the Christian NPO?

²⁰ In the author's opinion, Anthony and Estep miss a significant opportunity to associate stewardship with nonprofit management. They list stewardship as one of five aspects of management, but explain the concept in no more than one page.

Theories of Stewardship

Stewardship, Accounting, and Accountability

Stewardship has been a fundamental concept in accounting and finance literature for centuries under the general subject of accountability. One of the most concise histories of stewardship and its relationship to accounting is Higson and Tayles (1998). Writing about financial stewardship in accounting statements, the authors begin with a brief history of financial statements and stewardship's relationship with the purpose of financial reporting. The researchers demonstrate, starting with ancient Roman farming and moving through the Middle Ages, that record-keeping was done, not to calculate profit and loss or return-on-investment, but to prevent theft and other unrecorded losses that were under the management of the steward. Early financial statements were primarily accountability reports by "agents" of the owners and not statements of profit and loss, ownership, or indebtedness. Higson's 2003 book positions stewardship as an ancient notion of accounting that "appears to predate the production of accounts by hundreds if not thousands of years" (40). Higson further elaborates:

Stewardship in one form or another goes back to the most ancient of times. Boyd (1905, 17) quotes from the code of laws issued by Hammurabi (who rules in ancient Babylon) as an example that a stewardship relationship could be discerned between a merchant and a person acting as his agent. [...] Boyd considered that there was ample evidence that stewardship predated the production of accounts (in the modern sense of the word) by hundreds of years. (41-42)

Resources produced in the early 1970s onward specifically addressed accounting and its relation to stewardship. For instance, Gjesdal (1981), writing for the Journal of Accounting Research, provides a comprehensive review of literature on the stewardship demand for financial reporting. He investigated two main objectives behind the demand for financial reporting, both focused around a generalized agency model: the "decision-making demand" by investors making investment decisions, and the "stewardship demand" by investors for financial information about the actions taken by managers. Another example

of the prevalence of stewardship accounting during this period is the entire 1987 supplement of the Journal of Accounting Research, which was devoted to “Studies on Stewardship Uses of Accounting Information.”

However, in spite of this earlier emphasis on stewardship accounting, financial accounting today increasingly focuses on *decision-making* more than accounting for stewardship. Higson and Tayles’ 1998 paper is an early example of that shift when questions whether it is appropriate today to specify stewardship as being the objective of the financial statements:

Having examined the evolution of the notion of stewardship and the contemporary debate regarding its applicability to the financial statements..., stewardship may be more appropriate in a management accounting context than in a financial accounting one. [...] Given the imprecision of this term and the remoteness of users from the operations of modern corporations, the use of the word stewardship in relation to financial reporting may exacerbate the financial statements’ expectations gap. (62-63)

Financial standard setters such as US Financial Accounting Standards Board (FSAB) and the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) are also now concentrating on the decision-usefulness of financial reporting, as evidenced by their jointly prepared 2006 discussion paper. Both boards are increasingly viewing stewardship more in the purview of corporate governance than financial reporting (39). This shift away from the stewardship demand for financial reporting is a positive clarification according to the writer of this dissertation. It removes yet another misconception about stewardship that it is focused primarily on the management of money, and distances stewardship from the dominance of agency theory (which will soon be argued to be a theory based on incompatible assumptions to stewardship). This paper will also demonstrate that there is a broad reach of stewardship into *all* spheres of life, and when one leads the NPO as a steward, finances are only one of a multitude of resources the leader will be stewarding.

Accountability in general among NPOs and their management is another subject closely associated with stewardship. Management accountability is a major expectation of stakeholders and government regulators today, yet the literature on accountability in NPOs is surprisingly deficient. According to Kearns (1996, Introduction xiv), the few resources that exist focus mostly on narrow aspects of accountability for financial management, legal

compliance, or moral theory.²¹ Accountability is closely associated with stewardship because of the expectations owners and stakeholders place on stewards, and hence any deficiencies in research are potential subjects for investigation by this study.

Stewart (1984) is an earlier writer who articulates the various dimensions of accountability that nonprofit leaders need to address. He describes five levels of the “ladder of accountability” that range from “accountability by standards” on the lower levels to “accountability by judgment” on the higher levels:

- Level 5: Policy accountability
- Level 4: Program accountability
- Level 3: Performance accountability
- Level 2: Process accountability
- Level 1: Accountability for probity and legality

Stewart argues that a nonprofit accountability information system should report on all levels of the ladder.

Kearns (1994) provides a detailed definition of accountability in NPOs that is diverse and flexible enough to work in most management situations. His definition of accountability contains two important elements: (1) a set of performance standards, and (2) the response inside the organization (either reactive or proactive). These two factors allow the author to present and explain four types of nonprofit accountability: negotiated, compliance, professional/discretionary, and anticipatory/positioning accountability. Kearns suggests that the four accountability models can serve as the basis for conducting a nonprofit SWOT analysis.²² Kearns also provides helpful questions that could easily be used in the evaluation of stewardship within a NPO. The central thesis of Kearns’ later book (1996) is that accountability must be seen as a strategic resource for public and non-profit organizations, and a legal and moral imperative. He introduces the concept of an accountability environment. The book offers a conceptual framework and a corresponding set of strategic management methods that managers can use to evaluate their accountability environments. It includes practical assessment tools for conducting an accountability audit

²¹ When compared to government and public sector organizations, the literature on accountability in NPOs is the least developed according to Kearns (1996): “In comparison with the government sector, the literature on accountability in the private nonprofit sector is neither substantial nor sophisticated” (18).

²² A SWOT analysis analyzes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

within the framework of the strategic planning process and strategic management systems. Given this author's experience with religious NPOs, Kearns misses identifying the metaphysical basis for the strategic or moral imperative for accountability. Kearns also misses the possibility of a fifth type of accountability, namely, a spiritual or transcendental accountability that is common in many religious nonprofit leaders (i.e., "I am accountable to God for my stewardship.").

In a brief article, Molyneaux (2004) addresses the question: "Are voluntary organizations accountable?" He explores the ethical dimensions of five propositions that have implications for accountability. He also defines three forms of accountability: "*responsive accountability*, requiring little more than a response to views of others; *explanatory accountability*, requiring description and explanation; and *accountability with sanctions*, where those entitled to receive the account may impose various forms of penalty if dissatisfied" (15). Molyneaux is one of the few that identifies stewardship as one of the ethical attributes necessary for many of the nonprofit accountability principles.

Munro and Mouritsen (1996) provide a collection of essays on accountability grouped around the notions of giving account to one's self, in networks, and in "centres of calculation." In one of the essays in this book about accountability in the caring professions, Laughlin (225-44) presents a model for accountability using the principal/agent model (which can easily be converted to the owner/steward model). He looks at the "rights" of principals and the role of trust which creates the potential for value conflict. Sometimes the rights of higher principals conflict with the rights or desires of agents, particularly in the caring or religious professions. This model has direct application to issues related to stewardship conflicts within NPOs where the desires of stakeholders sometimes conflict with those of the executive directors. However, it falls short in providing substantive solutions to these conflicts in religious nonprofits when one considers the existence of multiple stakeholders and the "implicit" ownership of stakeholders (i.e., in the Christian world, even stakeholders are stewards themselves to the ultimate Owner—God—in addition to the board and the Executive Director).

Fry (1995) comes a little closer to the issue when he addresses how nonprofit managers can achieve alignment between an individual's felt responsibility (which is intrinsic and subjective) and being held accountable by others (which is more objective and

external). According to Fry, agency theory is often used to demonstrate how accountability and felt responsibility are often not aligned. Fry identifies five factors that move someone closer to alignment: role clarity, ownership, significance, irreversible acts, and group membership. But according to Fry, the greatest alignment is achieved when one publicly promises to be held accountable for something requested or perceived. He concludes with suggestions on how one can have “conversations for accountability” that create promises. The article moves in the right direction by demonstrating that an alternative theory besides agency theory is needed to explain the alignment of intrinsic responsibility and external accountability, but Fry’s solution lacks intrinsic motivations for creating such partnerships or collaborations.

The literature on accountability does develop one of the key aspects of stewardship, namely accountability for resource management, but the principal weakness of most sources is the narrow association of accountability with financial performance or other forms of extrinsic motivation. Positively, the literature does provide an occasional tool and method that is useful for guiding accountability in missional organizations and in managerial performance that applies directly to stewardship. Unfortunately, among all types of organizations, NPOs require some of the highest levels of accountability given the demands of multiple stakeholders on their management and performance and the requirements of the stewarding (i.e., non-ownership) role of management. Few sources adequately address the intrinsic motivation for such accountability or the inevitable conflict that arises between the differing expectations of stakeholders and management. Within Christian NPOs specifically, the issue of accountability to God and its ramifications on accountability to human stakeholders needs to be addressed by the research. If steward leadership is to be considered as a viable nonprofit leadership model, it must effectively address these issues. This suggests several viable research questions that are not adequately addressed by current research: In what ways are nonprofit leaders accountable to the stakeholders of the organization? How does a Christian nonprofit leader’s accountability to God affect his/her accountability to human stakeholders? And, how does the leader balance the challenge of accomplishing the desires and goals of the stakeholders versus accomplishing his/her own desires and goals when the two are in conflict?

Stewardship Theory of Leadership and Governance

In the last twenty-five years, organizational economics and governance has been strongly influenced by agency theory which depicts managers of large corporations as agents who perform actions on behalf of the principal. According to agency theory, the separation of ownership and management causes a number of results. Because of their motivation for personal wealth, managers often will not act to maximize return to shareholders unless appropriate governance structures are implemented. Managers also tend to be better informed than owners.²³ This creates the need for managerial incentives and contracts for managers to act in the interests of the owners instead of their own.

For the majority of the last century, agency theory has been the dominant theory of organizational governance. But in 1989 a new stewardship theory of governance was proposed that has received worthwhile attention (although not enough to unseat the dominant agency theory). This dissertation will review stewardship theory because of its potential impact on the core thesis and its role in presenting a viable alternative to agency theory. A number of studies will be examined, but many will be shown to have weak empirical tests, leaving us to call for better research on the viable but under-researched stewardship theory of governance.

In 1989 Donaldson and Davis presented an unpublished paper to the Academy of Management in which they proposed stewardship theory. Stewardship theory states that there does not have to be an inherent problem with managerial motivation, and that managers can have an *intrinsic* desire to maximize organizational performance because of a sense of duty and identification with the owners (if such exist), the organization, or its mission. In the first published paper on the subject, Donaldson (1990) analyzed organizational economics and management theory. Donaldson judged agency theory “a narrow model of human motivation and behavior [with] its negative moral characterization of managers and its methodological individualistic bias” (369). He proposed a positive

²³ The fact that managers often are better informed about the organization than owners adds additional complication to those who wish to lead NPOs as steward leaders. Their goal may be to fulfill the desires and goals of the implicit owners or stakeholders of the NPO, but since they may be better informed about the intricacies of the organization, they must find ways to inform or modify the owners’ wishes without violating their submission to the owner. This issue will surface again in chapter 7 on the discussion on stakeholders and accountability.

approach to organizational economics through stewardship theory. His paper reviews studies in human behavior to demonstrate, unlike agency theory's negative view of man's moral behavior, that humans are capable of a much larger range of motives including responsibility, altruism, and respect for authority. Appealing also to organizational behavior research, Donaldson argues that agency theory cannot interpret positive organization behaviors in a consistent manner, thus opening the door for a complementary, if not countervailing, approach in stewardship theory.

Several studies on stewardship theory followed that had tenuous results. In 1991 Donaldson and Davis reported on an empirical test of agency and stewardship theory by contrasting how these two views addressed the governance and incentive of the CEO and its impact on shareholder return. Using a questionable approach to study the two theories, Donaldson and Davis examined the effects of CEO duality—when the CEO holds both CEO and Board Chair positions—on shareholder returns. In a study of 103 publicly traded New Zealand companies, Fox and Hamilton (1994) attempted to study the impact of four increasingly diffuse types of ownership on diversification. According to the authors, the results of their study “point” towards stewardship theory as the better explanation of managerial motivation and positive diversification, but once again the empirical demonstration seems tenuous.

Six years after Donaldson's last paper on stewardship theory, Davis, Schoorman, and Donaldson (1997) developed the most detailed explanation of stewardship theory to-date. In this paper the researchers provide a “detailed description of stewardship theory, its language, definitions of terms, and units of analysis, [...] exploring the psychological and situational mechanisms that motivate stewards to behave pro-organizationally” (21). They attempt to describe the conditions under which both agency and stewardship theory could be necessary, and theorize that a steward's behavior is collective (i.e., focused on achieving the objectives of the organization), organizationally-centered, autonomous, and operates with high authority. The psychological factors that drive stewards are intrinsic motivation, organizational identification, and the use of personal power. The situational mechanisms that affect stewards are involvement, trust, performance enhancement, and collectivism. The authors conclude by positing three theoretical propositions about the conditions under which both theories can flourish:

Proposition 1- If a mutual stewardship relationship exists [i.e., both principal and manager desire a stewardship relationship], potential performance of the firm is maximized.

Proposition 2- If a mutual agency relationship exists [i.e., both principal and manager desire an agency relationship], potential costs of the firm are maximized.

Proposition 3- If a mixed-motive choice exists, the party choosing stewardship is betrayed, and the party choosing activity is opportunistic.

(40)

This paper provides the most detailed development of stewardship theory to-date but leaves to future research the task of proving the researchers' descriptive characteristics of the steward and the propositions under which stewardship can prosper. In support of the thesis of this dissertation, their paper provides a foundational basis for understanding the psychological, sociological, and organizational attributes of the steward within the context of management and governance. Their paper, however, unduly limits its theories about the steward's behavior and motivation, assuming a primarily collective behavior that is organizationally centered. Stewards can and are organizationally centered, but many religious nonprofit steward leaders operate with a "higher calling" that focuses their attention on achieving a spiritual calling or vision that has higher priority than the collective organizational mission. This is an area of steward behavior and motivation that needs further study, and suggests the research question: What role does the steward leader's spiritual accountability to God play in effective nonprofit organizational leadership and performance?

Subsequent papers on stewardship theory take Donaldson's foundations and apply the theory to specific questions of governance, accountability, and decision-making. Muth and Donaldson (1998) studied the effect of board structure on corporate performance among 145 publicly traded Australian companies. Their empirical analysis tested seven hypotheses of board independence (i.e., the degree to which a board operates under shareholder control and independent of management) based on agency or stewardship theories by looking for predictive agreement and positive value to the company. Their paper concludes that the findings support stewardship theory more than agency theory by

demonstrating in part that increased board independence leads to decreased shareholder returns and growth in sales. Thus, stewardship theory, by placing greater control in the hands of managers, was positively correlated with company performance on at least several measures.

The first application of stewardship theory specifically to NPOs occurs in a short paper by Dicke and Ott (2002) who conducted an empirical study to identify the prevailing types of values found in human service organizations that would correlate with service quality. Unfortunately their study could not identify any values that positively correlated with service quality. None-the-less, the authors conclude that “stewardship theory should not be dismissed yet as a conceptual foundation for the development of methods for ensuring accountability in human services contracting” (464).

Several research studies followed that studied stewardship theory in for-profit corporations with only tangential value to this dissertation. Unique research conducted by Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998) on the leadership function of self-sacrifice did not mention stewardship theory per se but studied one of the more important characteristics of stewardship theory, namely altruism and self-sacrifice. Their conclusions gave support to the existence and benefit of self-sacrificial behaviors on the part of leaders, especially of NPOs.

Tosi et al. (2003) further applied stewardship theory to managerial control by reporting on a study concerning decision-making. Their research question attempts to determine if decision-makers make different decisions when under the types of control suggested by agency or stewardship theory. Significantly different decisions were made by those under agency versus stewardship conditions. Individuals under agency controls invested more in profit-maximization alternatives and larger investments, while individuals under stewardship controls made smaller investments and did not maximize profits to the same degree. The most applicable findings to this dissertation relate to the psychological motivations and decision-making processes that motivate stewards differently than agents, and the processes that focus a manager’s attention on different aspects of performance. A viable research question that is not adequately addressed by current sources is: What motivates a nonprofit organizational leader to maximize the mission of the organization?

Finally, a paper published by Arthurs and Busentiz (2003) examines the limitations of agency and stewardship theories in explaining the behaviors in entrepreneur (E) and venture capitalist (VC) relationships. Although the study would at first glance seem to not apply to the thesis at hand (because of this dissertation's emphasis on NPOs), the study contains applicable observations about the importance of goal alignment between the steward (the entrepreneur in their study) and the principal (the VC in their study) in stewardship theory. It correctly recognizes that entrepreneurs often maintain a "psychological ownership" long after they have given up exclusive ownership to the VC, and the future relationship needs to account for this factor. The same could be said for founding steward leaders of NPOs.

Stewardship theory is still a relatively undeveloped field and needs additional research, particularly as it applies to nonprofit governance and leadership. It does hold promise for the thesis at hand because of its application to corporate governance, managerial control, steward-stakeholder relationships, managerial decision-making, board-manager relationships, founder-entrepreneur factors, and accountability. In the author's opinion, agency theory is unlikely to work for Christian NPOs. It relies on contractual and incentive controls on executive performance in a nonprofit environment where financial and performance objectives are less clear and more layered. Stewardship theory can still operate with nonprofit contracts and corporate governance rules, but such constraints will serve more as positivist guides to good practice than as coercive or preventative measures. Stewardship theory needs additional research into the characteristics that drive steward behaviors and the psychological and spiritual motivations such as the roles of responsibility, altruism, calling, servanthood, and faith. Several viable research questions for further study would be: What is a person's motivation or reward for leading a NPO like a steward? To what degree does altruism play a motive for Christian NPO leaders? Do Christian nonprofit organizational leaders manage under agency theory or stewardship theory?

Christian Stewardship

Literature resources on stewardship span millennia of time,²⁴ so a review of pertinent sources will require considerable narrowing of scope and categorization to present a feasible review.²⁵ Since later chapters will look at the steward and stewardship in biblical and classical times, this review will begin with a brief history of stewardship and then move to late-twentieth century sources, focusing primarily on Christian sources and applications.

There are only a handful of resources that trace the modern history of stewardship, and almost exclusively its ecclesiastical history in the United States. Salstrand (1956) traces the history of stewardship from U.S. colonial times to the mid-1950s as it developed in the religious life of the young nation and within various religious denominations. The need for an understanding of stewardship gradually arose in U.S. colonial history—and barely to a degree in European ecclesiastical history—because of the lack of state-funding for colonial free churches, forcing them to support their own pastors and financial needs. In the early part of the 19th century the growth of missions further stimulated a stewardship awakening: “Missions and stewardship have always gone hand in hand. [...] Wars [and controversy] have always had an adverse effect on the stewardship emphasis” (152).

Lynn (2006) researches the history of stewardship in the last two centuries and develops three distinct phases of the concept of stewardship.²⁶ “The story of ‘stewardship’ was often a search for rules of giving. That quest for standards, in turn, sometimes reflected responses to certain images of the future. Certainly the advocates of ‘stewardship’ worried about the tyranny of greed and covetousness in American life. The reader will

²⁴ According to Preissler (2002), the majority of printed sources on stewardship were produced in the last 250 years.

²⁵ In terms of useful and targeted bibliographic sources on stewardship, Preissler (2002) provides a fully researched and categorized stewardship literature bibliography using eight categories instead of the existing three classifications of the U.S. Library of Congress. Using content analysis as a categorizing method, Preissler analyzes almost 2,500 sources.

²⁶ Powell (1960) develops his own brief summary of the history of stewardship and its application in the Christian church, both Catholic and Protestant. He defines three specific periods in the “stewardship movement” of the early 19th century through the early 20th century: (1) missionary awakening (1800-1839); (2) essay writing period (1840-1850); and (3) renewed missionary emphasis (1900-1940). Although his survey primarily looks at financial stewardship and giving, he evaluates the motives for giving and the methods of church support that characterize each period, ranging from an inner response to the grace of Jesus Christ, the desire to buy one’s salvation, to church programmatic appeals.

soon discover that the ‘big tent’ notion of ‘stewardship’—or its predecessor, ‘benevolence’—included diverse visions of giving” (Preface n.pag.).

According to Lynn, the first period of stewardship history is 1820-1850, which he calls “A Republic of Benevolence.” This period was characterized by persuasive power expressed in persuasive oratory, preaching, and writing. Because of expansive growth in missions and religious organizations, roving agents were sent across the U.S. speaking forcefully about a vision for the future and calling Christians to give the “sacrificial gift.” Giving confirmed the development of a “Christian republic.” In the latter part of this period the search for an inward motivation and system for stewardship created an emphasis on principles from 1 Cor. 16:2 and the “law that governs benevolent giving.” Systemic giving was linked to efficiency, efficiency to thrift, and thrift to prosperity.

The second period is 1870-1920, referred to as “The Good Steward” period. Writers began to question the authority of those who preached “systematic benevolence” and questioned any man’s authority to tell individuals what or how to give. The question of authority led to a rediscovery of the biblical concept of the steward who recognized the authority of God alone who had placed man as a steward or trustee of His possessions. Roving agents gave way to pastors as the primary preachers of this new concept which took hold because of its biblical roots (adult Bible study classes in churches were growing) and the concept of the industrial manager, which society was increasingly embracing. Tithing became the accepted way of exercising stewardship because it was seen as “one of the primal laws of God.”

According to Lynn, the third period of stewardship history was from 1920 onward, which he calls “Tradition and Traditionalism.” The traditionalism of associating stewardship with fundraising was rejected, and the past tradition of seeing stewardship more holistically was affirmed, associating stewardship with global problems, the problem of affluence, environmentalism, and social welfare. An example of this new approach to stewardship is shown by Niebuhr (1930) who attempts to circumvent the Protestant idealism that seemed to imply that the discipline of stewardship would automatically check greed and materialism. According to Niebuhr, philanthropy is not stewardship if it stops at the donation of money without any corresponding attempt to deal with social problems or varying standards of living.

This short review of the modern history of stewardship in the Christian church demonstrates both the limited social context of stewardship that still shapes modern Christian thought, and the almost total lack of application of stewardship to the simultaneous rise of the nonprofit sector in the U.S. Stewardship was mostly related to charity (the practice of benevolent giving), economics, or global concerns, but rarely was it associated with nonprofit leadership or organizational management.

Turning now to stewardship in daily life and faith, most of the general resources on stewardship are written from a Christian perspective, but they do offer insight into the characteristics of stewardship as it is applied to life in general, life in the church and other NPOs. This review will focus on post-1960 sources, and will not review the resources on environmental stewardship, economic stewardship, or other forms of social stewardship because of the need to limit its scope. It will also avoid reviewing the sources that look at stewardship from a purely ecclesiastical viewpoint since the scope of this dissertation is limited to stewardship in non-church NPOs.

As has already been seen in the histories of stewardship in the church, Salstrand (1956), Powell (1960), and Lynn (2006) all trace the resurgence of stewardship to the early 1800s onward during which the emphasis was primarily focused on financial benevolence. During the 1970s, a number of books started appearing that looked at stewardship more holistically, considering it as a life-principle that engaged almost every sphere of life. Kauffman (1975) is a good example of an early book that provides a very basic look at the scope of biblical stewardship. He places stewardship in the context of God as steward and His eternal purposes, and looks at stewardship of life, creation, the Gospel, and material possessions. Kauffman also provides a number of helpful definitions of stewardship from other pre-1975 sources.

Cunningham (1979) views stewardship as a model for creative living that helps interpret and integrate various dimensions of the individual's and the church's life and ministry. He looks at an economic and a theological interpretation of the stewardship model. The divine-human drama is understood by looking at the relationship between God (the Creator and owner), humankind (the steward), and the world (fallen but to be redeemed). The author surveys the individual resources that man stewards: time, natural and spiritual gifts, personal relationships, the orders of creation (marriage, family, labor,

and government), material possessions, and the church. The book's primary contribution as an early resource is how it sees stewardship as a model for integrating life. Its weakness lies in its minimal affirmation of the role of stewardship in labor and commerce, having missed an obvious opportunity when it looked at economics and stewardship. This persistent oversight on the part of Christian writers baffles this author, given the early associations of stewardship with household and estate economics (see next two chapters). It was the author's personal experience with nonprofit organizational and commercial leadership that awakened his desire to correlate his fiscal responsibilities with stewardship obligations, but obviously most Christian stewardship writers did not share the same experience or challenges.

A book written by Werning (1983) provides a basic unfolding of the meaning of biblical stewardship rooted in the theology of the new man and God's message of grace through the Gospel. He studies stewardship of the body, spiritual gifts or abilities, and the earth, but unfortunately only applies stewardship within the context of the church. Werning's second book (1986) mostly focuses on stewardship as raising money, but the book attempts to move the church from its dominant position of "maintenance stewardship" to "supply-side stewardship." According to Werning, the problem of the church is not a shortage of money or resources but a dearth of a biblical and spiritual knowledge about God's grace, sovereign abundance, and an unlimited "storehouse." Limited in practical application, Werning focuses on misapplied scriptures to support his point and an abundance of pastoral suggestions on how to generate "creative spiritual leadership" that seem more self-serving to the mission of the church than to the development of spiritual steward leaders.

Redman and Neal (1989) propose "stewardship as a life principle, the logical expression of the Christian experience" (18). Christian stewardship is an exercise in life management where good life managers make good stewards. "The kind of managers we are is reflected in our lifestyle, our attitude, our motives, how we handle every aspect of our life" (16). The main principles of stewardship that people can live by are assessment, acquisition, ability, attitude, appreciation, accountability, and adoration. Mostly an example of unfulfilled potential, the major weakness of the book is that it is full of

alliterated three-point summaries and sermonized lessons that fail to unpack stewardship with sufficient detail or clarity.

In one of the latest books to view stewardship holistically, Westbrook (1996) writes a basic review of the elements of biblical stewardship in which she concludes, “every decision we make is at heart a stewardship decision” (8). She looks in detail at three characteristics of the steward: surrender, faithfulness, and obedience. Unfortunately, this book offers a fairly predictable look at the spheres of stewardship (time, gifts, our bodies, the earth, and money) without seeing the application of stewardship to broader spheres of life such as relationships, children, a personal or organizational vision, or even leadership.

Resources specifically focused on Christian stewardship in commerce and the workplace are very limited, but a few are worth mentioning for their unique contributions. Fletcher (1960) wrote an early influential article on the ethics of stewardship in which he begins by decrying the lack of reference to stewardship in all Christian ethics books. He believes that stewardship has been interpreted privately far too long and thus is out of step with the “organizational revolution” where corporate enterprise has replaced small business, and where private stewardship needs to be replaced by a stewardship of corporate and community giving.

Prosperity and organization go together. Individual small-scale production, marketing, and ownership management are being replaced by corporate enterprise. The same will have to become true of stewardship; it cannot remain a private, small-scale, individualistic affair—in the form of purely voluntary and private ‘tithing’ or anything of that kind. Post-modern man is going to have to exercise his stewardship, his social use of wealth, in forms that fit the way he gets it—i.e., in social planning and public welfare, in corporate or community giving. In a way, this will be returning from modern individualistic attitudes and mores to the essentially social or corporate character of stewardship at its biblical source in the Old Testament. (220)

Fletcher is quite correct in attacking the private and individualized nature of Christian stewardship, but his comments on the replacement of small-scale production with corporate enterprise makes one wince. However, significant additional research needs to be conducted on the communal and corporate nature of stewardship.

The Business Executives for Economic Justice (1992) published a short pamphlet that is unique in that it attempts to interpret stewardship directly in the context of business

and commerce. Written by Chicago Catholic business and professional managers, the group defines their perspective on stewardship: “We feel that, as business people, we both share the responsibility of all Christians to be good stewards and have specific responsibilities because of our professions” (3). The stated purpose of the pamphlet is to “stimulate thinking—by ourselves and others—about stewardship” and “to prompt action—again on our own part and that of others—to be more faithful and effective stewards” (3). Unfortunately, it focuses all too briefly on five major areas of responsibility: stewardship of people, products and services, the community, the environment, and the social fabric. Each area is illustrated with several real-life examples from business and a list of challenges applying stewardship in that area. This pamphlet only begins the dialogue but stops frustratingly short of developing its concepts.

Beisner (1994) adds a unique contribution to the literature on stewardship by carefully defining three terms that are interrelated and critically important to an understanding of stewardship: stewardship, freedom, and the market. He summarizes the essence of each term: (1) stewardship requires accountability; (2) freedom can only be exercised through virtuous self-control (“the freedom to do what is right”); and (3) the market can only remain free as long as it doesn't degenerate into licentiousness (23). For stewardship to be properly exercised in a free market, it must begin with stewardship of self. “It is clear that in the market, and in free society as a whole, power must flow from the bottom up, not from the top down: it must expand into ever-widening, and ever-weakening, circles” (26). He concludes by defining the virtues necessary for stewardship to flourish in a free market: justice, love, prudence, and humility.

A Christian study of the world of work and the integration of faith and work is provided by Graves and Addington (2005). The thesis of the book is that God ordained work as a critical part of life to mature and experience fulfillment. Work is a deep participation in the life and work of God himself. According to the authors, God's interrelated purposes for work are all related to stewardship in one way or another: provision, service to others, character development, worship, and modeling. An entire chapter on stewardship and work assumes that stewardship and servanthood are the lynchpins for understanding a theology of work that gives work its intrinsic, productive value: “Stewardship is first an internal reality affecting the way a person thinks, sees, and

feels. Stewardship anchors motivation. Once inside our heart and mind, stewardship eventually and inevitably works its way out” (141). Although not specifically a book on stewardship, Graves and Addington provide an effective foundation for future books and research needed on the integration of stewardship and the workplace. Therefore, a valid research question that has received little attention is: What does stewardship look like in commerce and the corporation?

In reviewing the previous sources on Christian stewardship, this author is convinced that the Christian community has missed significant opportunities. Although the Christian church has pioneered many developments in a holistic approach to stewardship in daily life, significant opportunities have been missed applying stewardship to leadership, the workplace, to organizational management, and to non-financial spheres (such as the stewardship of other people, employees, corporate vision, and corporate resources). Christian leaders of NPOs constitute a formidable segment of the nonprofit sector, but most literature sources are virtually silent in addressing the need for an understanding of stewardship and commerce as well as stewardship and leadership, instead choosing to dwell on the stewardship of church parishioners and pastors. In addition, no one seems to have addressed how Christian nonprofit leaders should teach and commend stewardship behaviors to other employees in the organization. Where the Christian church could have led the rest of the world in an understanding of holistic stewardship, it has failed to address the full range of stewardship issues other than self-serving benevolence. These gaps in knowledge do propose potential research questions for this field of study.

Theories of Nonprofit Leadership

This paper has already established that it differentiates between the roles of management and leadership, and because of its focus and thesis, it will primarily survey the literature sources on leadership (leaving the focus on stewardship and management to future research). The field of leadership has exploded with literally thousands of new sources each year, and so the focus will be limited to sources primarily focused on

nonprofit leadership. However, a few seminal works on *general* leadership and the *trait approach* will be reviewed first because of their foundational nature and theoretical underpinnings to this dissertation. This chapter will then evaluate the distinctive research sources on *nonprofit* leadership. *Spiritual* leadership will be reviewed next because of its application and importance to Christian leaders. Finally, the few sources that exist concerning *steward* leadership will be critiqued alongside the broader category of sources on *servant* leadership, a related but distinctive theory of leadership that is gaining considerable attention today.

General Leadership Theory

A review of general leadership sources could span multiple centuries, but this paper will take a more recent approach and focus only on the sources that provide important foundations for the development of steward leadership. It begins with the theoretical contributions of McGregor (1960). Although writing more about management than leadership, McGregor's conclusions are equally applicable to both perspectives. According to McGregor, the assumptions that managers holds about controlling people within the organization determine the whole character of the organization and its management style. The key question for management is: "What are my assumptions about the most effective way to manage people?" Every managerial act rests on assumptions, hypotheses, or theories, whether conscious or unconscious, and according to McGregor, typical managerial assumptions involve the necessity of control, influence, or direction of people to get them to perform (7).

McGregor labels the most traditional view of direction and control "Theory X" with its three major assumptions: (1) people inherently dislike work; (2) most people must be coerced or controlled to get them to produce adequate effort; and (3) the average person prefers to be directed and wants security above all else. By following Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McGregor argues that motivating people generally fails because a satisfied need is not a motivator of behavior (satisfied needs will merely produce a focus on higher-level needs that also need to be met).

However, a different set of assumptions can produce an integration of individual and organizational goals, which McGregor refers to as “Theory Y.” Theory Y’s primary assumptions about managing human behavior are: (1) physical and mental effort in work are as natural as play or rest; (2) people will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed; (3) commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement; (4) people seek responsibility; (5) the capacity for imagination, ingenuity and creativity is common; and (6) under the conditions of modern industrial life the intellectual potentialities of people are only partially realized. The central principle of Theory Y management is integration, or the creation of conditions such that members can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts toward the success of the enterprise (49). Theory X and Y approaches to management have important theoretical contributions for an understanding of steward leadership if it can be demonstrated that altruistic behavior is a key motivation of stewards. Heil, Bennis, and Stephens (2000) revisited McGregor’s work forty years later, analyzing and applying his philosophy of managing people. Their work reiterates the importance of what leaders think about people and tests leadership assumptions. People react as much, if not more so, to expressed attitude than they do to behavior. Steward leadership is a theory that may stand on the foundational work of McGregor’s Theory Y and the affirming work of others who observed the intrinsic and altruistic motivations that exist in many people. However, what is unknown is the degree to which contemporary Christian leaders manage according to Theory X or Theory Y assumptions or how altruistic their motivations are.

Writing a classic work on leadership as a political scientist and historian, Burns (1978) combines a wide range of historical, social, and political sources to demonstrate that “the processes of leadership must be seen as part of the dynamics of conflict and power; that leadership is nothing if not linked to collective purpose; that the effectiveness of leaders must be judged not by their press clippings but by actual causal change measured by intent and by the satisfaction of human needs and expectations” (3-4). He defines leadership as “collectively purposeful causation, [...] real change in the direction of ‘higher values’” (434). He divides leadership into two basic types: transactional leadership (leaders exchanging one thing for another), and transforming leadership (leaders seeking to satisfy higher needs in followers and engaging the full person of the follower).

According to Burns, transactional leadership is more common and found in opinion leadership, group leadership, political party leadership, legislative, and executive leadership. Transforming leadership is less common and is seen in intellectual leadership, reform leadership, and revolutionary leadership. Burns links the roles of leaders and followers, viewing leaders as people who tap the motives and morals of followers to reach goals and help followers reach their fullest potential (18). Even though transactional leadership undergirds the majority of leadership models, it is not a model by itself that fits the collective, missional nature of NPOs and the unique commitment that nonprofit employees give to missional organizations. The transformational model provides a more appropriate context.

Bass (1985) expanded and refined Burns' concepts of transformational leadership by giving more attention to the needs of the follower instead of just the leader. He argues that followers can do more than expected if transformational leadership does three things: (1) raise followers' levels of consciousness about the importance of idealized goals; (2) help followers to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the organization; and (3) move followers to address higher-level needs (20).

Two other groups of researchers have added significant contributions to Burns' and Bass' work in transformational leadership. In 1985, Bennis and Nanus wrote their foundational book on leadership based on a study of 90 interviews plus observation of successful CEOs (roughly half from Fortune-200 companies). Although few consistent patterns of good leadership principles emerged, four major leadership themes or competencies were observed by the authors that transformational leaders created: a compelling and clear vision; shared meanings through communication; trust through positioning; and creative deployment of self through positive self-regard. Kouzes and Posner (2002) further developed the transformational leadership model by interviewing 1,300 managers. Their model consists of five leadership practices or behaviors that enable leaders to get extraordinary things accomplished. Of the five practices, several share common elements with previous transformational researchers: modeling the way; inspiring a shared vision; and enabling others to act through trust and collaboration.

The works of Burns, Bass, and others in transformational leadership provide an important foundation for an emphasis on the relationship between leader and follower, the

development of followers' motives and morals, and the emphasis on the higher mission of the organization. All three of these factors will prove important for the NPO with its missional bottom-line. The research suggests that the leader of a NPO cannot succeed with just a transactional relationship with his or her employees or volunteers. Transformational leadership is becoming more common among writers of nonprofit leadership, but the extent of adoption by Christian nonprofit leaders is unknown. To what extent do most nonprofit employees, volunteers, and donors develop a steward-mindset themselves with regard to the mission and the organization's resources? And to what degree do Christian nonprofit organizational leaders apply the transactional or transformational leader models in their own leadership?

The Trait Approach to Leadership

Early systematic efforts to understand leadership focused on the leader's distinguishing personal characteristics or traits. In the early 20th century, leadership traits were frequently studied to determine what made certain people great leaders, resulting in "great man" theories that focused on the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by the great leaders of history. By the middle of the 20th century, the trait approach was under scrutiny by researchers that questioned the universality of leadership traits (Northouse 2007, 15). An example of that scrutiny is illustrated by Stogdill (1948) who examined over 124 early 20th century studies based on the trait approach and found a group of important leadership traits, but he also found that the importance of particular traits was often related to the requirements of the situation. Individuals do not become leaders simply because they possess certain traits, possession does not necessarily guarantee success in leadership, and many characteristics are important only in certain situations.

In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest and research into the trait approach. In 1974, Stogdill completed a second survey of 163 newer mid-century studies on leadership traits and compared his findings with his earlier 1948 analysis. His second survey took a more moderate position on the trait approach, concluding that personality and situational factors were *both* determinants of leadership. Further studies

have continued to investigate the trait approach and how personality traits can be used to distinguish leaders from non-leaders.

Current research on the trait approach appears to have defined an extended list of traits that individuals might possess or develop if one hopes to lead or be perceived as a leader. There is by no means agreement on a definitive list and there is considerable breadth in the traits defined by various researchers. However, Northouse (2007) summarizes some of the more prevalent leadership traits and concludes that some of the traits that appear to be central to most lists are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.

The trait approach is one of the most extensively researched approaches—both in breadth and depth—and its strength lies in its emphasis on the role of the leader in leadership (as opposed to focusing on followers or contextual situations). It has been criticized because of its failure to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits and its failure to give sufficient emphasis to situational applications of leadership. The mere possession of certain leadership traits does not guarantee effective leadership, nor has the field demonstrated how leadership traits affect outcomes such as productivity or employee satisfaction. But leadership traits are a factor that is a significant part of overall leadership theory, and it is clear that traits do contribute to leadership. This dissertation embraces the trait approach in studying steward leadership for many of the same reasons that early leader research also embraced traits—it is a logical and accessible place to begin studying developing models of leadership (which is where steward leadership is at), and sooner or later the traits and characteristics of steward leaders need to be investigated to contribute holistically to the field.

Now our attention will be drawn to studies specifically focused on nonprofit leadership.

Nonprofit Leadership

Resources that are specifically written for pastors and leaders of churches date back well over a century. However, leadership studies for non-church NPOs—which are the primary focus of this paper—only start to surface with any significance after the 1980s.

Research literature sources on nonprofit *management* are far more frequent and predate literature on nonprofit *leadership*, but our focus will primarily rest on nonprofit leadership sources. It will be observed that when the sources try to define the distinctive challenges of nonprofit leadership as opposed to for-profit leadership, each study seems to come up with its own list that has only partial overlap with other lists. The author observes that since research on nonprofit leadership is relatively new, hopefully there will be more coalescing of the distinctive differences over time.

Young, who has written a number of articles and books on nonprofit management, begins his 1987 article acknowledging that substantial studies existed on leadership in government and business but are largely absent in nonprofit leadership. He highlights the unique challenges of nonprofit leaders compared to business leaders, focusing on the external and internal functions of the NPO leader. Young condenses the nonprofit leader's many *external* functions into the concept of *entrepreneurship*, which he defines in traditional ways (168). By referring to nine case studies referenced in an earlier 1985 work, Young asserts that there is little difference in the risks associated with entrepreneurial activity experienced by for-profit and nonprofit leaders, but that there are other differentiating constraints on nonprofit entrepreneurial activity (such as regulatory and stakeholder control and lack of equal access to capital).

Young coalesces the nonprofit leader's *internal* functions into various activities of *personnel management*, and it is here that he sees the nonprofit leader's task most differentiated from that of the business leader. Nonprofits compete for personnel with additional challenges that can complicate recruitment, including public image, a stronger quality orientation, missional commitment, and resource constraints. Nonprofit leaders are also constrained in their ability to implement compensation systems that reward performance because of political constraints and the presence of non-compensated volunteers. As one of the earliest studies on nonprofit leadership, Young's findings seem minimal, but they are a starting place for additional distinctives in nonprofit leadership that come out in later studies.

Building on earlier works, Paton and Cornforth (1992, 36-46) analyze and summarize the different reasons that had been theorized for why nonprofit management is

different than for-profit management. According to the authors, nonprofit management is different because of:

- Distinctive purposes (nonprofits pursue social goals which do not easily lend themselves to measurement)
- Restrictive resource acquisition (primarily funded by donors which have different expectations than customers)
- Diverse stakeholders and governance (there is a much wider variety of stakeholders which changes the nature of governance)
- Distinctive culture (nonprofits have more participatory forms of decision-making and are value-driven).

The authors conclude by reviewing the distinctive demands placed on nonprofit managers: they must be well-rounded; must rely on influence more than authority; and must cope with considerable uncertainty and ambiguity. In this author's experience, Paton and Cornforth correctly put their fingers on four important distinctions that affect NPO leadership. For instance, he has experienced numerous times how donor funding of resources creates important stewardship accountabilities and restrictions that can sometimes conflict with the leader's ongoing strategy. However, this author also believes that Paton & Cornforth miss other important nonprofit leadership distinctives that will surface in this research (such as ambiguous or implicit ownership through stakeholders and God).

Writing more about the values-expressive nature of nonprofits than about leadership, Jeavons (1992) argues that the role of values in NPOs requires a distinct leadership function in a values-expressive character. He justifies this by pointing to the nonprofit sector's origin in religion, which gives contemporary nonprofits deep roots in values. This values-expressive nature of nonprofits drives general society's expectations about how the nonprofit and its leader should behave, treat their employees, and promote values through their work. The public places additional demands on NPOs for personal and organizational integrity (i.e., consistency of values), the desire to serve the public good, and a concern for the welfare of all.²⁷

²⁷ In a unique article that addresses nonprofit ethics, Jeavons ("Ethics" 1994) demonstrates that ethical questions and issues must be primary concerns of all nonprofit managers because of the implicit social

Herman and Heimovics (1994) conclude that leaders of NPOs face special challenges when they are expected to integrate mission, resource acquisition, and strategy. According to the authors, in spite of the CEOs subordination to the board of directors, the CEO is still expected to exercise “executive or psychological centrality” with regard to the board (138). Six board-centered leadership skills are described that characterize effective nonprofit CEOs: facilitating interaction, showing respect/consideration, envisioning change, providing useful information, maintaining board structure, and promoting board accomplishments. The authors also review four specific strategies for enhancing external impact: spend time on external relationships; develop informal information networks; know your agenda; and accept multiple partial solutions. One leader characteristic that is particularly singled out as necessary is the usefulness in understanding the political frame, or thinking and acting in politically effective ways. Herman and Heimovics’ research provides a supportive focus on a significant CEO/board relationship that is crucial for effective CEO performance, but their research misses a considerable aspect of the CEO/board relationship which is the trustee role that both CEO and board perform to varying degrees that implies other essential board-centered leadership skills.

One of the most significant and detailed treatments of the nonprofit leader is Nanus and Dobbs (1999), who propose that the primary purpose of nonprofit leadership is to focus laser-like attention throughout the organization on the greater good that the organization is capable of providing, and then to marshal energy and resources to make that greater good happen. The greater good is produced by maximizing the social goods the organization can produce for society and the people it serves (38). Social goods include organizational capital (assets that embody the potential to produce social goods) and social energy (the energy that is generated when a NPO marshals common action for the common

contract placed on them by the public. The core ethical values most important to honor and exhibit in a NPO are integrity, openness, accountability, service, and charity. Jeavons suggests how these ideals can be turned into operative organizational values (or into behavior) when the leaders articulate and model the values first: “The connection between the ethical behavior of managers and the maintenance of the highest ethical standards of behavior by nonprofit organizations is manifest in those managers’ capability to create a culture of integrity. Such a culture is one wherein the ethical ideals we have been discussing come to be accepted as ‘givens,’ and where the expectation that these ideals will be honored in the life and work of the organization permeates every participant’s thinking. This can only occur where these ethical values are both articulated and modeled by those in positions of responsibility and leadership. In this way leaders and managers can shape the core values of an organization as a whole—and the individuals within it—around these ethical ideals” (202).

good).²⁸ Nonprofit success, and to a degree its leader's success, can be measured by studying the output and impact of all three (i.e., social goods, organizational capital, and social energy). Nanus and Dobbs evaluate the distinctive character and roles of nonprofit leaders using three functions that build an organization—visionary, strategist, and change agent—and three functions that strengthen relationships—politician, campaigner, and coach. Given that this book presents one of the more detailed treatments of nonprofit leadership and that it recognizes the service-role in attempting to produce the greater good, it is unfortunate that the nonprofit leadership function of stewardship, which was proposed ten years earlier, is not alluded to in its pages.

An article by Riggio, Bass, and Orr, contained in the larger book on nonprofit leadership by Riggio and Orr (2004), supports this chapter's previous comment that transformational leadership is an effective model for nonprofit leadership. In another article in the same book, Sohmen focuses on the development of a distinctive nonprofit leadership model for nonprofit projects. Nonprofit projects are flexible, temporary group entities comprised of volunteers and idealistic participants who are tasked to produce a project with specific tasks and timelines. Sohmen studies the application and effectiveness of three existing models of leadership to nonprofit project groups—transformational leadership, visionary leadership, and servant leadership—and concludes that all taken individually are deficient for different reasons. However, he suggests that nonprofit projects require a multidimensional model that combines the best of all three leadership models triangulated into one flexible model that is strategic and value-oriented. Sohmen concludes by listing ten essential factors of this model of nonprofit project leadership, which gives the impression of a model that is so “multidimensional” as to be generically impractical. This brings up a question that this author has not seen addressed by Sohmen or other sources just cited: What model or models of leadership do nonprofit organizational leaders primarily claim to apply in their own leadership?

²⁸ Ciulla (2004) posits that NPOs have unique ethical issues because they have the moral virtue of charity as their basis rooted in their mission. Nonprofits have distinct qualities that have ethical implications: (1) they have an underlying moral cause; (2) they use these moral aspirations, goals, and virtues to elicit moral action from volunteers and financial support; and (3) the act of giving to a NPO has a moral dynamic that is different than buying a product. Even though all leaders should be moral, leaders of nonprofits often are expected to attain higher moral standards because altruism becomes a necessary measure of their morality.

In an attempt to summarize current researchers' understanding of the factors that give rise to the distinct challenges in nonprofit leadership, the following list brings together all of the above suggestions into one consolidated list. Nonprofit leadership is distinctive from for-profit leadership because of:

- Constraints on nonprofit entrepreneurial activity (such as regulatory and stakeholder control and lack of equal access to capital)
- Constraints on leaders' ability to recruit personnel and to implement compensation systems that reward performance
- A distinctive social mission, purposes, and goals which do not easily lend themselves to measurement
- Restrictive resource acquisition which is primarily funded by donors who have different expectations than customers
- Diverse stakeholders which changes the nature of governance and accountability
- A distinctive culture (more participatory forms of decision-making, value-driven culture, and decisions)
- The requirement of a distinct values-expressive character in leadership
- The balance of CEO centrality and submission with regard to the board
- Usefulness in thinking and acting in politically effective ways
- Focused attention on the greater good that the organization is capable of providing, and marshaling energy and resources to make that greater good happen
- The predominance of transformational leadership.

Although the above list presents a strong case for the unique challenges and factors in nonprofit leadership, in the author's experience, there are certain distinct challenges that still remain inadequately developed:

- The challenge of responsibly managing resources that one has no direct ownership over or financial stake in
- The stewardship role that both executive and non-executive directors play (and the interaction between the two as a result)

- Spiritual accountability that Christian nonprofit executives sense toward God and the Christian community
- The management of staff and volunteers who have a personal—and sometimes independent—commitment to the mission
- The emphasis on participatory or team leadership.

Finally, in our review of nonprofit leadership research, two studies stand out for their attempt to define the perceived level of nonprofit leader effectiveness and a future prognosis of the state of nonprofit leaders. Both studies provide an important context for any new model of nonprofit leadership that might be proposed to address the unique challenges listed above. A national U.S. study of over 2,000 nonprofit executive directors in 8 cities called “Daring to Lead 2006” by Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred (2006) raises important questions about the precarious future of executive leadership of NPOs. Its findings are summarized in five statements:

1. A majority of nonprofit executives plan to leave their jobs—but not the nonprofit sector—within five years.
2. Boards of directors and funders contribute to executive burnout.
3. Executives believe they make significant financial sacrifices to lead nonprofits.
4. Concerned with organizational sustainability, executives seek new skills and strategies.
5. Bench strength, diversity, and competitive compensation are critical factors in finding future leaders. (3)

The report concludes with specific recommendations to executives, boards of directors, funders, and capacity builders on how to build a pipeline of future leaders and increase their understanding of the challenges of nonprofit executives.

A second study by Dym and Hutson (2005) departs from many of the previous sources and denigrates the attempt by many to find *the* ideal characteristics or style of effective nonprofit leaders. In their research of NPOs, the authors conclude that the *fit* between leaders and their organizations seems to be the key to effective leadership. Fit means “placing the right person in the right place at the right time” (8), and can change over time as the needs of the organization change. According to the authors, effective

leadership in action is the alignment of the leader with “all available resources in the service of the organization's mission, objectives, and strategies. In other words, the leader's character, skills, style, values, and personal objectives have to mesh with comparable qualities in the organization she leads: its processes, structures, values, and culture; the way it develops and utilizes its staff; the way it interacts with its community; and perhaps most important, the way it pursues its strategies for success in the communities and markets it serves” (10).

The author agrees that Dym and Hutson make a good point that characteristics of effective leadership can be situational, and any attempt to formulate an *ideal* list of characteristics is tenuous. However, Dym and Hutson seem to go beyond the data in diminishing the importance of identifying potential leader characteristics, and their research does not accommodate the possibility that organizations within similar sectors can experience similar characteristics in their leaders—not exhaustive or comprehensive characteristics, but similar core characteristics. The thesis of this dissertation is that a primary typology of distinctive leadership characteristics exists, but the thesis makes no claims as to the definitive or comprehensive nature of that typology—only that distinctive characteristics exist.

Spiritual Leadership

Many books and articles have been written in the last century for those who are leaders of churches and the specific issues and challenges that are faced in ecclesial leadership. Although these sources can be of some value for this thesis, there is another class of leadership books that are far more germane, namely sources that deal with the spiritual and theological dimensions of leadership, or spiritual leadership. Banks and Ledbetter (2004) provide a comprehensive summary of spiritual leadership literature. They observe three distinct meanings of *spirituality* used in leadership research: spirituality as the capability to transcend the normal self (the humanistic term), spirituality as the presence of higher power or divinity (the cosmic or interreligious term), and spirituality

defined in mostly Judeo-Christian terms (69).²⁹ Since this thesis will look at leadership models within Christian NPOs, only contemporary sources that contain at least some element of the third approach to spiritual leadership will be reviewed.

Based on a study of hundreds of leaders, Clinton (1988) identifies six stages of spiritual leadership development that he believes God generally takes every leader through. His six stages establish a plausible framework for understanding the development process of the steward leader:

1. Sovereign foundations: When God works through family, environment, and historical events to lay early foundations in the life of the future leader.
2. Inner-life growth: Leadership potential is identified and God uses testing experiences in integrity, obedience, and word-checks to develop character.
3. Ministry maturing: By reaching out to others the leader identifies his spiritual gifts and skills and experiences relationship experiences.
4. Life maturing: The leader gains a sense of priorities concerning the best use of his gifts and develops an experiential understanding of God through isolation, conflict and crises.
5. Convergence: The leader moves into a role that matches his gift-mix and experiences maximum ministry.
6. Afterglow: The fruit of a lifetime of ministry and growth culminates in an era of recognition and indirect influence at broad levels.

Thrall, McElrath, and McNichol (1999) theorize an approach to leadership development through the integration of character and competency in the life of the leader. Focusing mainly on the cultivation of extraordinary character which occurs through opening ourselves up to the influences of friends, family, and God, the authors lay out four stages of development that result in necessary character traits for the effective spiritual leader. Each stage suggests characteristics that can inform the study of the steward leader:

- Stage 1: Trusting God and others develops humility,
- Stage 2: Choosing vulnerability develops submission,
- Stage 3: Aligning with truth develops obedience, and

²⁹ Another excellent review of bibliographic sources on spirituality and leadership is Dent, Higgins, and Wharff (2005).

Stage 4: Paying the price develops suffering and maturity.

Greenleaf (1988), who will later be reviewed in depth for his writings on servant leadership, addressed spirituality as leadership in a short monograph. He defines spiritual leadership as “that practical exercise of caring for others [...] [which] nourishes the servant motive in those who do the work of the world” (5). When spiritual leadership fails, the church fails to accomplish its responsibility to nurture spirituality in individuals or model for others a serving institution. According to Greenleaf, spiritual leaders have the capacity to understand how to manage power (always shared power rather than singular power), money (exercised within the realm of the sacred), and competition. In a later anthology of articles and papers written between 1929 and 1987 and published after his death, Greenleaf (1996) reflects on ways to guide religious leaders into serving people in a more caring way through servant leadership. Some of the articles address in more detail how to nurture the spiritual aspects of human existence and the importance of developing spirit in leaders.

Rinehart (1998) writes about spiritual leadership (which he alternately calls servant leadership) and contrasts standard approaches to the “power leadership model” (based on exclusivity and power) with the servant leadership model that follows the example of Jesus. The theological foundations of spiritual leadership are based on the divine Trinity (with its principles of unity among diversity, multiple leaders, shared authority, and respect), the Kingdom of God (with its principles of equality of all, emphasis on character, and building God's Kingdom instead of our own), and the people of God (with its principles of mutuality, one-anothering, and serving). Rinehart includes a rare but brief correlation between stewardship and leadership:

Clearly, leadership in the spiritual realm does not follow the same principles and practices as the world around us. We have been given a different blueprint. Spiritual leadership is to be profoundly determined by the ways in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit relate as members of the Trinity. The vision is greater, the focal point being Christ and His kingdom. The nature and character of spiritual leadership reflects the humble stewardship of those Christ has called as members of His body, the people of God. (98)

According to Rinehart, the primary role of spiritual leaders is to release others to service so they can be leaders through the execution of the spiritual gifts God has given them for the purposes of serving others. Positively, Rinehart's theological foundation for spiritual

leadership modeled after the trinity and God's Kingdom identify characteristics and behaviors that apply equally to the steward leader. It is unfortunate that Rinehart's references to stewardship and the steward are minimal.

Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) address evangelical Christian leaders in their book on spiritual leadership, and provide a narrow, targeted definition: "Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda" (20). This is accomplished through the following five tasks:

1. Spiritual leaders move people from where they are to where God wants them to be
2. Spiritual leaders depend on the Holy Spirit
3. Spiritual leaders are accountable to God
4. Spiritual leaders can influence all people, not just God's people
5. Spiritual leaders work from God's agenda. (20-23)

Blackaby and Blackaby view leader development as synonymous with personal development, understanding God's call in one's life, and being driven by God's revelation instead of human vision. This author respects the teaching of Blackaby and Blackaby, but their approach to spiritual leadership seems more sermonic and idealistic than one that has been tested in the realities of everyday organizational leadership.

Nelson (2002) develops the characteristics of the spiritual leader with a decided evangelical Christian approach using extensive biblical examples and passages. He demonstrate how spiritual leadership is not just leadership by people who are spiritual, but a unique expression of leaders who "rely on God, lead to serve, take risks out of faith rather than ego, and listen to the Spirit regarding timing, decisions, and relationship issues" (52). He includes a detailed chapter on the spiritual leader's inner life that speaks about how they deal specifically with ego, finding power and guidance through prayer, the temptations of spiritual leaders, and the need for personal time (mostly with God). Surprisingly, Nelson and most other writers on Christian leadership rarely exegete the frequent biblical passages on the steward even though the steward is held up in the Bible as a model of good management and leadership.

Fry (2003) develops a causal theory or model of spiritual leadership within an intrinsic motivation model. His model incorporates vision, faith/hope, and altruistic love so

that leaders and followers have a sense of spiritual survival through personal calling and membership. Calling entails “creating a vision wherein organization members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference” (695). Membership involves “establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, thereby producing a sense of membership and feel understood and appreciated” (695). Fry’s theory of spiritual leadership defines values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate the leader and others—all factors that are of high importance for the nonprofit leader and the missional, value-driven environment of NPOs. The development of calling and membership will later be seen to have particular significance to the steward leader.

Reave (2005) reviews over 150 leadership studies to show that there is a clear relationship between spiritual values or practices and effective leadership. She summarizes the spiritual values that are shown to contribute to leadership *success*: integrity, trust, ethical influence, honest communication, and humility. The spiritual practices that are shown to contribute to leadership *effectiveness* are respect, treating others fairly, caring and support, listening, appreciation of others, and engaging in reflective practices. Both lists provide a useful starting place for this dissertation’s purpose in developing a typology of characteristics of the steward leader. Since Reave’s research was not specific to nonprofit organizational leadership, there are other characteristics and behaviors that need to be researched and identified specific to the challenges of stewarding resources (e.g., faithfulness).³⁰

Research into the theories and models of spiritual leadership does provide a beneficial foundation for the development of a distinctive model of leadership within Christian NPOs. The sources identify numerous characteristics and practices that effective spiritual leaders incorporate into their personal lives and leadership:

- Sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit

³⁰ Faithfulness will be shown to be a crucial leadership characteristic in biblical sources. Using the same research technique of Peters and Waterman in their popular book, *In Search of Excellence*, Diehl (1987) surveyed 174 Lutheran business executives about faithfulness. His purpose was to identify the attributes or marks that were often found in “faithful” leaders. His conclusion was that there are seven observable attributes of the faithful: having a sense of identity, growth, prayer (or meditation), life in community, giving, a sense of justice, and simplicity of lifestyle.

- Accountability to God
- An emphasis on character development in leadership
- Servant mentality
- An emphasis on releasing others to serve
- Calling to a higher purpose
- Genuine care and love for others.

Because few of the sources looked at spiritual leadership specifically within the NPO, the characteristics identified do not address the complete range of challenges and behaviors distinctive to nonprofit leadership (as reviewed in a previous section in this chapter), especially within the Christian NPO. For instance, spiritual leadership does not address:

- Leadership issues related to resource management
- A leader's accountability to stakeholders and the board of directors
- The unclear role of power and authority in leadership
- How a leader leads followers who may have their own sense of divine calling.

Spiritual leadership models provide the groundwork for a needed model of Christian nonprofit leadership, but not the whole. A similar conclusion will also be proposed in the next section when another closely aligned leadership model, servant leadership, is evaluated.

Servant Leadership

Although deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian heritage, the specific expression and application of servanthood to leadership did not rise to any significant degree in business literature until 1970 with the writings of Greenleaf. A Quaker by background, Greenleaf introduced the idea of servant leadership while a manager at AT&T. A prolific writer in his life, with many articles and papers published posthumously by The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, the concept of servant leadership has found a home with many other prominent authors on leadership, including Blanchard and DePree. Servant

leadership and steward leadership are very closely aligned and share many similar assumptions. This dissertation will first review sources on servant leadership in depth, and will then look at research sources on steward leadership, concluding with a comparison of the two models.

The most succinct definition of servant leadership comes from Greenleaf himself in his 1970 foundational book on the subject:

Who is the servant-leader? The servant-leader *is* servant first. [...] It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He is sharply different from the person who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will he benefit, or, at least, will he not be further deprived? (7)

Greenleaf then briefly lists the qualities of the servant leader: listening, understanding, acceptance, empathy, foreseeing the unforeseeable, foresight, persuasion, awareness, and conceptualizing.

Seven years later Greenleaf (1977) released a compiled book containing articles that expounded on the servant leader theme in different forms of institutions: in business, education, foundations, and in churches. Greenleaf issues a call for a new business ethic in striving for excellence and becoming greater social assets as institutions. Since people are the institution, one strives for excellence by loving the people who are gathered to render the service. In this new ethic, business exists as much to provide meaningful work to the employee as it exists to provide a product or service to the customer. The growth of those who do the work is the primary aim of business, resulting in workers who then see to it that the customer is served. In the view of this author, a major gap in Greenleaf's philosophy of business comes out here when the rights and needs of owners, and the corresponding role

of hired directors who manage on behalf of the owners, is ignored in favor of the growth of employees.

In 1982 Greenleaf specifically applies the servant leader theme to religious leaders, defining religious servant leadership rather broadly as “any influence or action that rebinds or recovers alienated persons as they build and maintain serving institutions, or that protects normal people from the hazards of alienation and gives purpose and meaning to their lives” (11). He expands on several important aspects of religious leadership, such as the nurture of seekers (those that are willing to listen to the voices of prophets), actions that heal widespread alienation of people (to become persons who care and serve), and building religious institutions that serve. Since the biblical steward is strongly associated with serving, it is surprising that Greenleaf never associates the steward with the spiritual servant leader.

The first practical book that applies Greenleaf’s concepts is DePree (1989) where he applies servant leadership in the Herman Miller Company. DePree defines servant leadership as the process of removing obstacles that prevent others from doing their jobs and enabling followers to realize their full potential. The true leader is a listener who, within the context of his own beliefs, responds appropriately. His concept of servant leadership at one point touches on stewardship when he says that the servant leader is a “leader-as-steward in terms of relationships: of assets and legacy, of momentum and effectiveness, of civility and values” (12). Unfortunately, DePree leaves the opportunity undeveloped.

Spears, Director of The Greenleaf Center, edited several collections of articles expanding on Greenleaf’s servant leadership. His 1995 collection of essays by top leadership and business consultants reflects on how Greenleaf and servant leadership have influenced their own work and perspectives. Spears traces the development of three major themes in most of Greenleaf’s writings: the servant as leader; the institution as servant; and trustees as servants. He also identifies ten characteristics that are central to the development of servant leaders:

1. Listening intently to discern the will of a group
2. Striving to understand and empathize with others
3. The potential to help make others whole (to “heal”)

4. Awareness of both self and others
 5. The reliance on persuasion rather than positional authority in making decisions
 6. Looking at a problem from a conceptualizing perspective, thinking beyond day-to-day realities
 7. The ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation
 8. Holding in trust and being a good steward of an institution
 9. Deep commitment to the growth of others
 10. Seeking means to build community among those who work in an institution.
- (4-7)

Few would deny the value of these ten characteristics for leaders, and many of these characteristics would also be shared with the primary characteristics of steward leaders (such as empathy, self-awareness, strategic thinking, and commitment). But anyone who has led a NPO with its stakeholders and boards of directors immediately sees weaknesses in Spear's list, knowing that "the will of the group" is always subservient to the will of the owners or directors, and "persuasion" must sometimes give way to authority when one must clearly declare final decisions.³¹ Spears' eighth characteristic on trusteeship also appears to run at odds with some of the other nine characteristics.

In 1998 Spears edited another book of articles contributed by well-known business writers. This book collects articles around the themes of service, stewardship, spirit in the leader, and servant leadership. Each article develops concepts that were only briefly introduced by Greenleaf such as work as calling, developing trust, and the leader's covenant of accountability. The section on stewardship disappoints with its cursory assent to the relationship between stewardship and servant leadership, and it fails to develop the meaning of stewardship in favor of more articles on servant leadership.

In 2001 Fryar assembled a small booklet in the Concordia Lutheran "Christian Leadership Series" that largely draws on ideas presented by Greenleaf and others and Biblical studies on servant leadership. In spite of the small size of Fryar's book, she emphasizes the importance of a leader's identity over traits and behaviors, and offers a

³¹ Burkhart and Spears (2002) apply these ten characteristics of the servant leader specifically to philanthropic NPOs, demonstrating in their view how they uniquely apply and enhance the nonprofit mission.

helpful synthesis of the values from which a servant leader leads. That same emphasis on the identity of a steward will become a critical element of the steward leadership model as well. “The essence of servant leadership springs not from a leader’s traits (e.g., kindness) or behaviors (e.g., goal setting). At its heart, servant leadership is identity-based. The servant leader’s core identity and core values determine his or her attitudes and actions” (11). A unique service that Fryar also provides in her book is a compilation of over fifty terms used to describe servant leaders, their values, attitudes, beliefs, and approaches toward followers. Most of the behaviors and attitudes cluster around five values, all which sound quite idealistic and untested in the reality of day-to-day leadership:

- Servant leaders place a premium on service.
- Servant leaders want each follower to live a life of significance and purpose.
- Servant leaders value the freedom and dignity of the individual.
- Servant leaders want followers fully to develop their gifts and abilities.
- Servant leaders value wholeness and growth for their followers and themselves. (12)

Blanchard and Hodges (2002) follow with an equally small book for the Christian market on servant leadership and general leadership principles. To these writers, effective leadership starts on the inside with a transformation of the heart (character), head (beliefs and assumptions about vision, mission and values), hands (behavior or situational leadership), and habits (habits of solitude, prayer, Bible reading, faith, and accountability relationships). Unlike many books on servant leadership that have no biblical references, the authors examine Jesus’ life as an example of all these aspects of leadership and make a strong case for inner transformation as the basis for leadership among Christians.

Servant leadership is without question a predominant leadership model within religious circles, and it is gaining popularity as a secular model as well. However, among Christian-oriented writers, most of the model’s premises are based on the selective use of certain Bible passages (especially Mark 10:43-44) to the exclusion of the more frequent passages on stewardship and the steward. With its emphasis on people-development, servant leadership does not adequately address common nonprofit organizational issues such as non-owner leadership, resource management and growth, fiduciary responsibility,

organizational management needs, trusteeship, accountability (to stakeholders or God), and the rightful place of authority and power in leadership. Many Christian nonprofit leaders known by the author would state that they believe in servant leadership, but would also add that as a model it isn't singularly adequate to provide all of the principles and theory necessary to explain the full range of experiences and challenges that nonprofit leaders face. Later chapters on the classical and biblical steward will demonstrate that all stewards *are* servants, but not all servants are stewards. Therefore, the servant leadership model does provide a valuable foundation for the broader and more inclusive model in steward leadership. But in and of itself, the author strongly believes that as a model it is not sufficient to address the practical issues of NPO leadership. As this paper now turns its attention to the broader model of steward leadership, the author will propose that it encompasses the best concepts of servant leadership in a more comprehensive model that fits better the unique aspects of nonprofit leadership. Servant leadership will be more directly compared to steward leadership in chapters 7 and 8.

Steward Leadership

Steward leadership is a model that views the primary identity and role of the leader as one who is a steward managing the resources of another that are entrusted into his or her care. This review of research on steward leadership will focus on two groups of resources: those resources that associate stewardship and leadership in general, and those resources that directly unpack the model of steward leadership. As will be seen, the steward leader model *does* have precedent in contemporary research, but minimally so.

We will begin with the briefest of references to those who write about stewardship and leadership in general. Among those writing on the topic of leadership who also refer to stewardship as one of many attributes or values of a leader are Coleman (1998), Spears (1998), and Solomon (2004). In addition, Lamb (2001) writes an online Christian leadership training course that looks at nine biblical images of leadership, of which one focuses on the image of the steward and uses that image to emphasize the leadership themes of management, planning, and delegation. In a study of Christian owner-managers,

Werner (2008) also identified stewardship as a meaningful concept to many of her research subjects, but she was unable to give any further clarification to the enormous range in ways her subjects engaged with stewardship or linked it to their business practices.

Several well-known researchers associate stewardship with leadership, but scarcely develop the concept. DePree (1989) is one of the first contemporary writers to do so: “The art of leadership requires us to think about the leader-as-steward in terms of relationships: of assets and legacy, of momentum and effectiveness, of civility and values” (12-13). In reality, however, because of Depree’s respect for Greenleaf, when he speaks of stewardship he generally means servanthood and never develops the concept with any detail. Senge (1990) also speaks briefly about the leader as steward, but his development of this leadership model only extends to a leader’s sense of purpose and destiny, and becoming “a steward of the vision” (346).

We now turn our attention to evaluating the research that directly unpacks the model of steward leadership. Clinton (1989), a Professor of Leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary, briefly articulated the stewardship model as one of four main leadership models in the Bible.³² The stewardship model (or the accountability model as he alternately calls it) is considered “the most foundational of all four models” in that it applies to all leaders regardless of gifting. “The stewardship model is a philosophical model which is founded on the central thrust of several accountability passages [in the Bible], that is, that a leader must give an account of his/her ministry to God” (57). Clinton defines eight basic values that support the steward leadership model:

1. Ministry challenges, tasks, and assignments ultimately come from God.
2. God holds a leader accountable for leadership influence and for growth and conduct of followers.
3. There will be an ultimate accounting of a leader to God in eternity for one's performance in leadership.
4. Leaders will receive rewards for faithfulness to their ministry in terms of abilities, skills, gifts and opportunities.

³² Clinton’s four biblical models of leadership are the harvest model, shepherd model, servant model, and stewardship model.

5. Leaders are expected to build upon abilities, skills, and gifts so as to maximize potential and use them for God.
6. Leaders will be uniquely gifted both as to gifts and the degree to which the gift can be used effectively.
7. Leaders will receive rewards for their productivity in terms of zealously using abilities, skills, gifts, and opportunities for God.
8. Leaders frequently must hold to higher standards than followers due to ‘the above reproach’ and ‘modeling impact’ they must have on followers. (58)

In a paper presented at the International Faith and Learning Seminar in Australia in 1993, Birkenstock briefly explains the unique qualities of “Christian leadership.” He initially identifies the servant leadership model as the “most distinctive contribution from Christian literature,” but because of negative connotations of servant leadership, he commends the term *steward* as “a biblical term that would more clearly identify the Christian leader without the negative connotations of servant.” “The concept of steward leadership more closely suits the idea of Christian leadership. It incorporates the idea of servanthood and more fully recognizes the role of manager and of being fully accountable, responsible and reliable” (5). Unfortunately, Birkenstock does not develop the concept of the steward leader any further.

Block takes up the application of stewardship to corporate leadership in his seminal book Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest (1993). In this mostly theoretical book, Block views stewardship as a more effective replacement for what is normally understood as leadership. To Block, stewardship equals empowerment, or giving employees at all levels choice over how to serve customers by leading with an attitude of service rather than control (i.e., by redistributing power, purpose and wealth). A weakness in Block’s definition of stewardship is that it is so strongly biased towards servanthood and the redistribution of power that the leader retains very little legitimate power or authority in the end—just service to those with redistributed power:

Stewardship is defined in this book as the choice to preside over the orderly distribution of power. This means giving people at the bottom and the boundaries of the organization choice over how to serve a customer, a citizen, a community. It is the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in

control, of those around us. Stated simply, it is accountability without control or compliance. (Introduction xx)

Block takes leadership to task but quickly reveals his bias when he polarizes leadership and stewardship against one another. The writer of this dissertation believes that Block's severe contrast between leadership and stewardship is based on a misunderstanding of the legitimate role of power and accountability in stewardship:

The alternative to leadership is stewardship. Not a perfect concept, but an entryway into exploring what fundamental, sustainable change in our organizations would look like. Stewardship asks us to be deeply accountable for the outcomes of an institution, without acting to define purpose for others, control others, or take care of others. Stewardship can be most simply defined as giving order to the dispersion of power. It requires us to systematically move choice and resources closer and closer to the bottom and edges of the organization. Leadership, in contrast, gives order to the centralization of power. It keeps choices and resources at the center and places power at the boundaries as an exception to be earned. (18)

Block develops his unique approach to the leader-as-steward by elaborating on four contrasting pairs of leadership skills. His first contrast has already been stated, namely, choosing stewardship over leadership. Block faults leadership, as he sees it most often expressed, as the ineffective localization of power, purpose, and privilege solely in the leader. Secondly, Block recommends choosing partnership (or the distribution of power and ownership) over patriarchy. It has been demonstrated, however, that classical approaches to stewardship involve the recognition that ownership resides completely outside of *all* managers and employees, not merely spread around. His third and least developed contrast involves choosing empowerment over dependency. Empowerment involves trusting people to know best what needs to be done for the customer, giving them responsibility, and the power to define purpose for themselves. Finally, Block wraps up all of his contrasts by recommending service over self-interest. The rest of his book unpacks what these service-based governance strategies look like in management practices and structures, in staff functions, financial practices, compensation, and performance evaluation.

Block's contribution to an understanding of the steward leader is fresh and unique in corporate literature. His emphasis on service, empowerment, and accountability reside at the heart of classical stewardship. His understanding of the permeating nature of true

stewardship in its effect on management practices, staff functions, and human resources demonstrates the breadth with which he sees stewardship impacting an organization. However, his narrow definitions of leadership and power bias his understanding of the role of the steward as leader and set him up for an either/or view of corporate governance instead of both/and. Based on Block's work, a valid research question for further study is: How do Christian nonprofit leaders understand and apply the roles of authority and power in their leadership? Overall, the author of this dissertation finds Block's book very disappointing and inadequate in addressing the distinctives of NPO leadership.

In 1996 Higginson wrote about transforming leadership as the practical outworking of Christian discipleship, and in the process identified three biblical images of a leader: servant, shepherd, and steward. He then relates all three to management and leadership. Speaking briefly about the image of the steward, Higginson says: "It may well be that this is therefore an image more for managers than leaders! Yet as soon as one says that, one must qualify it, because the essence of stewardship is accountability: being accountable to one's master for the management of resources. Leaders too are accountable, though exactly who they answer to varies widely" (50).³³ As one of the earliest writers to refer to the steward leader, Higginson misses the opportunity to develop the model.

Goodspeed (1998) relies on the foundations established by Block and extends the application of stewardship to hospital governance. He defines five principles of corporate governance that, when combined, develop healthy community stewardship. His book is the first to place emphasis on stewardship-governance in the context of the community. He calls hospital trustees to community stewardship, not just organizational stewardship, and for hospitals to move from competition to collaboration with other organizations for the benefit of the community. Community or team stewardship is empowering the organization and the community to act collectively to improve the health status of the community:

Governance teams must move from trusteeship of the organization to stewardship of the community. There is a world of difference between these two approaches to governance. [...] To become stewards of community health, boards must understand that the answers to the health issues facing

³³ Lee and Zemke (1995, 102-03) also take the approach that stewardship is an appropriate model for managers while servanthood is the best approach for leaders. However, they fail to understand the leadership role of accountability to the owner that steward leaders fulfill, but managers cannot.

our communities can be found within the communities themselves. Stewardship thus requires a fundamental shift in both control and power. When boards embrace stewardship, service and outcome become more important to them than ownership, and shared power becomes more important than control of the process. (68)

Daft (1999) includes a rare but brief reference to the role of steward leadership in his textbook on leadership under the heading of moral leadership. According to Daft, the recent growth in acceptance of moral leadership “encourages change toward developing followers into leaders, thereby developing their potential rather than using leadership position to control or limit followers” (371). Stewardship results from the pivotal shift in leadership thinking from authoritarianism to service. Unfortunately, Daft largely follows the lead of Block in his brief reference to this leadership model.

Several researchers have studied the steward leader model in very specific contexts: among Christian CEOs, in public sector administration, and in NPOs. Based on interviews with 40 Christian executives, Pascarella (1999) attempts to answer the question concerning how Christian CEOs conduct their business according to their faith. According to the author, the Christian CEOs studied unite the spiritual and secular in their work and worldview, are comfortable with the paradoxes of life and leadership, view themselves as stewards as they serve others, take a stand for their faith, and struggle constantly with confirming that they are guided by God rather than ego (all refreshing in their realism and application to NPOs). This book is one of the few that addresses the stewardship role of Christian leaders. Pascarella states that Christian steward leaders view leadership as characterized by: (1) being created for a purpose; (2) given the gift of responsibility; (3) a lack of ownership; (4) a servant’s attitude; and (5) operating through spiritual power from God. Unfortunately his book lacks reference to the challenges of stakeholder accountability, multi-level stewardship within the organization, and little specificity to guide the organizational leader.

Smith (2000) provides one of the few articles that argues for the value of steward leadership in public sector administration. Smith reviews the brief literature on stewardship but emphasizes mostly Block as her primary source. Smith addresses the misconception that stewardship is just a religious principle and not applicable to public administration. Unfortunately, she doesn't lay out a detailed understanding of steward leadership, and

primarily sees stewardship as an important “attribute” of a leader. The article concludes with a brief but ineffective attempt to describe how one learns stewardship: “Learning stewardship is a lot like learning ethics” (212).

Brinckerhoff (2004) introduces the first full-length analysis of steward leadership in NPOs. He begins with an explanation of the steward that is the closest to the definition of the classic steward of any research source reviewed so far:

The stewardship philosophy of leadership [...] reminds us that the not-for-profit sector organizations actually belong to the communities they serve, and leaders have temporary stewardship over their assets. The key concept here is this: as a steward, your job is to manage your not-for-profit with the same care, the same attention to detail, the same level of responsibility that you would give to someone else’s property—because that’s the reality. ‘Your’ not-for-profit is not, in actuality, yours; it really belongs to the community and you are but the temporary steward of its resources. While many of us take justifiable pride in ‘our’ organization, ‘our’ staff, ‘our’ board, and of course ‘our’ mission, in far too many cases ‘our’ becomes ‘my’ in more ways than just as a descriptor, and soon the organization loses its mission-first focus. (3-4)

Given such a solid beginning, Brinckerhoff loses his edge quickly and reverts to general business platitudes that will plague the rest of the book. The author has moments of insight when he speaks about board members and funders as stewards, but for all other nonprofit staff roles, his distinctive understanding of stewardship comes across as anemic, if not generic. For example, when defining the unique role supervisors’ play as stewards, he says: “As stewards, supervisors understand that management is, at its core, a support function, not one of command” (66). When defining the eight “unique” qualities of the nonprofit steward leader, he lists qualities that are found on most generic lists of leadership traits: balance, humility, accountability, integrity, the ability to motivate, a thirst for innovation, communication skills, and a quest for lifelong learning (6).

Notwithstanding, Brinckerhoff’s book does add significant contributions to the study of steward leadership. His practical approach to how stewards make decisions results in a useful decision-making tool. In that tool he combines missional accountability with concern for the stakeholders that are impacted and an appropriate engagement with risk. Brinckerhoff also provides a unique organizational stewardship assessment tool which,

although applicable to NPOs more than stewardship, rates a successful NPO along nine characteristics.

Ford is a leadership and team-building consultant. In his 2006 book he addresses four common western myths that encourage an upwardly mobile movement in our typical approaches to leadership and spiritual ministry: (1) the self-centered Christian leadership myth (“ME”) versus the biblical reality of the equipping releaser; (2) the individualism myth (“Build ME”) versus the biblical community; (3) the ladder myth (“Build me UP”) versus the biblical reality of stewardship; and (4) the sarcasm myth (“Put you down”) versus the biblical reality of encouragement. Ford is again one of the few authors who connects stewardship to leadership in a unique way. He recognizes leadership as the intentional stewarding of relationships, one’s own spiritual gifts, and the spiritual gifts of others. He defines what he calls the “stewardship three-step process”—the stewardship of who I am, the stewardship of who we are, and the stewardship of the groups of we (166).

Finally, in a new book on the steward leader, Rodin (2010) acknowledges that his theological book is not a “how” book on leadership, but a “who” book on the personal transformation of godly stewards who are also called to be leaders: “We are first called to be godly stewards and then to be leaders. Commitment to our call as stewards guides us as steward leaders. But we are stewards first. It is as stewards who undergo the daily transformation of the Holy Spirit that we are sometimes called to lead” (8). According to Rodin, this process of personal transformation rests on three foundations: (1) the purpose of our existence rooted in the image of God that we bear; (2) the radical freedom the steward experiences to work in joyful, responsive obedience; and (3) the distinctiveness of the steward leader model that is based on inward-outward transformation and an emphasis on being over doing.

Rodin spends the bulk of his book evaluating the transformation process that every steward leader must go through. This process occurs simultaneously at the four levels of the steward’s relationship with God, with self, with others, and with God’s creation. Each relational transformation takes the steward on a journey—or *trajectory* as Rodin calls it—that impacts the people the steward serves and the organization the steward leads. The author defines eight specific impacts that come from the transformation process:

1. Steward leaders are united with the people they serve.

2. Steward leaders cultivate culture.
3. Steward leaders develop whole people.
4. Steward leaders harness the power of people.
5. Steward leaders build and value community as its own end.
6. Steward leaders are caretakers of their community.
7. Steward leaders marshal resources effectively.
8. Steward leaders create organizational consistency and witness.

Throughout Rodin contrasts the behavior and effectiveness of the steward leader to what he calls the owner-leader who is focused on control (rather than freedom), doing (rather than being), and on leading (rather than obeying). He includes a unique section that compares the steward leader approach (Rodin hesitates to call it a model) to other approaches to leadership such as transformational leadership, Wheatley's work on leadership and the new science (Wheatley 2007), and servant leadership.

Rodin's latest work is the most foundational and applicable work to the current thesis at hand. He provides the theological and philosophical underpinnings for understanding the identity and internal transformational process of the steward leader. His emphasis on the steward's engagement with the four relational levels is original and crucial to developing a holistic model of steward leadership. Although Rodin eschews discussing leadership traits or characteristics due to his selective focus on the process of steward transformation, his work is not antithetical to the thesis of this dissertation because of the theological and basal purpose of his work.³⁴

The field of literature on steward leadership is sparse at best, but some foundational books have opened the way for a more elaborate and consistent development of stewardship as a model for leadership in NPOs. On the positive side, current research on steward leadership and Christian leadership do stress the following distinctive contributions to existing leadership literature:

- That God is the source of all personal and organizational resources
- That leaders are accountable to God for their influence and missional growth

³⁴ "I have been very careful not to use the term 'steward leadership,' because my formulation of the steward leader cannot be reduced to a general theory nor does it offer a specific set of static, measurable traits. My focus in this book is on the person of the steward leader in relationship" (Rodin 2010, 75-76).

- That many of the principles of steward leadership have roots in the Christian faith and texts
- The breadth of the resources that one stewards (money, gifts, people, mission, etc.)
- The steward leader has a unique service mindset towards both the owner of the resources and followers
- Steward leaders hold themselves accountable to stakeholders and the community for how they manage the resources entrusted to them
- Viewing steward leadership as a form of moral leadership
- The identity and transformation of the steward as precondition to leadership.

However, because research on steward leadership is still in its infancy, significant deficiencies and gaps in knowledge still exist in the current sources:

- General lack of agreement on a definition of steward leadership
- A general failure to recognize the importance of the relationship between the steward leader and the owner of the resources (e.g., God, the community, stakeholders) as a critical determinant of the steward's priorities and accountability
- A confusion of the servant leader and steward leader models by many researchers
- The excessive influence that Block's book on steward leadership has on other researchers, associating stewardship with service and empowerment of others
- Confusion by some who associate stewardship with management but not leadership
- General lack of understanding of the stewardship role of the NPO board of directors
- Little elaboration of the relationship between the various levels of steward leaders (e.g., between the board of directors and ED)
- The failure to recognize the importance of seeing stewardship more as an identity than just as a role

- The limited descriptions of steward leader characteristics
- Little development to-date of the principles and practices of leading as a steward.

Conclusions

The aforementioned sources of literature demonstrate that the integration of stewardship within the discipline of leadership is as of yet an undeveloped field. When one further looks at the relationship of stewardship to nonprofit organizational leadership, only a handful of sources exist. Considering the extensive number of sources that have been written on leadership in general, it is unusual that few have tried to bring the stewarding role³⁵ of nonprofit organizational leaders together with leadership theory or models. The model of servant leadership appears to be the model of choice for Christian nonprofit leaders at the moment, but that model is inadequate to address the full range of challenges and issues that nonprofit leaders face.

This review of contemporary research has also demonstrated that stewardship has a long and developed history, although its application has largely been narrowed in the theological realm to ministry funding, in the environmental realm to resource management and sustainability, and in the financial realm to stewardship accounting. When one considers the fact that the original stewards of history were official managers of estate and business resources, and that the origin of economics lies in the classic stewardship role of “household management,” there exists a significant gap in the development of stewardship in contemporary management, nonprofit and publically held company governance, and even in modern household management. One wonders how more elevated in importance the modern role of “homemaker” could have been viewed today had the connection of classical steward roles with contemporary management of the household unit not been lost.

³⁵ Namely, the role that nonprofit organizational leaders fulfill in managing the resources that they do not personally own but are managed “in trust” for others.

Significant areas of undeveloped knowledge surface—and their associated research questions—from this review of literature:

- What is the relationship between servanthood and stewardship, given that both concepts arise out of the same role of servant or slavery?
- How would leadership be characterized differently, if at all, if one approached it from the perspective of leadership as servanthood versus leadership as stewardship?
- Is leadership in the NPO characterized differently if one approached it from the viewpoint of a steward (or steward leadership)?
- If one were to formulate his or her role in nonprofit leadership around the characteristics of the steward, how would that affect their effectiveness compared to other leadership approaches, theories, or models?
- What are the primary characteristics of the steward? What are the primary characteristics of the steward leader (if different)?
- How would a steward leader approach and utilize relationships with the implicit owners of the nonprofit resources in their decision-making and leadership?
- To what extent do nonprofit organizational leaders understand and view their role as stewards?
- Would the field of knowledge be improved or advanced if a theory or model of steward leadership was proposed and studied?
- In what ways would knowledge be advanced, and the performance of NPOs improved, if other stakeholders viewed their roles as stewards?

Because of the range of these potential research questions, the attempt to answer all of them extends well beyond the scope of a single study or dissertation. As was discussed in the introduction, the scope of this research has been limited by a number of decisions. Therefore, the author proposes the following two primary research questions as the logical and achievable starting point for a study on the relationship of stewardship with nonprofit leadership:

1. What do contemporary leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations perceive are the primary characteristics of leadership that is focused around the role

of the steward, and how do these characteristics compare with historically defined characteristics of stewards?

2. What is the extent of awareness and implementation of steward leader characteristics among leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations?

This dissertation's approach to answering both research questions involves two broad directions of study: first, historical research—looking back into the past foundations of the mundane steward and into recent research—and secondly, contemporary field research into steward leadership as it does or does not exist today among Christian nonprofit organizational leaders. The first half of this research will be presented in the next section and involves the study of historical documents: secular (Greek and Roman) and theological (Judeo-Christian). It has been demonstrated that the greatest wealth of information concerning the steward and the steward's role comes from some of the earliest source documents of classical slave/steward owners and historians. The biblical record is a critical part of the historical study because of the chronological scope of its documents and the decisive function that the subjects of this research—Christian nonprofit leaders—grant to the biblical text. It has also been demonstrated that contemporary theories of stewardship and leadership in NPOs, although containing significant gaps in knowledge, do provide further development of the characteristics and behavior of the steward leader. Out of these approaches to historical research, chapter 5 will derive a preliminary typology of steward characteristics.

The second phase of research will shift to the present and will study the existence and definition of steward leader characteristics as perceived by contemporary Christian nonprofit leaders. The research questions defined in this chapter, coupled with the preliminary typology of historic steward leader characteristics in chapter 5, will serve as the foundation for developing a field research instrument with survey and interview guides. Both quantitative and qualitative field research will be conducted with contemporary nonprofit leaders leading to the articulation of a collective typology of steward leader characteristics by combining the historical and contemporary typologies.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter on research methodology and design follows a standard approach, beginning with a review of perspectives on the primary and secondary research questions, the research purposes, and the contribution of the research to theory and practice. It will then propose a general research methodology by briefly reviewing the attributes, distinctives, and rationale important to the quantitative and qualitative methods chosen. Then, the author will propose the specific research designs and procedures for each stage of the field research. These methodologies will include a description of the specific method chosen, identification of access considerations, the rationale for sample selection, and ethical considerations. Finally, the author will propose both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures that will evaluate and interpret the data derived from the research.

Research Perspectives

Research Questions

The primary research question identified earlier in this thesis is: *What do contemporary leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations affirm are the primary characteristics of leadership that is focused around the role of the steward, and how do those compare with historically defined characteristics of stewards?* Closely aligned to that question is the secondary research question: *To what extent do leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations visualize and formulate their role through stewardship (i.e., the extent of awareness and implementation of stewardship characteristics)?*

Research Thesis

The thesis to be confirmed is as follows: *A primary typology of distinctive leadership characteristics exists among senior managers of Christian nonprofit organizations who visualize and demonstrate their role as stewards.*

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is *to develop a typology of beneficial characteristics of steward leaders and to analyze whether these exist in contemporary nonprofit Christian leaders and managers, by applying multiple research methods, resulting in a behavioral description of steward leadership.* Using the purpose categories suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2006, 34) for qualitative research,³⁶ the purpose of this study can be described as primarily descriptive and exploratory. It is descriptive in that it will attempt to discover and describe the primary characteristics of steward leaders where such characteristics have not been previously well identified or fully articulated. The research is secondarily exploratory in that it will attempt to provide understanding concerning a little-understood and minimally researched approach to leadership and management within the unique environment of nonprofit organizations (NPOs). Ultimately, this research is primarily a phenomenological study in that it is a study of things as they are *perceived* by the research subjects (rather than being a positivistic study where behavior is primarily observed and evaluated) and is based more on qualitative methodologies than on quantitative (although both approaches to research will be used).³⁷

³⁶ Marshall and Rossman describe four potential purposes of a research study: exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, and emancipatory.

³⁷ See Hussey and Hussey (1997) for an excellent summary of the differences between positivistic and phenomenological methodologies.

Research Contribution

The contribution of this research for theory and practice has many different facets. It contributes in general ways to greater knowledge in disciplines such as nonprofit organizational development, nonprofit leadership, and theories of leadership. It also adds specific contributions to gaps in knowledge and theories previously reviewed in chapter 1, building on and adding to specific theories, research studies, and channels of study. We will begin by reviewing five general contributions that this research makes, and will then address a number of specific contributions to gaps in knowledge revealed in the previous chapter.

First, the desire of the researcher is that this study will add knowledge to the development of a theory of leadership tailored to the specific needs of the NPO and leader, and in particular to the Christian nonprofit. As we have already seen, only a handful of sources in the review of literature address the unique aspects of leading the nonprofit organization, and most adopt an approach to leadership formulated around for-profit leadership models. Significant leadership resources for non-church NPOs started to be produced only after the 1980s. Nonprofit leadership has been studied more frequently in recent decades, but more research needs to be done to develop a distinctive model applicable to the nonprofit sector. Specifically, this research will augment the distinctives Jeavons (Bottom Line 1994) and Anthony and Estep (2005) explored concerning managing the Christian NPO. Hence, considerable knowledge can still be added to theories and models of nonprofit leadership.

Second, this research will have a practical impact on the leadership skills and effectiveness of nonprofit leaders and managers. They are the primary subjects of this study and intended beneficiaries of its results. Although analyzing leadership *effectiveness* is not within the limited scope of this study, it is assumed that an increased awareness of steward characteristics and leadership knowledge will contribute in some degree towards better nonprofit leadership and nonprofit organizational effectiveness. As nonprofit leaders familiarize themselves with and develop steward characteristics that more directly address

the unique challenges they face in nonprofit leadership, they will be better empowered to lead and develop employees and volunteers who are stewards themselves.

Third, this research will contribute understanding of the stewardship role to other key participants in NPOs who each have their own expression of stewardship in the nonprofit organization: board members, donors, stakeholders, and employees. Members of the board of directors are the most obvious of contemporary stewards; they are those who *hold in trust* the resources of the organization on behalf of the donors, stakeholders, and public. Certainly those who have governance responsibilities over NPOs need to understand the challenges faced by the executive director and his or her own stewardship role. They can also profit from a deeper understanding of their own motives and roles as stewards. Donors often provide the resources for the establishment and operation of NPOs. They do not have the same claims of control over assets as classical estate owners did, but many donors retain a fiduciary claim and an implicit interest—if not a sense of personal possessiveness—over the resources, management, and work of the organization. As such, donors can also benefit from a clearer understanding of their own stewardship role and the role entrusted to the directors, executive leaders, and staff. Stakeholders other than donors also develop an implicit engagement in the organization and through this research can be educated with a fuller understanding of stewardship. Finally, employees of NPOs manage and use the assets of the organization every day, while executing their given responsibilities, and they have the potential to function equally well as stewards if properly educated as to the role.

Unfortunately, this project does not have sufficient space or time to fully research and/or develop a succinct model or theory of steward leadership. However, it is the fourth intent of the author that by developing one aspect of the steward leader model, namely the characteristics of the steward leader, the articulation of those characteristics will contribute towards the development of a formalized model of steward leadership, to be both suggested by this research in the conclusion and adopted by others for further elaboration and study.

Finally, this research is offered as a stimulus for further research into the contemporary role of the steward in the organization, into nonprofit leadership, into steward leadership, and even into the role of the steward leader in publicly held companies.

All are young fields when compared to other spheres of leadership studies, and much is left to be understood.

There are also a number of specific contributions to gaps in knowledge highlighted in the previous chapter that this research will provide. In that chapter, six characteristics that make the nonprofit distinct from the for-profit corporation were identified based on the work of Salamon (1999) and Anthony and Young (1999): preoccupation with non-financial outcomes; a tendency towards providing service; different tax and legal considerations; private sector non-ownership; self-governance; and ambiguous accountability. Although each distinctive has been researched as it applies to the organization, few researchers have looked at how these characteristics influence the need for a unique approach to nonprofit management and leadership. This body of research will contribute to knowledge by evaluating how the role of the steward leader in the NPO provides much of the context for understanding most of these distinguishing characteristics.³⁸ For example, it will clarify the leadership motivation and behaviors necessary to address the unique challenge that lack of direct ownership presents for nonprofit management (Goodin 2003). It will add to a crucial and growing field of nonprofit organizational research and will contribute specifically to knowledge in the specialized area of nonprofit leadership.

Both in research and in the press, corporate and leadership accountability are increasingly important topics today due to a number of high-profile abuses in recent years. Among all types of organizations, according to Stewart (1984), NPOs require some of the highest levels of accountability given the demands of multiple stakeholders on their management and performance and the requirements of the stewarding (i.e., non-ownership) role of management. Unfortunately, few research studies adequately address the intrinsic motivation for such accountability or the inevitable conflict that arises between the differing expectations of stakeholders and management. Within Christian NPOs specifically, the issue of the leader's accountability to God and its ramifications on accountability to human stakeholders needs to be addressed by the research. This study will contribute to these issues of nonprofit accountability inadequately addressed by

³⁸ We will not attempt to determine the leadership ramifications of the third distinguishing feature, namely tax and legal considerations, because of the specialized focus needed to research that field adequately.

Kearns (1994 and 1996) and Fry (1995) by looking at the motivations for accountability and the potential conflict arising from varying understandings of divine and human accountability.

For at least the past 25 years, organizational economics and governance theory have been strongly influenced by agency theory, which depicts managers of large corporations as agents who perform actions on behalf of the principal. In agency theory, managers often will not act to maximize returns to shareholders because of divergent interests unless appropriate governance structures are implemented. Only recently has a new stewardship theory of governance been proposed and studied by a handful of researchers attempting to provide a more balanced approach.³⁹ Stewardship theory proposes that there is no inherent problem with managerial motivation and that managers can have an intrinsic desire to maximize organizational performance because of a sense of duty and identification with the organization. Since stewardship theory is still a relatively young and minimally researched theory of managerial behavior and governance, this research will contribute knowledge to the following:

- The theory's application to nonprofit organizational management⁴⁰
- An understanding of the motivational characteristics that drive stewardship behavior
- How a Christian leader's sense of accountability to God affects his or her human accountabilities
- Whether contemporary Christian nonprofit leaders primarily operate under the principles of agency or stewardship theory.

Salstrand (1956) and Lynn (2006) demonstrated how the history of stewardship over the centuries has been driven more by religious nuance and contextual necessity than by a careful or holistic attempt to understand and apply stewardship to all spheres of life. As we have already seen in chapter 1, significant opportunities have been missed in applying stewardship to corporate leadership, to the workplace, to organizational management, and to non-financial spheres such as the stewardship of employees, corporate

³⁹ See Donaldson (1990); Donaldson and Davis (1991); Fox and Hamilton (1994); Davis and Schoorman (1997); Muth and Donaldson (1998); Dicke and Ott (2002); Tosi et al. (2003); and Arthurs and Busenitz (2003).

⁴⁰ The application of stewardship theory to nonprofit management has been only minimally studied by Dicke and Ott (2002) and Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998).

vision, and corporate resources.⁴¹ Block's most recent book on stewardship in organizational dynamics and management (1993) points out the importance of this subject in the business world, yet even he does not apply stewardship to the nonprofit sector. This dissertation expands on an understanding of the scope of stewardship and contributes to an understanding of its application to leadership, management, and most importantly, to nonprofit organizational management.

In the discipline of leadership theory and models, this study has already reviewed the state of research on leadership theories such as McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (1960) and compared transactional leadership models with transformational models (Burns 1978). However, little is known about which theories or models of leadership influence Christian nonprofit leaders or how their approaches affect the organizations they oversee. Two distinct models of leadership—servant leadership and steward leadership—have only recently been delineated as leadership models by Greenleaf (1970) and Clinton (1989) respectively. But there appears to be no research that has attempted to compare these two models which share many similar characteristics, and no research has been published on the prevalence of either model among leaders of Christian NPOs. As a cogent model, steward leadership has been developed by only a handful of researchers.⁴² This research report will attempt to contribute to these significant gaps in knowledge, concluding with a refined definition of the steward leader model.

Finally, based primarily on the work of Young (1987), Paton and Cornforth (1992), and Jeavons (1992), nonprofit leadership has been shown to have distinctive challenges compared to leadership of for-profit corporations. Yet this report already concluded in chapter 1 that the following five distinct leadership challenges seem to be inadequately developed in current nonprofit organizational research:

- The challenge of responsibly managing resources that one has no direct ownership over or financial stake in.
- The trustee role that both executive and non-executive directors play (and the interaction between the two as a result).

⁴¹ Research by Fletcher (1960); Business Executives for Economic Justice (1992); Beisner (1994); and Graves and Addington (2005) are starting places but wholly inadequate.

⁴² Clinton (1989); Block (1993); Goodspeed (1998); Daft (1999); Brinckerhoff (2004); Ford (2006); and Rodin (2010) are the primary contributors to the steward leader model.

- Spiritual accountability that Christian nonprofit executives have toward God and the Christian community.
- The management of staff and volunteers who have a personal—and sometimes independent— commitment to the mission.
- The emphasis on participatory or team leadership.

This research will attempt to provide contemporary field data and analysis to contribute knowledge to each of these five challenges that leaders face in guiding the NPO today.

General Methodology

The general scope of theoretical inquiry contained in this dissertation is a part of larger, established traditions of quantitative and qualitative research. Both methodologies will be used in a two-part approach to the field research, thus providing triangulation of data through the use of multiple methods in a single study.⁴³ To root this study in existing literature and methodologies, the author will provide a general introduction to each methodology. Since the rationale, scrutiny, and conceptual rigor of both quantitative and qualitative research is highly documented, only summary sources will be presented in support of the use of these methodologies.

Quantitative research has been historically associated with the objective investigation of quantitative phenomena and their relationships, and is commonly used in the natural sciences. Collecting, measuring, and the statistical analysis of numerical data are central to quantitative research. In quantitative research, the role of the researcher is generally one of independence from the subjects or data being studied. Although lists of the methodological features for quantitative research vary based on the published source, Reichardt and Cook (1979) suggest the following features are representative of the quantitative method in general:

- Emphasis on testing and verification
- Focus on facts and/or reasons for social events

⁴³ See Denzin (1978) for one of the earliest detailed explanations of triangulation in research.

- Logical and critical approach
- Controlled measurement
- Objective “outsider view” distant from data
- Hypothetical-deductive; focus on hypothesis testing
- Result oriented
- Particularistic and analytical
- Generalization by population membership.

Quantitative research is often associated with positivism, both by proponents and by critics. Positivism is one of two primary research paradigms—alongside phenomenology—in which, according to Collis and Hussey (2003),

The positivistic approach seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard to the subjective nature of the individual. Thus, logical reasoning is applied to the research so that precision, objectivity and rigour replace hunches, experience and intuition as the means of investigating the research problems. [...] Laws provide the basis of explanation, permit the anticipation of phenomena, predict their occurrence and therefore allow them to be controlled. Explanation consists of establishing causal relationships between the variables by establishing causal laws. (52, 53)

Collis and Hussey (2003) prefer to use the term “positivistic paradigm” as the broader and more inclusive term under which they include quantitative methodology, because, they contend, it is possible for a positivistic paradigm to produce qualitative data and vice versa (55-56). However, according to Silverman (2000), “not only is [positivism] difficult to define but there are very few quantitative researchers who would accept it (see Marsh, 1982; Ch. 3). Instead, most quantitative researchers would argue that they do not aim to produce a science of laws (like physics) but aim simply to produce a set of cumulative generalizations based on the critical sifting of data” (5).

Quantitative research tends to focus on research methods that allow for the statistical analysis of numerical data to find relationships within the data. Common quantitative methods are surveys, experiments, structured observation, structured interviews, cross-sectional studies, and longitudinal studies (Collis and Hussey 2003). Measurement is the essential element of the quantitative process, with rigor in data collection and accuracy of measurement being most critical. Quantitative data are analyzed using various statistical methods and formulas. Specific to how this research report will

analyze quantitative data, Alasuutari (1995) details how quantitative data are sometimes transformed into quantifiable variables and tabular forms:

In quantitative analysis argumentation is based on numbers and on systematic, statistical relations between the numbers. Naturally the starting point for this is that the data are transformed—except for the rare cases in which this is already so—into a table format. This means that the observation units are given values in different variables. These variables are not always numbers but—when we talk about a nominal variable—may be letter symbols. [...] The observation units are given values in several variables, and the idea of the analysis is to find statistical relations between the variables. (8-9)

Qualitative research is generally associated with the social sciences and is more recent as a methodology, developing in the 1970s and exploding in the mid-1990s onward (Seale et al. 2004). It is the examination, analysis, and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. In qualitative research, reality is subjective, viewed from multiple perspectives, and value-laden. The researcher interacts with those being researched and follows an iterative, inductive process leading to hypothesis building and explanations.⁴⁴ Denzin and Lincoln (2005) offer the following definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves the interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (3)

Silverman (2000) summarizes the preferences of qualitative research based on an adaptation of Hammersley's 1992 work:

- A preference for qualitative data: the analysis of words and images rather than numbers
- A preference for naturally occurring data: observation rather than experiment, unstructured rather than structured interviews

⁴⁴ See the excellent summary chart of the qualitative paradigm in Collis and Hussey (2003, 49) which they adapted from Creswell (1994).

- A preference for meanings rather than behavior: attempting “to document the world from the point of view of the people studied” (Hammersley 1992, 165)
- A rejection of natural science as a model
- A preference for inductive, hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis testing (cf. Glaser and Strauss 1967) (8)

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives: case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, cultural texts and productions, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts (3). Qualitative research “does not have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own” (7). It tends to focus on methods that study smaller sample sizes in more depth: interviewing, ethnography (field observation), oral history, focus groups, grounded theory, case studies, feminist research, and hermeneutics (textual analysis), to name a few.

The analysis of qualitative data is full of challenges given the phenomenological nature of the data itself, the large quantities of data, and the iterative nature of the research process. Robson (1993) compares the breadth of qualitative data analysis with quantitative analysis: “There is no clear and accepted set of conventions for [qualitative data] analysis corresponding to those observed with quantitative data” (370). In Coffey and Atkinson’s 1996 review of some of the more recent contributions by researchers to the process of qualitative data analysis, the range of procedural approaches to analysis is quite evident (7-10). Coffey and Atkinson begin their review referring to Huberman and Miles (1994), who link three sub-processes in their approach to qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. They also refer to Dey (1993) to illustrate how qualitative data analysis can be broken into three related but different processes: describing, classifying, and connecting. Coffey and Atkinson end their review with Tesch (1990) supplying the most succinct summary of the key characteristics of qualitative data analysis which can be viewed as commonalities among most approaches:

1. Analysis is a cyclical process and a reflexive activity.

2. The analytical process should be comprehensive and systematic but not rigid.
3. Data are segmented and divided into meaningful units but connection to the whole is maintained.
4. Data are organized according to a system derived from the data themselves.
5. Analysis is, on the whole, an inductive, data-led activity.
6. Analysis requires methodical knowledge and intellectual competence.

This author chose to pursue the field research into contemporary characteristics and attitudes concerning stewardship through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Both approaches provided a unique perspective into the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter, and both will be used in combination with the other, as Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002) suggest:

In some studies, data may be quantified, but the analysis itself is qualitative, such as with census reports. It is quite common for researchers to collect their data through observations and interviews, the methods normally related to qualitative research. But the research may code the data collected in such a manner that would allow statistical analysis. In other words, it is quite possible to quantify qualitative data. (86)

Field research for this dissertation was multi-method and triangulated, combining quantitative and qualitative research respectively. It began first with quantitative research through survey of a larger population of target subjects—Christian nonprofit organizational leaders—and drew conclusions from that survey regarding the knowledge and expressions of steward leader characteristics. A self-administered survey was chosen as the quantitative method for this study's research strategy because of its accepted role in establishing baseline characteristics and attitudes as a set of cumulative generalizations from a pool of subjects. The author has personal access to many subjects in the target audience through his work in the nonprofit sector for over 30 years, and thus was able to develop a multi-national list of subjects. In addition, the results of the survey facilitated the identification of a smaller number of subjects who fit a more targeted profile—those who have a developed understanding and perception of themselves as steward leaders.

This smaller pool of subjects was the focus of the second qualitative phase of field research through in-depth subject interviews, was intended to triangulate and enrich the survey findings, and allowed more in-depth investigation of the research questions and steward leadership issues. Multiple in-depth interviews were chosen as the second research method because of the undeveloped nature of the research subject (which necessitated more in-depth investigation of the concepts), the lack of existing documents on the subject that could be studied, and the need to define a common vocabulary of steward leadership terms among subjects for comparison purposes.⁴⁵ The details of each research design and procedure is the subject of the next section.

All research conformed to standards of quality and trustworthiness. Positivist research has long affirmed the need for internal validity, external validity (or generalizability), reliability, and objectivity as the fundamental standards of acceptable research. Based on earlier work by Lincoln and Guba (1985) regarding how these standards apply within qualitative research and establish the “truth value” of a triangulated study, Marshall and Rossman (2006) summarize how these four standards are reworked for interpretive qualitative inquiry:

- **Credibility:** Is there sufficient detail provided by the researcher on the way the evidence was produced and analyzed to ensure credible acceptance and validity?
- **Transferability:** How transferable and replicable are the research findings to another setting or group of people in similar situations and with similar research questions?
- **Dependability:** Has the researcher accounted for and justified changing conditions in the phenomena studied and changes in the research design due to the iterative nature of the research?

⁴⁵ For instance, due to the undeveloped nature of the subject, stewardship terms such as *steward*, *risk*, *stakeholder*, *ownership*, and *resources* may be referenced by different words or phrases by various subjects, requiring dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee to clarify.

- Confirmability: Can multiple observers confirm the same findings as the researcher, thus lending an intersubjective agreement as a form of objectivity? (201-03)⁴⁶

Research Design and Procedures

Data Collection Methods

Survey

The field research began with the development and implementation of a self-administered descriptive survey,⁴⁷ quantitatively analyzed. Surveys are one of the oldest and most common forms of research, and are solidly rooted in the quantitative paradigm. The method is not without its critics, however, whose assessments are succinctly summarized by Marsh (1982). Surveys are criticized for being inherently positivistic; superficial; the product of uninvolved respondents; suffering from a lack of relation between attitude and behavior; and sometimes too generalized. To develop a survey that minimized the above criticisms or weaknesses, a rigorous process of development was followed using suggestions from contemporary survey research literature:⁴⁸

1. Survey content was derived from observations and characteristics previously identified in the review of literature, historical study, and biblical study included in this dissertation.

⁴⁶ Seale et al. (407) provide a useful summary of the wide range of new concepts that have been proposed by qualitative researchers to address issues of phenomenological quality: completeness, saturation, authenticity, ecological validity, consistency, credibility, and plausibility.

⁴⁷ Burns (2000) describes the difference between a descriptive survey and an explanatory survey: “The descriptive survey aims to estimate as precisely as possible the nature of existing conditions, or the attributes of a population. [...] The explanatory survey seeks to establish cause and effect relationships but without experimental manipulation” (566).

⁴⁸ For example, see Robson (1993, 247-67) and Burns (2000, 574-80).

2. Survey questions were formulated using the simplest construction and approach possible to convey unambiguous meaning to the participants and a standardized approach where possible.⁴⁹
3. Open-ended questions were minimized and the answers coded to facilitate quantitative analysis.⁵⁰
4. The total length of time to complete the survey was designed to be between 15 and 25 minutes to avoid participant fatigue.
5. Eight members of the target audience were asked to pre-test the survey and give extended feedback to improve its final form before broader distribution.
6. Multiple-choice question options were presented in random order where possible to avoid early-option bias.
7. Participants were given two options for how to take the self-administered survey—online or printed copy—to provide open access.
8. Any explanation of the intent of the survey to participants was minimized to avoid preconceived biases. Subjects were asked to participate in the leadership survey because they were nonprofit organizational leaders, but nothing else was said concerning the content or intent of the survey.⁵¹
9. Participants met established demographic criteria to ensure a defined sample population, with non-qualifying participants eliminated from the results.

The survey was a combination of questions seeking demographic and attitudinal measurement. Demographic questions were kept to a minimum but included to confirm participation in the survey only by members of the target audience—leaders of Christian NPOs with other employees reporting to them—and to investigate whether different demographics produced different results. Attitude scales were used in the survey to assess the cognitive and affective component of statements that revealed a full range of steward leadership attitudes. Since no prior existing attitude scales had been published in the area

⁴⁹ Burns (2000, 576-79) has an excellent list of criteria for formulating good survey questions.

⁵⁰ Robson's (1993, 253) suggestions on how open-ended questions can be coded were followed.

⁵¹ Alasuutari (1995) suggests the mechanistic method (versus the humanistic method) of gathering information as a way to avoid "the reactivity of measurement" by giving subjects only limited information about the purpose of the study, thus avoiding bias in the way they respond.

of stewardship, the attitudinal statements were derived from the previous historical research in this dissertation. The attitudes measured were not of a tacit nature, deeply held beliefs, or emotionally charged opinions. Therefore, following Marshall and Rossman (2006, 125), it was assumed that the characteristic or belief could be measured accurately through self-reporting. Burns (2000, 559) provides detailed instructions regarding the construction and analysis of attitude scales, from which the researcher chose to use the Likert method⁵² in the attitude scales. Half of the statements were worded in a reverse direction to promote a “response set,” encouraging respondents to read and judge the statements carefully and thus avoid filling in the scale by going down one column only.

The survey was self-administered, made available to subjects either online through SurveyMonkey⁵³ or as a printed copy sent via post to subjects who did not have access to the Internet. Subjects were given a total of 45 days to complete the survey with 2 bi-weekly reminder notices during that period. As an incentive to complete the survey, participants were informed that new The Message Bibles would be given away to three participants of the survey, drawn at random. The original goal was to send the survey to 250 people with a response from at least 100 of the subjects (40% response rate). The final subject database consisted of 235 nonprofit leaders who were identified using various means detailed in a later section in this chapter entitled “Research Participants.” Of the 235 potential subjects, 77 completed the survey (33% response rate).

Non-response bias, or the potential for those who did *not* respond to the survey having different views than those who did respond, is a challenge to validity and generalizability in quantitative research. Since only 33% of potential subjects responded to this particular survey, it is important that there be safeguards to reduce or eliminate non-response bias and to analyze the smaller data set appropriately. Because of the researcher’s familiarity with the target subjects, the researcher knew that organizational leaders, given their busy lives and priorities, would be a challenging audience to engage in completing a survey. Therefore, a lower response rate was expected, due more to time constraints than to response bias. However, the researcher implemented the following safeguards with the process and data analysis to minimize non-response bias:

⁵² See Likert (1932).

⁵³ www.surveymonkey.com. This program was chosen for its simplicity of use, the prevalence of awareness of the program among the subjects, and the program’s statistical capabilities.

- Subjects were told little about the purpose or content of the survey, thus diminishing the possibility of biased participation or non-participation in the survey.
- Surveys that were submitted towards the end of the 45-day completion period were compared through cross-tabulation to surveys submitted early on to see if discernable differences in the results were observed.
- The data were analyzed using less sophisticated methods (frequency distribution and arithmetic mean and mode) to accommodate analysis methods more appropriate to a smaller data set.

Although subjects were given the optional opportunity to attach their names to the survey to be entered into the drawing for a free Bible and to collect contact information for a possible follow-up interview, participants were informed that all results would be reported anonymously. See appendix A for the survey form.

In-depth interview

Cohen and Manion (1989) call the interview “a kind of conversation initiated by the interviewer for a specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation” (307). Although most forms of interviews are used to elicit participants’ perceptions of reality, an important methodological debate concerns whether interview responses are to be treated as giving direct access to experience and facts, or as actively constructed “narratives” and indirect representations of those experiences (Silverman 2000, 35).⁵⁴ People generally attach multiple meanings to experiences, which are often revealed by what they say differently to a researcher, partner, co-worker, or pastor about the same experience. The “realist approach” to interview data is used by many who take the former view (i.e., interviews give direct access to experience and facts) and seek to fit a verifiable interpretation to an external reality. Silverman proposes an

⁵⁴ Seale (1998) calls these two approaches “interview data as resource” and “interview data as topic.” In a later source, Silverman (2006, 117-32) breaks out the debate into three positions: positivism (interviews provide facts about behavior and attitudes), emotionalism (interviewees actively construct their social worlds), and constructionism (interviewers and interviewees are always actively constructing meaning). The author has attempted to follow the first and second constructs.

alternative “narrative approach,” which “treats interview data as accessing various stories or narratives through which people describe their world” (2000, 122). The approach of this study’s in-depth interviews has been with a foot placed in both camps. Interview data were coded for the purpose of evaluating participants’ perceptions of steward leadership characteristics, and the results were recognized as being a valid representation of the participants’ experience. Yet at the same time, the interpretations of the researcher are “held softly,” recognizing the finiteness and limitations of a situated interview and the interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Another debate related to interviews concerns whether the interviewer can be truly neutral in the interview, and whether lack of neutrality is a fatal flaw or an advantage to this unique qualitative method. Traditional approaches to interviewing concentrate on maintaining scientific neutrality and the techniques to achieve it (Fontana and Frey 2005, 696). However, Holstein and Gubrium (2002) argue that neutrality is impossible to achieve because of the active component of interviews: “If interviews are interpretively active, meaning-making occasions, interview data are unavoidably collaborative. Therefore, any technical attempts to strip interviews of their interactional ingredients would be futile” (112). In the same articles by Holstein and Gubrium (112-26) as well as Fontana and Frey (695-727), the authors make a convincing case for the role of active interviewing. Active interviewing is not, however, a free-for-all conversation without bounds or purpose. The author follows the advice of Holstein and Gubrium, who caution that the interview is a guided conversation in which the interviewer empathetically guides and probes the subject into greater depth and articulation, all the while maintaining a focus on the research question and the research subject as the primary source of data:

This is not to say that active researchers merely coax their respondents into preferred answers to questions. Rather, they converse with respondents in such a way that alternate considerations are brought to play. They may suggest orientations to, and linkages between, diverse aspects of respondent’s experience, adumbrating—even inviting—interpretations that make use of particular resources, connections and outlooks. Interviewers may explore incompletely articulated aspects of experience, encouraging respondents to develop topics in ways relevant to their own everyday lives (DeVault, 1990). The objective is not to dictate interpretation, but to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined by predetermined agendas. (120-21)

Given the current role of the author as a peer nonprofit leader and as one who has sought to personally understand and apply steward leadership for more than 30 years, it would be impractical for him to portray a role of neutrality in the interviews. The author was aware at all times of the potential for biased interpretations of the results and tried to separate the expression of his own beliefs from the analysis of the interview data. There are advantages for the author to be the primary qualitative, active researcher:

- The author has an intimate and developed understanding of the research problem and its purpose.
- The author is in a qualified position to conduct the type of interviews that are “guided, concentrated, focused, and open-ended communication events that are co-created by the investigator and interviewee(s)” (Crabtree and Miller 1999, 19).
- The author is in an advantaged position to be able to understand and interpret the meanings that experiences hold for nonprofit leaders.⁵⁵

Most researchers define at least four basic types of interviews: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured (open-ended) interviews, and focus groups (Silverman 2006). In the semi-structured interview, a set of general questions are worked out in advance, there is liberty to vary the sequence or wording of the questions, some probing on the part of the interviewer is required, and rapport with the interviewee is encouraged. The semi-structured type of interview format was selected for this phase of the research based on a number of reasons. It was selected because of the undefined nature of steward leadership terminology (which required greater interaction with subjects) and the complicated nature of how leadership expresses itself in reality. The semi-structured interview format was also chosen because the research requirements fit best the criteria defined by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) for semi-structured interviews:

- It is necessary to understand the construct that the interviewee uses as a basis for his or her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or subject.

⁵⁵ See Holstein and Gubrium (2002, 123-25), and Fontana and Frey (2005, 713-15), for excellent summaries of the collaborative role of the active interviewer in analysis and interpretation.

- One aim of the interview is to develop an understanding of the respondent's "world" so that the researcher might influence it, either independently or collaboratively.
- The step-by-step logic of a situation is not clear.
- The subject matter is highly confidential or commercially sensitive.
- The interviewee may be reluctant to be truthful about the issue other than confidentially in a one-to-one situation.

The interviews were also conducted as in-depth or "depth interviews". In-depth interviewing is generally considered a subset of either the semi-structured or unstructured categories. Crabtree and Miller (1999) define the in-depth interview as "a powerful qualitative research tool when the focus of inquiry is narrow, the respondents represent a clearly defined and homogenous bounded unit with an already known context, the respondents are familiar and comfortable with the interview as a means of communication, and the goal is to generate themes and narratives" (90). Rapley (2004) suggests in-depth interviews "are 'thick descriptions,' where interviewees are specifically encouraged by questions and other verbal and non-verbal methods to produce elaborated and detailed answers" (15).

The process of interviewing began with a determination of the major themes that were to be investigated in more depth based on the results of categories and issues discovered during the historical research and the written surveys. Since the in-depth interview is a qualitative research method designed to delve deeper into issues with only a limited number of subjects, the questions that were developed for the interviews focused on issues that surfaced in the previous stages of research that needed clarification, explanation, and "elaborated and detailed answers." A flexible interview guide was developed that contained a scripted introduction, introductory "closed" or warm-up questions, broader open-ended or "grand tour questions,"⁵⁶ and closing remarks. The purpose of the introductory questions was to build rapport, orient the interviewee to the subject, establish both the credibility of the interviewer and the interviewee, and build a bridge to intimacy. Grand tour questions were the main body of the interview and contained questions that were more open-ended, descriptive, engaged the interviewee

⁵⁶ See Crabtree and Miller (1999, 96-99).

deeply in the subject, and sought to elicit understanding, perceptions, and attitudes. The order of the grand tour questions was tentative pending the direction that each interview took. Prompts and probes were used throughout the interview to encourage the interviewee to expand on his or her input. A copy of the final interview guide is included in appendix B.

The interview guide was pre-tested as a pilot study with two members of the target audience. As a result of the pre-test of the interview, the wording of many questions was modified for better clarity, the order of some questions were changed, and a few questions were eliminated to keep the length of the interview to approximately 1 hour. Following the suggestions of Silverman (2000, 104) and Gobo (2004, 448-49), 10 interview subjects were chosen from the 77 participants who completed the survey using purposive sampling to study a small number of leaders who professed to personally apply steward leadership in their organization. The list of interview subjects was chosen from those who had demonstrated a high awareness of steward leadership characteristics and self-identified their personal leadership style as steward leadership. Interview subjects answered all of the following survey questions accordingly:

- Question 11: “What theory or model of leadership do you try to apply?”
Answer: “steward leadership”
- Question 12: “To what degree does the steward role describe your leadership?” Answer: “This role generally describes my leadership style”
- Question 15: “A biblical model of leadership is the steward leader.”
Answer: “strongly agree”
- Question 16: Provided their name and email address.

Interview subjects were contacted through a formal permission letter,⁵⁷ either mailed or emailed, with the request to participate further in the research through a face-to-face or telephone interview. The author presented himself both as an academic researcher and a fellow leader to gain rapport. When all 10 subjects agreed to participate, appointments were made and the method of contact was determined. All participants were informed that confidentiality of the results would be maintained through the use of

⁵⁷ Content of the permission letter followed the recommendations of Silverman (2006, 325). A copy of the letter is included in appendix B.

fictitious names. Interviews were personally conducted by the author, tape recorded, and transcribed using a standard transcription style that did not record speech patterns or use diacritical markings. The standard transcription style was chosen because the form of analysis that was applied focused on themes and opinions, and not on precise speech patterns or on discourse analysis. A copy of the analyzed results was provided to each interview participant for his or her feedback and affirmation that the quotations and facts (but not necessarily the interpretations) were an accurate representation of his or her input.

Research Participants

Participants in both phases of the field research were individuals in leadership positions within Christian NPOs. The scope of this study is rooted in leaders of Christian NPOs because of gaps in knowledge concerning how the Christian belief system affects leadership characteristics and behavior in nonprofit management, and because of the author's awareness of sufficient research subjects in Christian NPOs that were aware of steward leadership. Individual leaders are the focus of the research, not their organizations. Validation of their leadership position was confirmed by demographic questions in the survey that established their title, type of nonprofit organization, and number of employees under their span of control (it was necessary for participants to have at least one or more direct reports). Surveys of non-conforming organizations or individuals were eliminated. The NPOs were validated as Christian in orientation based on the author's personal knowledge of the organization or a brief analysis of the organization's published information on the Internet. Leaders within churches were not included in the research because of the unique and distinctive nature of ecclesial leadership and the author's familiarity with non-church nonprofit leadership. Church pastors and leaders are worthy subjects of study, but that target group will have to be the subject of specialized research in the future.

A challenge in this type of study is whether or not to claim that the individuals under study are "Christian leaders" and hold to Christian values, norms, and beliefs. Identifying individual subjects as "Christian" is a challenging process fraught with

conflicting theological and political definitions. Therefore, the assumption was made that as long as the organization publicly identified itself as Christian, the leader would most likely share the same persuasion. This research report will generally refer to the participants as “leaders of Christian NPOs.” However, occasionally participants will be called “Christian nonprofit leaders” (generally for grammatical reasons), but because of the aforementioned explanation, both phrases are to be understood by the reader as synonymous.

Potential subjects were initially identified through three different methods: (1) the author’s own network; (2) published lists of the leaders of Christian NPOs; and (3) referrals suggested by other leaders in the author’s network. Each method provided approximately one third of the total list of 235 names with postal addresses and/or email addresses. The author was not aware of any pre-familiarity with the research subject among his own network, thus reducing the potential of bias. Because of the author’s extensive involvement in the Christian nonprofit sector, access to all subjects was straightforward and open, either through direct contact or contact through the referring friend (one degree of separation). The interviewer’s prior reputation and leadership position as the CEO of an international Christian nonprofit publishing company with an annual budget of \$18 million also facilitated openness of dialogue and trust.⁵⁸

Sample Size and Sampling Strategy

The choice of the final sample size and sampling strategy was dictated largely by the distinct nature of the subject matter. Little has been written or researched on steward leadership, and finding subjects that could speak experientially about steward concepts and characteristics in their leadership was considered a formidable challenge. Following the recommendations of Silverman (2000, 103-04) on how to obtain generalizability with limited cases, the author chose to combine quantitative measures of larger populations with qualitative in-depth research of smaller populations through triangulation. It could be

⁵⁸ Alasuutari (1995, 52) references a number of research studies where rapport with the subjects increases the potential for honesty.

argued that the sample size of 77 participants in the survey was not a statistically predictive sample size for the quantitative survey to obtain generalizability from that study alone. But when the contemporary survey data are combined with the historical and biblical textual study of steward leader characteristics, and then merged with the characteristics identified from the contemporary, in-depth steward leader interviews, the resulting combined typology of steward characteristics becomes predictive and generalizable to the broader population of Christian nonprofit organizational leaders.

In reviewing the sampling strategies summarized by Kuzel (1999, 39), a *homogeneous* and *criterion* sample group was pursued for the survey.⁵⁹ It was assumed that, because of the newness of the research topic, the research would benefit from focus and simplification at this formative stage of inquiry. The scope of the research and time constraints did not allow for random or stratified sampling to identify the target sample. Although a statistically large sample of homogeneous subjects was sought for the survey study ($n \geq 250$), 235 subjects that accurately fit the target profile could be identified in a six-month period. Viable results—more indicative than predictive—were still obtained from the resulting 77 survey participants when combined with the results of the previous historical studies.

In selecting the type and number of samples for the qualitative in-depth interview, emphasis was placed on *intensity* as the sampling strategy.⁶⁰ Subjects were chosen using strict *criteria* derived from the survey results that singled out the most likely subjects who were intimately aware of steward leadership characteristics and were self-identified as trying to apply the steward leadership model in their own organizational leadership. The author chose to interview 10 cases to provide a wider variety of input on steward leader characteristics and to triangulate the quantitatively derived characteristics.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Homogeneous* sampling is chosen to “focus, reduce, and simplify” research. *Criterion* sampling is “useful for quality assurance in that all cases met some criterion” Kuzel (1999).

⁶⁰ Again, following Kuzel’s typology, *intensity* sampling provides “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely” Kuzel (1999).

⁶¹ Of the 10 interview subjects, only one came from the author’s prior network of acquaintances.

Ethical Considerations

Traditionally, ethical concerns in research have revolved around three core topics: informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm (Fontana and Frey 2005, 715). In a 2009 copy of a paper by the University of Aberdeen, the following Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) core principles were proposed for ethical research within the College of Arts and Social Studies:

1. Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure research integrity and quality.
2. Research staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved. Some variation is allowed in very specific and exceptional research contexts for which detailed guidance is provided.
3. The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.
4. Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion.
5. Harm to research participants must be avoided.
6. The independence of research must be clear. Any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit. (20)

All of the above ethical principles were carefully observed in this research.⁶² Subjects were fully informed of the purpose, methods, and possible uses of the research through an introductory paragraph on the survey and a letter to each interviewee. Copies of informed consent and permission documents are included within this dissertation in appendices A and B. Confidentiality was guaranteed each participant through the anonymous reporting of the survey results and through the use of pseudonyms in the

⁶² The research guidelines were available only in draft form at the time of writing, so the author was not able to submit the research plan to a research ethics committee for approval. Due to the straightforward nature of the research methods and the non-sensitive nature of the subject, the author felt confident that demonstrating care and attention to detail was sufficient to ensure that the research guidelines were followed.

interview report. When certain biographical details of a subject could potentially identify him or her within the smaller community of Christian nonprofit leaders, those details were changed or not published. All participation was voluntary, and no harm came to research subjects, either real or perceived. The researcher did not have any conflicts of interest.

Data Analysis

SurveyMonkey was the online survey program that automatically performed a rudimentary level of statistical analysis of the survey data: total, mean, percentage, and cross-tabulation analyses. To these relations were added other statistical calculations by the author: tabular presentations, graphing, frequency distributions, standard deviation calculation, and mode calculation. The data was then presented as summary statistics along with measures of central tendency (mean, mode) and variability (standard deviation). Tabular and graphical representations of the data (pie and frequency distribution charts) were added where a visual display of relations between the data sets was better than lists of data alone.⁶³ The relationships between variables were also analyzed, comparing multiple variables simultaneously, combining similar data sets, and comparing opposite data sets together.

Qualitative data analysis is described as “messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating” (Marshall and Rossman 2006, 154), leading Crabtree and Miller (1999, 130) to liken it to a dance. They additionally admit, “Nearly as many analysis strategies exist as qualitative researchers” (20), and they provide a helpful continuum of analysis strategies. These range from the technical, scientific, and standardized strategies on the “objectivist” end to “immersion strategies” on the other extreme, where categories are not prefigured and the researcher’s intuition and interpretive abilities are heavily involved. In an attempt to give some order and focus to the field, Crabtree and Miller break out the qualitative interpretive process into five phases that they suggest are pursued more circularly and iteratively than linearly: describing, organizing, connecting,

⁶³ Alasuutari (1995, 117) makes a convincing argument for the analytical value of tabulation as a form of proving quantitative relationships.

corroborating/legitimizing, and representing the account. “Organizing, connecting, and corroborating/legitimizing are the actual analysis part of the larger interpretive process. The describing phase serves as a link to the data collection process” (130). Representing the account generally takes whatever written form is appropriate to the context, which in the case of this specific research is in the form of a dissertation. Other researchers break out the qualitative process into fewer phases, such as Wolcott’s (1990) three phases of description, analysis, and interpretation, but most affirm that the phases or categories of analysis are not necessarily neat or distinct stages separated from one another.

The first phase of Crabtree and Miller’s qualitative analysis process is *describing*, which they call “a reflective phase in which the research team steps back from the field and analysis and reviews what is happening, how what has gone on has influenced the interpretation (reflexivity), and what should happen next” (131-32). This author paused at several key junctures in the data collection and analysis stages to re-read the previously written research reports and chapters of the dissertation to review the assumptions, process, and what had changed as a result of the research. In view of the fact that the author was working alone, he also submitted his research process, findings, and analysis to three supervising professors at similar junctures for interaction and feedback.

The approach of this dissertation’s qualitative research falls somewhere in the middle of Crabtree and Miller’s objectivist-immersion continuum, leaning more towards the objectivist end because of the undeveloped nature of the subject and the author’s familiarity with prefigured categories, coding, and standardization. Crabtree and Miller (1999, 20-24) break out the second phase of qualitative analysis, called *organizing*, into three idealized styles: the template style,⁶⁴ the editing style, and the immersion or crystallization style. All three styles refer to different ways in which the researcher enters the data and reorganizes it to answer the research question. “The template style refers to entering the text with a classification scheme, whereas the editing style refers to entering the text and only later developing a classification or coding scheme. [...] The process of organizing when using the template style involves using initial codes or categories to interact with the text; additional categories can emerge or old ones changed based on that

⁶⁴ Collis and Hussey (2003, 263-65) describe an analytical process called “general analytical procedure” that is very similar to Crabtree and Miller’s template style but not as well developed.

interaction” (134).⁶⁵ Since classification or coding schemes developed as the typology of steward leader characteristics progressively emerged in this research, the template style seems more closely aligned with the research process than the more immersive styles. The coding schemes were applied to the in-depth interview data through an iterative process of refining and elaborating further codes and sub-codes that surfaced out of the data.

The third phase of Crabtree and Miller’s five-phase sequence of qualitative analysis is *connecting*, or “the discovery of themes and patterns, to making linkages between categories, to developing models, and even to generating theory” (136). They suggest two broad approaches to connecting data: chunking (examining chunks of related texts together) and displaying (visually displaying segments of text next to each other through data matrices, maps, or diagrams) (170). Both approaches are used in connecting the data within this research.

Several alternative methods of analyzing the interview data were considered and rejected by the author. Content analysis was considered but rejected because of its emphasis on the indirect approach to existing documents, its data-reduction to sample-size units, and its positivist approach to coding and frequency distributions.⁶⁶ Narrative analysis is primarily applied to stories contained within narratives, conversations, or interviews. Discourse analysis, and its related discipline, conversation analysis, have both been applied to interview data, but their emphasis on analyzing written, spoken, or signed language at the structural or linguistic level would have diverted this research from its conceptual and attitudinal level.

The fourth phase of qualitative analysis according to Crabtree and Miller (1999) is *corroborating* or *legitimizing*, or “verifying and determining validity,” as others have called it. Corroborating is to make certain and to confirm by reviewing the texts after analysis to confirm internal consistency of interpretation (136). Corroboration is important because of the distinct differences between quantitative and qualitative data analysis (Alasuutari 1995, 11-12). In this fourth phase, alternative explanations, disconfirming

⁶⁵ See Crabtree and Miller (1999) pages 20-24, 133-35, and 163-71 for detailed descriptions of the template style of organizing qualitative data.

⁶⁶ See Collis and Hussey (2003, 255-58) and Robson (1993, 272-79) for detailed explanations of the content analysis method.

evidence, and negative cases were identified to either verify or modify the initial interpretations.

Summary

To answer the research question leading to confirmation of the thesis, quantitative and qualitative methods were used to triangulate the research findings. Adding to the results of the preliminary typology of steward leader characteristics derived from the chapters on classical and biblical studies of the steward, the researcher conducted a self-administered survey and in-depth interviews to derive a contemporary typology generalizable to the broader universe of leaders of Christian NPOs. ESRC ethical research guidelines were followed throughout. Chapters 6 and 7 will report on the specifics of the two research methods and on their analyzed results.

PART II

A PRELIMINARY TYPOLOGY OF STEWARD LEADER CHARACTERISTICS BASED ON CLASSICAL AND BIBLICAL MODELS

3. HISTORY AND TYPOLOGY OF THE CLASSICAL STEWARD

To understand how one leads the contemporary nonprofit organization (NPO) with the mindset of a steward leader, one needs to begin with a basic knowledge of the steward. To understand the steward, it is helpful to go back to the time when stewards were well-known as contributing members of society, when the first detailed explanations of the steward's role and responsibilities were documented. Various referred to as the bailiff, manager, house-manager, overseer, or steward, in classical societies the steward was given the responsibility of managing the resources of the master⁶⁷ on his behalf or in his absence. Stewards played a significant role in Chinese, Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Jewish, and medieval societies. However, up until the 4th century BCE, stewards are mentioned only briefly in funerary inscriptions and business documents, and no extant description of the steward's role existed in writing. Finally, starting circa 360 BCE, agricultural manuals began to surface from a few classical Greek and Roman writers—Xenophon in Greece; Cato, Varro, and Columella in the Roman Republic and Empire⁶⁸—that explained the specific roles and responsibilities of the steward. Because of cultural and educational restrictions, nothing was written at this time by stewards themselves of their role, but only by their masters. The author acknowledges that these documents most likely contain some bias as to the master's expectations and descriptions of the steward's role, but they are the only detailed documents the researcher has to work with and still serve as a valuable resource and view into everyday classical society and stewardship.

This chapter begins the second section dividing this dissertation which develops an understanding of the role and responsibilities of the *historical* steward. Its purpose is to

⁶⁷ When it comes to the ownership factor, modern day stakeholders (what will be called “implicit owners”) of nonprofit organizations are the closest analogy to classical masters or owners we have, although there are many aspects of the classical master that are not analogous. However, the primary purpose of studying the classical steward is to discern the characteristics and behaviors of the *steward*, not to study the role of the master or his or her characteristics.

⁶⁸ Xenophon (430-354 BCE) was a soldier, mercenary, and a contemporary of Socrates. His writings covered the history of his own times, the sayings of Socrates, and the life of ancient Greece. Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 BCE), statesman, soldier, and author, wrote his manual on running the *latifundia*, or rural farm, circa 160 BCE. Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BCE), a Roman scholar and writer, wrote over 400 works. Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella had a career in the army, was tribune in Syria (circa 35 CE), and then took up farming and wrote the most extensive manual on farming of the four.

derive a preliminary typology of steward leader characteristics based on the classical and biblical steward that will inform the field research into contemporary nonprofit steward leader characteristics. The reader has already observed in chapter 1 that no extant list of steward leader characteristics exists in current literature or research to define who the steward leader is, and so a preliminary typology of characteristics derived from historical sources is necessary to provide a baseline for research. Therefore, this second section will conclude in chapter 5 with the articulation of a preliminary typology of historical steward leader characteristics that will be used to launch the field research of modern nonprofit leaders in section 3. This historical and theoretical foundation will also serve to identify many of the actual survey and interview questions that will be used in the original field research of section 3.

In this chapter on the classical steward, the author will provide a broad review of slavery in the Greco-Roman world and the general role that steward-slaves played. After assessing the primary Greek and Latin words for the steward, the general duties and social status of stewards in Greek and Roman culture will be presented. The chapter then will present the specific responsibilities of the steward according to four primary sources: Xenophon, Cato, Varro, and Columella.⁶⁹

The Steward in Greco-Roman Society

Ancient wars produced a good supply of slaves, and numerous victories of Greek and Roman conquerors supplied a large enough flow of labor to change the nature of work and leisure from the upper class to the common soldier (Stambaugh and Balch 1986, 71).⁷⁰ With this growth of slave labor came the growth of industry, estates, and large urban farms (or *latifundia* in the Roman Republic), which required a large pool of labor and organized

⁶⁹ For the sake of brevity, the primary bibliographic information of the following four authors will be abbreviated by referring to author name and page number only: Xenophon and Pomeroy (1994); Cato and Varro (1934); and Columella (1968).

⁷⁰ Slaves were also produced as a result of abandoned children, the sale of children by the father, self enslavement, and by birth to slave parents, but violent conquest provided the largest supply of slaves (Barrow 1968).

local management (Yavetz 1988, 3). As common work was increasingly viewed as demeaning to Greek and Roman citizens for both philosophical and social reasons, management of the workforce of slaves was increasingly given over to specially trained and authorized managers chosen from the slave pool (Yavetz 161-62). A slave would often be identified at a young age for his management potential and trained over time in all aspects of work to someday assume the role of steward (Columella 11.1.7).

According to Jones (1960), slaves and stewards were actually more common in urban industry than on the farm: “Only the home farm where the landlord resided was normally cultivated by slaves. Slaves were more commonly employed in industry. [...] As Xenophon puts it, ‘Those who can, buy slaves so as to have fellow workers’. That is, craftsmen who could afford it bought slaves and trained them as assistants, hoping ultimately to retire and live in their declining years on the proceeds of their work” (3).⁷¹ Because of this, elaborate laws evolved (particularly in Italy) to define the legal responsibility of owners for their slaves’ commercial transactions, and many laws surfaced to govern the actions and relationship of slaves who were vested with authority to act on their master’s behalf (Jones, 11).

Greek and Latin words for steward

Various Greek and Latin words were used to describe the role of the classical manager. The most common word used in Greek for the steward is *oikonomos*, a compound word that Reumann (1957) etymologically analyzes in his seminal dissertation as coming from the noun *oikos*, meaning *house*—or by extension *household*—and the verb *nemō*, meaning “to deal out, distribute, or dispense.” *oikonomos* also came to mean by derivation “to rule” or “to manage.”⁷² Early in the classical period the term referred to “one who manages a household” (Liddell and Scott 1996), but later it came to refer to a broad range of household administrators, estate stewards, managers, subordinate state officials,

⁷¹ See Westerman (1955, 13) for a chart of the number of manumitted slaves in Athens in 349-320 BCE who worked in industry (68%) compared to agriculture (11%), transportation (9%), or distribution (26%).

⁷² Gersch (1974); Vine (1940); and Spicq (1994) agree with Reumann. Some mistakenly assume that *oikonomos* is derived from two nouns, *oikos* (*house*) and *nomos* (*law*) (e.g., Kantonen 1956).

financial officers, or any official holder of an office. Gersch (1974) describes the broad associations of the word: “We see from pre-Christian Greek evidence that *oikonomos* is associated with politics, religion, and mystery cults, as well as the common household” (9). Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1907) (BDB) further adds to this description:

oikonomos (from Aeschylus on) was used of people, and has a more concrete meaning. It denotes the house-steward, and then by extension the managers of individual departments within the household, e.g., the porter, the estate manager, the head cook, the accountant, all domestic officials who were mostly recruited from among the slaves. (254)

The second most common word associated with the role of the steward in Greek is *epitropos*. It designated a person “to whose care something is committed” (Vine 1940). It is used of the guardian of a minor, a steward, trustee, administrator, or of political offices such as procurator or governor (Liddell and Scott 1996). The term is frequently used for a guardian of a minor orphan, but not always with regard to inheritance. The *epitropos* was appointed by the father or by the court for an orphan so that the *epitropos* could act in place of the parents in all matters related to the welfare and life of the orphan (Belkin 1935, 53-54). Gersch (1974) provides an important comparison of the *epitropos* and the *oikonomos*:

The four qualities of the *epitropos* should be kept in mind for future comparison with those of the person called *oikonomos*: the *epitropos* is not a servant but the head and master of the household; is able to acquire wealth and to guard it; and is able to order his possessions properly and to make proper use of them. (1)

Other minor Greek words that have at times been associated with the steward are *tamias* (“one who cares and distributes, dispenser, steward, housekeeper”) and *phrontistēs* (“one who takes care, a house-steward”) (Liddell and Scott 1996).

Although Latin occupational titles were numerous, *villicus* is the most common word used for the farm overseer or steward and is also used for servants employed in public service and managers of businesses (Glare 1980, 2062). The Latin word is generally translated into English as *steward*, *overseer*, or *bailiff*. Other Latin titles used for managers or overseers are *procurator* (the person who has management of any business), *dispensator* (administrator or treasurer), *negotiator* (slave manager of a master’s business), *institor* (business manager), and *actor* (agent or business manager). Crook (1967) reveals the

breadth of responsibilities of the steward through descriptions of the various roles typically associated with each Latin name:

At the highest level was the steward, *servus actor* or *dispensator*, who managed the accounts and carried out the financial transactions of the wealthy families and their estates. [...] Free men were willing to pass into slavery to secure this coveted position, and the *dispensator* could expect to receive freedom on properly rendering account to his deceased master's heir. He might be in charge of estates abroad, entirely on his own. [...] He might, as *actor publicus*, be city treasurer of a municipality. Then, on a rather lower level of standing, there was the *vilicus* or bailiff: managing a particular agricultural property, in charge of all the labour, slave and free. [...] Then again, the slave might manage enterprises outside the family range altogether, such as taverns and shops; apparently even 'children' (adolescents, one supposes) ran such places—often, according to Gaius. And, going back to businesses, we hear of a slave (who decamped) managing a mixed affair that included money-lending, pawn broking, and letting depository space to grain merchants; and Ulpian envisages the possibility (though the way he puts it suggests it is a marginal one) of a slave being a full-scale banker. (187-188)

General duties of the steward

Slaves were broadly classified into two groups—the overseer and the worker—by the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica*,⁷³ a peripatetic work probably of the late fourth or early 3rd century BCE. Overseers or stewards were most commonly slaves, but some were freedmen (a former slave released from slavery),⁷⁴ and in rare instances may have been free men (born citizens) who sold themselves into slavery to become managers.⁷⁵ Slaves and freedmen were chosen as steward-managers because their masters “preferred to use in positions of trust men whose characters they knew, and on whose obedience they could rely; slaves could be chastised if they disobeyed instructions, and freedmen had formed the habit of executing their master's orders” (Jones 1960, 2).

⁷³ See Aristotle, Ross, and Smith (1908).

⁷⁴ For example, see Xenophon (1994, 218) and Joshel (1992, 59-60).

⁷⁵ For example, see Whittaker (1987, 109); Beare (1978); and Scheidel (1990). Only minimal research has been conducted to confirm or deny the existence of freeborn stewards. Beare and Scheidel, writing ten years apart, disagree with one another in their conclusions.

The majority of Greek and Roman stewards managed the farm, estate, business, finances, or resources on behalf of the master or owner. Stewards could be employed as managers in a wide range of enterprises:

In everyday commercial life—that is in activities such as shopkeeping, trading and banking—slaves were particularly noticeable, operating as their owners’ managers and agents with a great degree of latitude and independence, a pattern clearly shown by a section of the Digest (14.3)⁷⁶ that deals with the contractual liability of those who appointed agents to undertake business for them. The agent, who could be free or slave, a man or a woman, was called an *institor* and was appointed “to buy or sell in a shop or in some other place or even without any place being specified” (Digest 14.3.18). Any number of enterprises could thus be in the hands of slaves—managing a farm, buying houses, cattle or slaves, shop keeping and inn keeping, banking and money lending, trading and contracting of every kind. (Bradley 1994, 75)

The duties of the steward ranged widely, from performing manual work to buying and selling property. The role of management was considered prestigious, evidenced by Xenophon who dictates a conversation between Socrates and Critobulus where Socrates likens the steward’s role in estate management to a branch of knowledge (*epistamas*) similar to medicine, smithing, and carpentry (Xenophon 1.1-4). In the 1994 translation and commentary of Xenophon by Pomeroy, she comments on the prestige given to *oikonomikos* (or estate management) by Xenophon: “The prestige awarded to the management of the *oikos* [household] in classical Greece may come as a surprise to the modern reader who may be familiar with the activities of the Greeks in the public sphere and who may also despise ‘housework’. However, the *oikos* was fundamental to the welfare of human beings and their cities” (217). Pomeroy quotes Socrates speaking in another book by Xenophon on moral philosophy (Memorabilia), when he calls the role of *oikonomia* a *mathema*, a learning or science. Both Plato and Socrates also refer to *oikonomia* as an *epistamas*, or field of knowledge (217).

The relationship of the steward to his master was often one of contradictions. Xenophon illustrates a master’s conflicted attitude towards the steward-slave by recommending stewards be treated like animals or property with punishment and rewards. However, at other times Xenophon viewing stewards as human beings who craved praise

⁷⁶ Digest is a name given to a compendium or digest of Roman law compiled by order of the emperor Justinian I in the 6th century. See Watson (1998) for a recent translation.

and honor (Fisher 1993, 55-56). Roman writer Columella, who gives some of the most detailed instructions on the qualifications and responsibilities of the rural farm steward, declares that if the steward was a slave, he was to be viewed along with all the other slaves as essentially criminal and servile in spite of his responsible position (Bradley 1984, 26-27). Discussing classical slavery and the steward, Thalmann (2007) adds his perspective on this contradiction:

One of the things that has always struck me about Xenophon and the Roman writers [...] is their suspicion of slaves and whether you could really trust them as slaves. How much of a free hand do you give them? How often do you audit their accounts? What do you do when you find them not performing well? And in Xenophon's case, how do you train them so that you can insure their loyalty? The answer is: You do it the way you would train a horse because the slave is like an animal. The *villicus* focuses the dilemma of the slave owner. The master's got this person under his power whom he has to think of as a kind of thing but who is actually a person with a certain amount of thought and autonomy, and has to be induced to do what his master wants him to do. The whole relationship is always a very tense one. If slaves are inferior, then you can't trust them, and yet you have to trust them. (Interview)

On larger urban farms it appears that more than one steward could be present according to Varro: "If you cultivate less than 240 iugera of olives you cannot get along with less than one overseer, nor if you cultivate twice as large a place or more will you have to keep two or three overseers" (1.18). Varro does not provide detail as to how multiple stewards on a farm related to one another, but stewards were elsewhere known to have under-stewards (see next chapter on the stewards of the Old Testament). Stewards were also allowed by their masters under certain conditions to own and administer property (*peculium*) like an owner, which could include the ownership of other slaves (*servus vicarious*) and possibly other under-stewards.⁷⁷

The social status of stewards

Stewards who were slaves could not escape the hard realities of their social position. They lacked most if not all of the fundamental freedoms of the citizen

⁷⁷ See Buckland (1908, 187-238) and Patterson (1982, 184).

(Westermann 1960, 26),⁷⁸ were under the complete ownership of another, had no individuality, no legal personality apart from that of their owner, no *patria* (fatherland), and in the eyes of the law had no male parent (Westermann 1955, 20). In both Greek and Roman society, attitudes about the innate capacities of slaves changed over time. In the Homeric world, slaves were simply viewed as captured foreigners held by force who possessed all the characteristics and virtues inherent in a human being but with none of the privileges or rights of a citizen (Schlaifer 1960, 110). The slave was a piece of property, but not a beast. However, after Aristotle's political and scientific explanation for the natural difference in innate moral and intellectual capacities of slaves, they were increasingly viewed as sub-human, somewhere between animals and humans (Westermann 1955, 26).

However, the social status of stewards, and the ensuing attitudes of their masters and the general public, were not all negative. Funerary inscriptions for stewards abound in praise of their loyalty, longevity (ILS 7372),⁷⁹ faithfulness (ILS 7370), and appropriate exercise of authority (ILS 7367). Stewards did experience a form of occupational hierarchy in which they were considered superior to other domestic slaves, and their prestige increased with the size of the estate or farm they managed, or the social standing of their owner (Bradley 1994, 70). City stewards (*urbani*) were considered more prestigious than country stewards (*rustica*) (Bradley 1994, 70).⁸⁰ Assigning slaves to managerial positions did produce interesting anomalies at times: stewards often served as bank managers, could rise to highly respected positions within local government as treasurers, and on large rural farms often collected rents and supervised the activities of tenant-farmers who were freedmen or free men (Jones 1960, 1).

⁷⁸ The four freedoms of Greek citizens were:

1. He is to be his own representative, his own master, in all legal matters, without need of intervention of a second party. This is the legal expression of freedom.
2. He is not subject to seizure as property. Said otherwise: No one dares lay a hand upon him.
3. He may do what he desires to do.
4. He may go where he desires to go. Or, in a variant form, he may live where he desires to live.

(Westermann 1968, 26).

⁷⁹ ILS is *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*. See Dessau (1989) for a recent translation.

⁸⁰ For a practical example of this prestige, see the poem entitled "To the Manager of His Farm," written by Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65-68 BCE, a staff officer in the Roman army of Brutus, who later secured a position in the Treasury and wrote poetry under sponsorship of Virgil), in which he complains to his country steward about how he is always vying to return to the city (Ferry 2001, 62-67).

The Responsibilities of the Greco-Roman Steward

The roles and responsibilities of the classical steward are laid out in surprising detail by several Greek and Roman writers, but only in the context of the *oikonomos* or *villicus* of the rural farm. Xenophon, a Greek soldier, mercenary and writer, wrote his Socratic dialogue Oeconomicus circa 360 BCE. It is one of the earliest works on economics and principally focuses on household management (*oikonomia*), agriculture, relationships between men and women, slavery, and rural life.

Three Latin writers stand out for their writings that contribute to our understanding of the classical steward on the Roman farm. The 2nd century statesman, soldier, and author Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 BCE), wrote his manual De Agri Cultura circa 160 BCE on running the *latifundia*, or rural farm, with its miscellaneous collection of rules of husbandry and management. Cato's manual assumes a farm run and staffed by slaves, and his harsh suggestions about dealing with sick or unproductive slaves are striking in their severity. Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BCE), a Roman scholar and writer, was called "the most learned of the Romans" by Cicero and St. Augustine of Hippo. Although he wrote over 400 works, only two survive extant, one of which is his advice on agriculture and beekeeping. Finally, Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella took up farming after a career in the army and being tribune in Syria (circa 35 CE). His twelve volume De Re Rustica (writing circa CE 60-65) has been completely preserved and forms the most important source on classical Roman agriculture and urban slavery.

All four classical writers produced manuals on agriculture for the benefit of fellow landowners. In their manuals they described the responsibilities of the steward and in some cases the corresponding responsibilities of the steward's wife. Although biased towards the interests of the master, these descriptions are the most detailed records researchers have concerning the classical steward's responsibilities. The analysis of the characteristics and responsibilities of the classical steward contained in these four authors can be consolidated, categorized, and summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: General Characteristics and Responsibilities of Greco-Roman Stewards

<u>Personal Characteristics</u> Medium age Robust Not physically attractive Vigorous	<u>Preparation for Management</u> Taught from childhood Trained in all aspects of farming Trained for management
<u>Personal Virtues</u> Diligent Early riser from bed and last to go to bed Energetic A frugal eater Does things in moderation Always learning Faithful	<u>Absence of Personal Vices</u> Not intimate with household members Not a drunkard Not lazy Avoids sexual indulgence Not superstitious Not a gadabout Does not expect special treatment Does not show favoritism
<u>Relation to His Master</u> Fidelity and attachment Knows what his master knows Follows his master's instructions Insures that the master's orders are carried out Does not use his master's money to engage in personal business Does not think himself wiser than his master Frequently reviews the accounts with the master Does not give excuses for work left undone Does not lend out his master's property Loyal	<u>Use of Resources</u> Keeps tools in good repair Knows the cost of proper tools is cheaper than idle workers Uses the same resources as the workers Knows where he can quickly obtain more resources if needed Gives additional resources as rewards to others who do well Does not scrimp on resources (e.g., seed)
<u>Management Skills</u> Able to teach others Demonstrates by example how a job is to be done Assigns tasks appropriately Personally leads the workers to the job site Encourages the workers Rewards good workers Always available Expects a full day's work from everyone	<u>Management Skills (continued)</u> Protects workers from wrong doing to avoid punishing Humors good workers Disciplines in proportion to the wrong Keeps workers busy Produces workers who are themselves enthusiastic, eager and persevering Knows how to command others Does not do other people's work for them

Plans ahead	Controls who comes and goes on the estate
<u>Relation to His Subordinates</u> Cares for the health of workers Provides adequate food and clothing Does not expect subordinates to serve him Not too cruel or lenient	

Sources: Xenophon (1.1-4; 9.11-13; 12.3-20; 13-15; 21.9-11); Cato (1.2; 1.5); Varro (1.2; 1.13; 1.16; 1.18); and Columella (1.7-9; 11.1)

Any attempt to summarize and assemble a complete typology of classical steward characteristics and responsibilities from the writings of Xenophon, Cato, Varro, and Columella is an approximation at best. None of the writers purported to articulate a comprehensive inventory of the roles and responsibilities of the steward in their manuals on agriculture and household management. However, a number of general characteristics and responsibilities can be detailed based on themes that were given more extended treatment in the source documents.

Personal characteristics

Columella is the only one of the four classical writers that focuses on personal characteristics of the steward, and does so with intentional specificity. The ideal steward must be of medium age to have the right balance of skill and vigor, “for slaves despise a novice as much as they despise an old man, since the former has not yet learned the operations of agriculture and the latter cannot any longer carry them out, and his youth makes the novice careless while his age makes the old man slow” (Columella 11.1.3). The steward should also be of sound health, married to a woman who can help him in his management duties, and neither be physically attractive nor ugly.

Personal virtues and vices

The virtues of the steward are very important to the classical writers, and all four go into detail concerning the virtues that are important to the proper exercise of the role:

- **Hard working:** The steward should be able to perform all of the duties of the slaves but without doing the work for them. “He must take pains to know how to carry out every agricultural operation, and must do so frequently, but never to the extent of tiring *himself* out” (Cato 5.5).
- **Always growing in knowledge and experience:** “But, generally speaking, this above all else is to be required of him—that he shall not think that he knows what he does not know, and that he shall always be eager to learn what he is ignorant of; for not only is it very helpful to do a thing skillfully, but even more so is it hurtful to have done it incorrectly” (Columella 1.7.13-14). It is unknown if this expectation and limited freedom for the steward was extended to the normal working slave, who was no doubt provided less opportunity to learn, but the steward did enjoy a startlingly open environment that encouraged honesty concerning one’s level of ignorance, an eagerness to learn, and progress towards the development of useful skills.
- **Lives personal life in moderation:** The steward should not be addicted to wine, sleeping in, socializing, sexual indulgence, gluttony, or superstition.
- **Exercises moral and sexual self-control:** Xenophon and Columella both warned of stewards that were sexually indulgent with the other male or female slaves. “He should also have an aversion to sexual indulgence; for, if he gives himself up to it, he will not be able to think of anything else than the object of his affection” (Columella 11.1.14). To help the Roman steward avoid the temptation of sexual exploitation or harassment of the other slaves, he was granted the benefit of a non-legal wife (*vilica*) to satisfy his

sexual needs—a benefit that was withheld from most classical slaves (Columella 1.8.5).⁸¹

- **Other virtues:** Stewards were also to be responsible, diligent, frugal, and skilled in all of the jobs.

Preparation for service

Leader development did not just reside among the Roman aristocracy, but estate owners were also encouraged to proactively develop the stewards of tomorrow through identification of potential candidates at an early age, proactive teaching and development through learning experiences, and testing. Stewards were selected and trained for management by the master himself as well as existing estate stewards (Columella 11.1.5-7). They were put through an intentional process of testing to see if they could learn farming and management and would demonstrate fidelity and attachment to the master (Columella 11.1.7). Their training involved exposure to almost every job on the farm so that the future steward could not only do the job himself, but also teach others how to do it: “Whoever is destined for this business must be very learned in it and very robust, that he may both teach those under his orders and himself adequately carry out the instructions which he gives” (Columella 11.1.4). Xenophon includes an extended dialogue between Socrates and Ischomachus in which the latter explains how he teaches future stewards through praise, recognition with special clothing and rewards, and punishment when necessary (Xenophon 12.6-12).

⁸¹ Differences did exist in how Roman and Greek classical writers approached the sexuality of stewards: “The greatest differences between the Greek original and the Roman versions appear in the discussion of slaves. [...] In Rome, the norm for both male and female slaves is heterosexuality and ‘marriage’ (*contubernium*, i.e., *de facto* marriage, though without legal force). The ‘marriage’ of the *vilicus* and *vilica* has the potential to be excessively passionate, with the result that the *vilicus* will spend too much time indoors in order to enjoy his wife’s embraces. In contrast, the slaves in Ischomachus’ household are segregated by sex. One criterion for the selection of the housekeeper is that she can control her sexual appetite (ix. II); she does not hold her position by virtue of any quasi-marriage or other relationship with a man. Well-behaved slaves are permitted to have heterosexual intercourse, but this relationship is said to be for the purpose of reproduction (*teknopoionta* ix. 5). Whereas Columella (*RR* 12.I.2-3) is concerned lest the *vilicus* become too lecherous toward the *vilica*, Ischomachus worries that his foremen may be distracted by affairs with boys (*paidika* xii. 4)” (Xenophon 1994, 71-72).

Relationship with the master

The relationship of the steward to the master was one of the most important domestic relationships on the farm. Consequently, all four of the writers mention different aspects of the steward-master relationship.

- **Respectful:** “He must not think that he is wiser than his master” (Cato 5.2).
- **Obedient to the master:** The steward listens intently to what the master says and follows his orders without exception.
- **Aware of the master’s desires and intentions:** Classical owners of estates and farms were aware of the inherent risks associated with non-vested management, and addressed the situation in part through extensive training and mentoring between the master and the steward: “I train him [the steward] up myself; for he who stands in my place in my absence and acts as a deputy in my activities, ought to know what I know” (Columella 11.1.5).
- **Protects the master’s resources:** “Cato’s rules for the *vilicus* or manager are partly an attempt to ensure that he has no relationships with, or obligations to, any gods or humans except through the owner. The post was one of great responsibility. A bad manager could do lasting damage to the owner’s property and ruin his business and his relations with neighbors” (Cato 1998, 65).
- **Accountable for his actions and results:** Cato mentions a detailed process of accountability that the master should go through when first arriving on the farm and meeting with the steward. The process reviews the workers’ efficiency, the condition of the resources, and the state of the accounts, culminating in a realistic assessment of the steward’s successes and failures in managing the resources (Cato 2.1-7). “He should frequently go through the accounts with his master.” (Cato 5.4).
- **Accepts his master’s lifestyle:** The steward was expected to take on the gods of his master, to oversee the religious activities of the farm, and to

even accept his master's friends as his own.

- **Stays within the management guidelines set by the master:** “He should not employ his master's money in purchasing cattle or anything else which is bought or sold; for doing this diverts him from his duties as a bailiff [steward] and makes him a trader rather than a farmer and makes it impossible to balance accounts with his master” (Columella 11.1.24).

Relationship with subordinates

Stewards were unavoidably reminded every day that they were still slaves in service to their masters. But with a privileged position on the estate, it would be easy for a steward to assume that the other slaves existed to serve his needs. Not so, says Columella: “He should not make use of his fellow-slaves for any service to himself” (11.1.23). Columella goes into great detail to define his expectations of how the steward and his wife should treat the other slaves. The steward was to look out for the health and protection of the working slaves, and along with his wife make sure that all were provided adequate clothing and food that was appropriate to the season and work conditions (Columella 11.1.18-19). He was not allowed sexual intimacy with any member of the extended household except his wife: “This same overseer should be warned not to become intimate with a member of the household” (Columella 1.8.5). When the workday was done, the steward was to exercise the care and compassion of a shepherd: “And when twilight has come on, he should leave no one behind but should walk in rear of them, like a good shepherd, who suffers no member of the flock to be left in the field. Then, when he has come indoors, let him act like that careful herdsman and not immediately hide himself in his house but exercise the utmost care for everyone of them” (Columella 11.1.18). His management of the workers was to be a balance of discipline that was not too severe or too lenient (Columella 11.1.6), with some humor and forbearance (Columella 1.8.10).

Use of resources

For the classical steward on the rural Roman farm, resources were as practical as iron hoes and slaves. But not all resources had the same implicit value. The classical manager was expected to know that the unavailability of cheaper resources (e.g., tools) could cause the waste of more valuable resources (e.g., slave labor): “He should rather often examine the iron tools. These he should always provide in duplicate, and, having repaired them from time to time, he should keep his eye upon them, so that, if any of them have been damaged in the course of work, it may not be necessary to borrow from a neighbor; for it costs more than the price of these things if you have to call off the slaves from their work” (Columella 11.1.20). The steward was also to maintain a resource reserve by always knowing several neighbors whom he could borrow tools from when needed (Cato 5.4)

The steward’s wife was responsible to maintain the food and clothing stores and ensure that both were able to last throughout the year (Columella 12.1.5). Seed corn was to neither be squandered nor scrimped so that it was used properly to ensure a good crop. It was the steward’s responsibility to guard the property from intrusion and from outsiders changing the borders. The steward was not allowed to lend money or resources to others without the master’s permission. Columella outlines a number of additional recommendations regarding how the steward was to use the human resources efficiently and effectively, which will be covered in the next section. The steward, therefore, was responsible to manage *all* of the master’s resources, whether things or people, with foresight, efficient application, and with long-term sustainability in mind.

Management skills

The largest group of comments by the four classical writers involved instruction on how the steward was to manage the farm and the workers on it. Many of the following instructions are still a part of today’s modern management philosophy.

- **Teaches from personal experience and example:** The steward was to lead by example: “From time to time, as if to aid one whose strength is failing, he should take his iron tool from him for a while and do his work for him and tell him that it ought to be carried out in the vigorous manner in which he himself has done it” (Columella 11.1.17).
- **Motivates through encouragement, humor, and reward:** Surprisingly, stewards were instructed to encourage, humor, reward, and honor workers who responded and showed promise. “He must reward good work so that the others have an incentive to work well too” (Cato 5.2).
- **Disciplines and corrects appropriately:** Stewards were instructed “not to deal either too cruelly or too leniently with those set under him. He should always cherish the good and diligent and spare those who are not as good as they ought to be, and use such moderation that they may rather respect his strictness than hate his cruelty” (Columella 11.1.25).
- **Produces good work in others:** “The man in charge—whether he is a foreman [*epitropos*] or a supervisor [*ephistami*]—who can produce workers who are enthusiastic, eager for work, and persevering; these are the ones who manage to prosper and to make their surplus a large one” (Xenophon 21.9).
- **Wisely allocates people resources to the right tasks:** “The most important thing in this kind of superintendence is to know and estimate what duties and what tasks should be enjoined on each person. [...] The nature therefore of each operation must be taken into consideration; for some tasks require strength only, such as the moving and carrying of heavy loads, [while] others require a combination of strength and skill” (Columella 11.1.7-8).
- **Exercise authority and control at all times:** The steward was delegated authority by the master and was expected to learn how to manage and lead “like a general” with constantly changing strategies and deployment of resources (Xenophon 16.14). The steward had complete control of who came and went from the estate: “No one shall leave the farm without the direction of the overseer” (Varro 1.16).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that through the descriptions of the steward in classical Greek and Roman writers, many of the behaviors and responsibilities of the ancient steward-slave can be identified. Its main purpose is to articulate a typology of the characteristics and role of the classical Greco-Roman steward. Through the neglected descriptions of the steward embedded in the writings of four classical Greek and Roman writers—Xenophon, Columella, Varro, and Cato—we discover the specific roles and responsibilities of the steward and find surprising antecedents to management today. This chapter has touched in detail on only a few of these managerial traits, and more can and should be done to exegete the classical steward. The behaviors and responsibilities of the steward have been identified in these descriptions of the farm steward, resulting in the following consolidated and synthesized typology of the classical steward.

4. HISTORY AND TYPOLOGY OF THE BIBLICAL STEWARD

There are numerous typologies of the characteristics of the steward that could be developed specific to historical eras, cultures, or political states. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to create an exhaustive survey of historical typologies. Instead, its purpose is to define a biblical typology that is germane and informative to the contemporary Christian nonprofit leader and the research question at hand. Several important purposes drive this stage of study:

1. As with the texts on the classical steward, the biblical texts also provide an historical platform of the steward's role and characteristics and a benchmark with which to compare ones understanding of the contemporary steward.
2. The biblical texts concerning the steward are some of the more detailed descriptions we have of the historical steward.
3. For most leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations (NPOs), philosophical and theological presuppositions suggest that a typology of the steward engage the biblical record to be credible and instructive to those of a Christian persuasion.
4. The characteristics identified in both studies of the classical and biblical steward will form the basis for the characteristics that will initially be presented to contemporary leaders of Christian nonprofit organizations in the field survey.

But the biblical records of the ancient steward are informative for far more than theological or philosophical reasons alone. The biblical history reveals the behaviors and expectations of the steward from a great diversity of cultures and across a wide span of time, and in the parables of Jesus in the New Testament are some of the most fascinating and informative applications of the steward's role to religious and business leadership.

Thus, this dissertation now moves from a typology of the classical steward, spanning the 4th century BCE to the 1st century CE, to a study of the biblical steward which will span an even broader and earlier history, as far back as the 2nd millennium BCE in the

Old Testament records to the 1st century CE in the Pauline writings of the New Testament. This study of the biblical records will be primarily historical and exegetical and will focus on examining the characteristics and behaviors of the steward in the Old Testament era, the parables of Jesus, and the Pauline letters of the New Testament. Out of these three biblical sections the author will also develop a brief theology of stewardship.

The Steward in the Old Testament

This study of the steward and stewardship in the Old Testament begins by first identifying and analyzing the common Hebrew words⁸² for steward used in the Masoretic text (MT), the Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible.⁸³ The study will then exegete the primary scriptural passages in the Old Testament that elaborate the behaviors and expectations of the steward, focusing on those passages that contain additional information beyond the mere descriptive use of the title. This section will conclude with a summary of the main Old Testament theological concepts behind stewardship and the steward's role.

⁸² The meaning of words (lexicography) is just one of many elements of language along with phonology, morphology, and syntax, and researchers on hermeneutics such as Barr (1961) and Mickelsen (1963) warn the researcher of the many difficulties entailed in word studies. The author has tried to stay true to the five lexicographical/interpretive principles suggested by Mickelsen (128-29):

1. Know all possible meanings of a word in the period of its occurrence,
2. Decide which meaning fits best into the context of the writer,
3. Consider carefully the context of your listeners,
4. Beware of etymological pronouncements that are not well supported by contemporary usage, and
5. Beware of fine distinctions of meaning in synonyms that are not well supported by the context.

Therefore, since this study is meant to be more of a historical and behavioral study of the steward, only the lexicography of noun forms will be primarily investigated (which will include evaluating the etymology, usage, history, and/or synonyms when applicable). The author encourages other researchers to take up a fuller hermeneutical study of all aspects of the steward and stewardship.

⁸³ An equally profitable word analysis could also be conducted in the Septuagint (LXX)—the Koine Greek version of the Old Testament translated between the 3rd to 1st century BCE—but the author has given priority to the Hebrew text to limit the scope of the study. Occasional references to the LXX will be included when they are relevant.

Hebrew Words for Steward

The Hebrew phrase that is most commonly used in the MT for those in the position of steward is *'al habbayit*. *'al* is a Hebrew preposition that denotes elevation or pre-eminence and is variously translated “above” or “over” (BDB 755).⁸⁴ *Bayit* is the most common Hebrew word for “house,” but by metonymy the word can also denote what is in the house, meaning “household,” which includes household affairs, persons, and property (BDB 110). Thus the phrase comes to mean “he who is over the household,” and is generally applied to those who are in official positions over the household of an important official. Notable examples of *'al habbayit* stewards in the Old Testament are Joseph as the steward over Pharaoh’s palace (Gen. 39:4; 41:40), an anonymous steward over Joseph’s house (Gen. 43:16, 19; 44:1, 4), and Ahishar as steward of King Solomon’s palace (1 Kings 4:6). The title had a wide range of responsibilities and official status beginning with private household management and extending to second in command to the pharaoh or king. Gersch (1974) singles out Eliakim, steward of King Hezekiah’s palace, as an example of the elevated status of many *'al habbayit*:

Eliakim (Isa. 22:19-23; 2 Kings 18:18) is not merely manager of the royal household, but takes on an office, distinct in itself within the court, of governing the well-being of the people of the land. Since *'al habbayit* or *ho oikonomos*⁸⁵ cared for the household of the king, the welfare of which was conjoined to the welfare of the nation, the position held by this person could naturally have been transformed into the first official of the state below the king. (18)

Another Hebrew word that gives insight into the background of the steward is *na'ar*, which generally is translated *boy* or *youth* but also is used to refer to servants, personal attendants, and household servants (BDB 654). Several clear uses make it apparent that the word also occasionally referred to official stewards of entire families and kings. In 2 Sam. 9:9-10, and 19:17, Ziba is called the *na'ar* of the house of King Saul, and is obviously a well-to-do person—with fifteen sons and twenty slaves of his own—who officially negotiates for Saul’s family. In 2 Kings 19:6 the prophet Isaiah refers to the

⁸⁴ BDB is an abbreviation for Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1907).

⁸⁵ *ho oikonomos* is the most common word for *steward* in Greek. See the later section in this chapter on the New Testament words.

na 'arim of the king of Assyria, which included an individual given the official title of chief commander in an earlier passage (2 Kings 19:4). MacDonald (1976) argues in detail that in certain military contexts the term refers to young men who spent their lives serving the king. Other commentators such as Montgomery (1951) see in this passage a derogatory tone (e.g., “these mere pages”).

Other less frequently used Hebrew words that correspond with the role of steward are *rab bayit* (“chief of the house” in Esth. 1:8)⁸⁶ and *peha* (“lord of the district” in Esth. 8:9). There are also occasions when the generic word for “servant” or *'ebed* is used to describe a steward (Gen. 24:1-67; 41:12), but only the context can differentiate the generic *servant* from the official *steward-servant*. Therefore according to Gersch (1974), all four of the most common Hebrew words that refer to the steward share two aspects in common:

First, the terms can refer merely to a major-domo or to a government officer, whose office apparently grew out of the common major-domo position. Secondly, the two offices share in a generic character: each position involves the administration of another’s property and each receives its own authority from a higher authority. The name and well-being of this higher authority is closely associated with and determined by the work of the delegated officer. (23)

Exegesis of Primary Old Testament Passages on the Steward and Stewardship

We now turn our attention to the primary Old Testament passages that contain references to the role and behavior of the steward or to stewardship. Although some of the passages will not contain the key Hebrew words previously studied, the passages are important none-the-less for establishing the biblical understanding of the steward or stewardship.

⁸⁶ Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the Bible are from The New International Version (NIV).

God's ownership of all creation (Psalms 24:1; Deuteronomy 8:10-18)

Based on the preliminary simplified definition stewardship proposed in the introduction (*stewardship is the management of resources belonging to another*), a reference point for understanding stewardship must begin by establishing proper ownership of the resources. The Genesis account of creation conveys the view that God has sovereign and singular control over the creation of all substance: “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). A biblical economic is established regarding ownership, confirming God as the only sovereign owner of all that exists: “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps. 24:1);⁸⁷ “To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deut. 10:14; see also Ps. 50:10-11 and 100:3). Even though we will subsequently see that in the Old Testament humanity is given temporary ownership of land by divine gift, perpetual human ownership was forbidden and regulated through various economic laws. For instance, regulations for the Jubilee Year—where land and property temporarily sold are restored to its original owner every fifty years—are defined in Lev. 25:23-28 to prevent permanent ownership⁸⁸ and to confirm that “the land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants” (Lev. 25:23) (Taylor 1973, 24).⁸⁹

Unfortunately, a natural presumption of anyone who has been given resources by another to use and develop is that any resulting growth in the resources is due to one’s own abilities and skills, and the recipient should take credit for such growth. But when God is the owner and giver of the resource, Deut. 8:10-18 clearly cautions against such presumption. God not only provides all resources for man’s use, he also provides the ability to develop and multiply those resources.⁹⁰ According to the Deuteronomy passage,

⁸⁷ Kidner (1973) describes these two aspects of God’s creative ownership as “fruitful earth (1a) and peopled earth (1b)” which “conjures up its wealth and fertility, seen here not as man’s, for exploitation, but, prior to that, as God’s, for His satisfaction and glory.” (113)

⁸⁸ The fact that the Jubilee Year was rarely practiced by Israel, if ever, demonstrates how utterly foreign the biblical economic of absolute divine ownership and temporary human ownership was to Israel. See Harrison (1980, 228-29) for a review of theories of the practice of Jubilee.

⁸⁹ *Tenants* literally means *sojourners* and refers to the temporary residency of humankind on earth (Wenham 1979).

⁹⁰ The Hebrew uses a play on words in this passage. There are two words that can be normally translated *strength* (*koha*) or *power* (*hayil*). The former refers to physical strength or the requisite mental ability or skill

the failure of stewardship is forgetfulness, pride, failure to obey the divine Giver, and presumption—all symptoms that the steward has forgotten his or her role and assumed “an arrogant elevation of self to the status of God” (Thompson 1974). Stated positively, the behaviors of the steward in this passage are thankfulness (*praise*) for being entrusted with resources to use, constant awareness (*remember*) and respect for the existence and rights of the true owner, obedience to the master’s desires and commands, and humility of spirit.

Humanity created as God’s representative (Genesis 1:26-27)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:26-27)⁹¹

The image of God in humanity, or the *imago Dei*, has been extensively interpreted by expositors and linguists, but several interpretations relate directly to humankind as the steward of God. In the ancient Near East, a king would sometimes erect an image of himself in a territory as a symbol of his sovereignty. In a similar vein, man as God’s image stands on earth as God’s representative (Hay 1991, 18). Alternatively, Ellis (1995, 5) points out the belief of some Near Eastern peoples who referred to their king as the image of their god. The king was like a deity, standing in the deity’s place as his representative ruler on earth. A similar concept could be conveyed by the words of Gen. 1:26, particularly given the fact that the Genesis statement goes on to correlate the *imago Dei* through humankind’s role in ruling over all of creation. As God’s creation “in his own image,” man functions as God’s representative ruler or delegated authority on earth.⁹² Hall (1986) adds a third interpretive position when he relates the *imago Dei*, not as a quality of human nature, but as an inclination that comes out of man’s relationship with God: “The human creature

to accomplish a task. The latter also generally refers to physical strength but is additionally used to refer to monetary strength or wealth. Both words are used in this passage. Thus, man may be tempted to lay claim to wealth (*hayil*), regardless of the original source of the assets, because he is convinced that it is the result of his own strength (*koha*). But God is the ultimate source and owner of both.

⁹¹ Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the Bible are from The New International Version (NIV).

⁹² Clines (1968, 70-80) goes even further arguing that *beselem elohim* should be translated “as the image of God” rather than “in the image of God,” furthering the understanding that man stands as representative of God.

images (used as a verb) its Creator because and insofar as it is ‘turned toward’ God. To be *imago Dei* does not mean to have something but to be and do something: to image God” (98).

Therefore, to represent or to image God recognizes a fundamental concept undergirding a stewarding role. Humanity stands in the place of, and works on behalf of, the ultimate Owner. Although all three views just cited differ concerning the exact nature of what humanity has or becomes as a result of *imago Dei*, all recognize that the *imago Dei* allows humanity to steward creation. The *imago Dei* provides the means or the model for humanity to rule creation as the divine Owner would rule it.

Stewardship rooted in ruling over creation (Genesis 1:28; 2:15)

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Gen. 1:28)
The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Gen. 2:15)⁹³

Although this dissertation does not elaborate on the stewardship of nature (the focus will be on stewardship within NPOs), the biblical passages quoted above are foundational for understanding the paradoxical nature of scripture’s presentation of stewardship and management. Humankind is clearly directed by God to *subdue*⁹⁴ and *rule over*⁹⁵ creation, both typically coercive concepts, but men and women are also to exercise that rule as those who are to “work [creation] and take care of it” after the fashion of God who seeks to maintain and nurture that creation. God is the creator and owner of all that has been created, yet he gives humanity the trusteeship of that creation, expecting man to rule over the gift of creation as God himself would—ruling in his image.⁹⁶

⁹³ See also Ps. 8:6-8.

⁹⁴ *Kabas*, “to subdue, dominate or bring under bondage” (BDB 461). The Hebrew root is used of both violent or powerful personal acts (as in forcing someone to become a slave, Jer. 34:11; or the rape of a woman, Esth. 7:8) and non-personal acts (as in symbolically treading sin underfoot, Mic. 7:19).

⁹⁵ In Gen. 1:26, the Hebrew word is *radah*, “to have dominion or rule over by force,” and even “to supervise” in 1 Kings 9:23 (BDB 922). In Ps. 8:6, *mashal* is used, meaning “to rule, have dominion,” or “to reign” (BDB 605).

⁹⁶ “Man is given ‘dominion’ over the created order. The word is a strong one, and implies that man is God’s vice-gerent, and steward of the created order, with an important role to fulfill. The nature of man’s dominion and stewardship is spelt out in 1:28-30, and in 2:15. Man is enjoined to be fruitful and multiply. He is to

Thus, instead of the potential of a violent or consumptive dominion, humanity fulfills his/her stewardship by ruling over creation as the image of God, peaceful and benevolent, according to the pattern set by the divine owner (Ellis 1995). Stewarding creation is a task that is always accountable to the divine owner and is not license for human indulgence (Hall 1986). Even though these passages speak of humanity's delegated stewardship only over nature, we will discover later in the chapter that the same principle of stewarding resources with care and respect applies equally to the stewardship of other resources, and even people. Since all things are owned by God, humanity is to steward each resource as God would, regardless of the type of resource. Kiser (2005) summarizes the importance of God's first stewardship assignment to humanity: "Thus, in the very first interaction between God and man recorded in the Bible, the foundational principles of mankind's role as stewards are the central focus of the encounter" (12).

Having reviewed the Old Testament biblical passages that establish the foundational concepts important to a biblical view of stewardship—God's ownership, humankind as God's steward, and the divine gift of abilities—we will now consider Old Testament passages that elaborate on the characteristics and behaviors of the steward.

The dependent and independent authority of the steward (Genesis 24)

¹ Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ² He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. ³ I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, ⁴ but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac." (Gen. 24:1-4)

Although the servant of Abraham⁹⁷ referred to in this passage is never given a formal title identifying him as a steward, descriptions within the passage clearly identify him in that functional role. He is called "the chief servant" (literally, "the eldest one of the

exercise his dominion by filling and subduing the earth. [...] There is a paradox in the language. The description of man's dominion is in terms of subduing nature and controlling it. But this is offset by language which speaks of respect for nature, and an obligation to care for it" (Hay 1991, 18).

⁹⁷ Many expositors identify this servant as Eliezer, Abraham's steward in Gen. 15:2, but this identification is doubtful in that the writer of Gen. 24 would have called him by name given the fact that he was previously identified, and Eliezer would have been an even more important figure had he survived the intervening years.

household,” BDB 278) and “the one in charge of all that he had” (literally “the one that ruled,” BDB 605). This servant is given an unusual task by Abraham—to find a wife for his son Isaac.⁹⁸ In the process of completing this task we see certain characteristics of the steward that are detailed by the writer of Genesis:

1. He is in charge of everything that his master possesses (v.2).
2. He is trusted to find an appropriate wife for the master’s son (v.4).
3. His oath is accepted and trusted by the master (v.3).
4. His freedom to act is dependent on any explicit directions from the master (vv.1-9).
5. He takes the god of his master as his own god (vv.12, 26-27).
6. Commitments made to the steward are the same as commitments made to the master (v.49).
7. He is trusted to manage considerable resources, wealth, and even other servants (vv.10, 53-54).⁹⁹
8. He is free to exercise independent judgment in how to best fulfill his obligations (vv.12-14, 56).

An overarching characteristic of the steward exemplified in this passage, and reflected on occasion in the classical Roman steward as seen in the previous chapter, is the master’s confidence in the steward that involves both dependent and independent authority. Brattgard (1963) extends this characteristic to all stewards:

What is remarkable about the biblical idea is the fact that the steward has a unique authority. He is a fully authorized representative, free to deal independently on behalf of his master, at the same time that he is completely dependent upon his master. When his stewardship is over he will have to give an account of how he took care of the calling which, as just noted, involves both dependence and independence. (41)

⁹⁸ The task of finding a wife was unusual only in the sense that, during the time of the writing of Genesis, fathers (or in some cases mothers such as in Gen. 21:21) normally chose the spouse for their children (see Gen. 28:2; 34:4). But in this case Abraham was advanced in years and probably unable to travel (see Gen. 24:1), and thus assigns the task to his most trusted servant.

⁹⁹ In most classical examples of stewards, little or no distinction is made between managing material resources versus managing other slaves because slaves were still considered property. However, this dissertation will observe any differences when it is germane to the example.

Joseph as the prototypical steward (Genesis 39:1-6; 41:38-41)

¹ Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. ² The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, ⁴ Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. ⁵ From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. ⁶ So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. (Gen. 39:1-6)

³⁸ So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." ⁴¹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." (Gen. 41:38-41)

Joseph, the youngest of twelve brothers, is sold into slavery at the age of seventeen by his jealous brothers to a traveling band of Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:2). They then resell him to Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh in Egypt. Although just a common slave, Joseph fulfills his responsibilities with such faithfulness and success¹⁰⁰ that Potiphar elevates him to the position of overseer (*'al habbayit*, Gen. 39:4) over the entire household and agricultural estate. The fivefold repetition that Joseph is put in charge of "all that he had" (*cal 'ashehr yesh lo*, v.4, 5, 5, 6, 8) places emphasis on the comprehensive scope of the steward's authority over all resources, save only the food that Potiphar ate (v.6) and intimate access to his wife (v.9). However, it is on the latter restriction that the entire story turns as Potiphar's wife unsuccessfully attempts to seduce Joseph and then, as a spurned lover,

¹⁰⁰ *Salah*, repeated three times in this passage for emphasis (vv.2, 3, 23), means "to prosper or advance" (BDB 852). Joseph didn't sulk in his slavery but used the occasion to serve to the best degree possible, a mark of a diligent steward-in-training. "It speaks of achievement rather than status... where the servant's promotion becomes the master's blessing" (Kidner 1967).

falsely accuses him (vv.7-18).¹⁰¹ Joseph is immediately thrown into prison with no possibility of defense, illustrating the reality that a steward, however high in authority or power, is fundamentally still a slave without rights. A steward may have almost complete authority and scope over all that the master owns, but never total authority.

Joseph languishes in prison for over a decade. While there, he exhibits the same spirit of service and attentiveness that soon catches the eye of the prison warden who places all the prisoners under Joseph's authority (Gen. 39:20-23). While in prison, Joseph also befriends Pharaoh's cupbearer—thrown in prison for offending Pharaoh—and reveals the meaning of a dream to him. Years later, when Pharaoh has a dream he cannot interpret, the cupbearer—subsequently restored to his original position—remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sends for Joseph and is so impressed with his discernment and wisdom (Gen. 41:39) that he makes him second in command over the palace (v.40) and the entire land of Egypt (v.41). Joseph's authority is once again powerful and limited only by claim to the throne (v.40).¹⁰²

The study of Joseph in Egypt is complicated due to the fact that, without official title or rank defined in the record, it is hard to distinguish between responsibilities that are a function of stewardship and those that are a function of his official role. However, a number of distinct characteristics of Joseph's duties surface in this highly detailed account and are informative of a more general stewardship role:

1. Stewardship can be expressed at many different levels and circumstances—on the estate, in prison, or even at the national level¹⁰³—whenever a superior (the *principal*) trusts an inferior (the *agent*) with resources and/or responsibilities belonging to the superior.

¹⁰¹ Kidner (1967) comments on Joseph's refusal to violate his limited authority as a steward and remain loyal to his master's trust: "His freedom from supervision and his rapid promotion, which have corrupted other stewards (cf. Isa. 22:15-25; Luke 16:1ff.), and his realization that one realm only (v.9) was barred to him (which others, from Eve onwards, have construed as a frustration) were all arguments to him for loyalty. By giving the proposition its right name of *wickedness* (v.9) he made truth his ally, and by relating all to God (v.9c) he rooted his loyalty to his master deep enough to hold" (190).

¹⁰² In this role as second in command it is uncertain what Joseph's official title was. His role is primarily explained descriptively. Gen. 42:6 describes him as "ruler [*shaleet*] of the land," but the Hebrew word means "having mastery, domineering" (BDB 1020) and is only used here and in Eccl. 7:19, 8:8, and 10:5 in descriptive and not official ways. Various commentators suggest his role as "first citizen or vizier" (Kidner 1967), "viceroy" (Skinner 1910), "overseer of the granaries," or "steward of the crown lands" (Ward 1960, 144-50). Regardless of titular definition, it is clear that Joseph functioned in a stewardship role.

¹⁰³ For examples of each, see Gen. 39:2-6 (the estate), Gen. 39:20-23 (prison), and Gen. 41:39-45 (national oversight).

2. Stewardship can involve a wide scope and high level of responsibility, including the oversight of all of the resources of the principal—both property and people—exclusive of personal resources (e.g., the master’s wife, Gen. 39:9) or positional resources (e.g., titular authority, Gen. 41:40).¹⁰⁴
3. A critical requisite for a master/owner is that he can trust his steward.¹⁰⁵
4. Faithfulness and success as a normal slave can be an important prerequisite to elevation to the status of steward.¹⁰⁶

Limits to the steward’s power (Isaiah 22:15-19)

¹⁵ This is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: “Go, say to this steward, to Shebna, who is in charge of the palace: ¹⁶ What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling your resting place in the rock? ¹⁷ Beware, the LORD is about to take firm hold of you and hurl you away, O you mighty man. ¹⁸ He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country. There you will die and there your splendid chariots will remain—you disgrace to your master’s house! ¹⁹ I will depose you from your office, and you will be ousted from your position.” (Isa. 22:15-19)

Occasionally the biblical record speaks of a steward that has failed in his official duties—such as in the case of Shebna, steward in charge of the palace of King Hezekiah—which are as equally instructive as positive examples. The prophet Isaiah is sent by God to speak against Shebna who was acting more like the master than the steward-slave that he was, building a sepulcher for himself and his family.¹⁰⁷ Later references to Shebna confirm that he was demoted to the lower position of scribe for his actions (Isa. 36:3, 11-12; 37:2; 2

¹⁰⁴ As evidenced by the often repeated phrases “in charge of everything he owned” or “in charge of the whole land” containing the word “all, the whole” (see *kal* in BDB 481).

¹⁰⁵ See Gen. 39:4, “Joseph found favor in his [Potiphar’s] eyes and [...] he entrusted to his care everything” (*natan*, “to commit, entrust to,” BDB 679); Gen. 39:6, “with Joseph in charge he [Potiphar] did not concern himself with anything”; and Gen. 39:23 “the warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care.”

¹⁰⁶ By proving himself faithful and successful as a normal slave, Joseph caught the attention of Potiphar, the prison warden, and Pharaoh, and was rewarded with the position of steward: e.g., “When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did [...] Potiphar put him in charge” Gen. 39:3-4. See also Gen. 39:21 and 41:39-40. Given the overarching spiritual purpose of the writer of Genesis, Joseph’s success is repeatedly attributed to the blessing of God which is repeated 5 times in Gen. 39:2-6 and 4 times in Gen. 39:21-23.

¹⁰⁷ According to Leupold (1968), as a steward-slave, Shebna was not eligible for such aspirations of wanting to be buried among the social elite.

Kings 18:37). Brattgard (1963) sees in Shebna's negative example an illustration of several important stewardship principles: "His faithlessness resulted from the fact that he never discovered life's stewardship principles, viz., God's sovereign lordship and man's total responsibility on the basis of this. His attitude of selfishness had not been broken. He lived in the belief that he was to seek his own good as long as possible. Responsibility for others and for the need of giving an account had been lost" (41). Hall (1990) identifies another important principle of stewardship in this passage—a steward needs to always remember that he or she is still a slave or servant, and not a master or owner:

However important the steward may be in the scheme of things, he is neither ultimately authoritative nor irreplaceable. He may indeed be a superior servant [...] but he is still a servant: and if he forgets this and begins to behave as though he were himself unambiguously in charge (i.e., not accountable) he shall be dealt with most severely. (33)

Although this dissertation cannot undertake a comprehensive survey of the steward in the Old Testament, a few final references will help identify additional attributes of the biblical steward in the Old Testament.

- **The steward of Joseph:** Stewards of large estates and responsibilities could at times employ their own sub-stewards (Gen. 43:16) in addition to slaves of their own (Gen. 44:10).
- **King Saul's steward Ziba:** Stewards could serve multiple generations and amass a significant family and slaves of their own (2 Sam. 9:9-10).
- **Eliakim, steward of King Hezekiah:** As replacement to deposed Shebna, Eliakim is symbolically given the "key to the house" as an expression of his stewardly role (Isa. 22:20-22).¹⁰⁸ In this singular mention here in the Bible, Eliakim is credited with a symbolic parental care over those for whom he is responsible: "He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah" (vs. 21).

¹⁰⁸ We are reminded by Brattgard (1963) that keys and stewardship will figure again in the New Testament, first of all with regard to Christ as the fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy (Rev. 3:7), and secondly with regard to the apostles as stewards of the Kingdom (Matt. 16:19): "Above all, it must be noted that the New Testament texts refer to the apostolic mission as stewardship. The apostles are, in a special sense, 'stewards of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. 4:1ff.). Therefore Christ has given them the keys to the house, a biblical concept which implies that they have a special authority and are fully authorized agents—faithful, wise, and independent stewards" (43).

- **The Suffering Servant:** Although the “Servant Songs” of Isa. 49-53 do not specifically refer to a steward, the Servant¹⁰⁹ of these passages bears many resemblances to a steward: He is chosen by God (the master) for a specific mission (Isa. 42:1; 49:1-6), he has to carry out his mission among a people who are not receptive, and he will be rewarded by God for faithful service (Isa. 53:11-12). The Suffering Servant has great difficulties in his mission (Isa. 49:1-7) and suffers personally in executing his responsibilities (Isa. 52:13-53:12). The task of stewardship is not always easy, and stewards accept the possibility of personal stress, difficulty, and even suffering for the sake of accomplishing a higher purpose or calling. Thrall, McElrath, and McNichol (1999) as well as other writers on leadership confirm the importance of “paying the price” and suffering in leadership development and maturity.

Major Stewardship Themes in the Old Testament

Imago Dei

One of the first foundational concepts presented in the Old Testament—alongside establishing God’s ownership over all creation—is that humanity is created in the image of God, or *imago Dei* (Gen. 1:26-27).¹¹⁰ *Imago Dei* is the theological concept that asserts that human beings are created in some fashion after, with, or in God’s image and therefore have value and distinction apart from other animal and plant life. The manner in which humans bear the image of God has been debated by biblical scholars for centuries, but three

¹⁰⁹ The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 49-53 has been variously interpreted to be the nation Israel (most Jewish scholars), the future Messiah, Jesus Christ (most Christian scholars), and even Cyrus.

¹¹⁰ In the context of Genesis 1 the two terms *selem* (*image*) and *demut* (*likeness*) are generally agreed to be synonymous in this passage, although Berkhof (1939) provides a useful history of theological interpretations of both words from Augustine on (203-08). “The idea is that by creation that which was archetypal of God became ectypal in man. God was the original of which man was made a copy. This means that man not only bears the image of God, but he is His very image” (203).

common views have emerged called the substantive, relational, and functional image of God (Erikson 1994, 498-510).

The substantive or substantialistic view holds that there is a substantive characteristic in human beings that is like God. The substantive likeness may be moral or spiritual in nature—such as holiness—or may be forms of personality—such as self-consciousness, self-determination, or creativity (Strong 1907, 514-18). Most theologians believe that after the Fall some of the substantive attributes of the image of God were lost, but not all.

The relational view of the image of God in man argues that man must be in relationship with God to possess or reflect the *imago Dei*. Theologians like Emil Brunner argue that we should think less of man having the image of God (as a noun) and more of man imaging God (as a verb). Hall (1986) sees in this view of *imago Dei* “the ontological basis for an ethic of human stewardship” (60). When humanity lives in relationship with God, “we image God as we are incorporated through grace and faith into the preservational dominion of God in the world. Or, to state the same thing in other words, we mirror the sovereignty of the divine love in our stewardship of earth” (200).

In the functional view of the image of God, people display God’s likeness when they function in ways similar to God. As has already been demonstrated, Gen. 1:26-28 associates the image of God with ruling and exercising dominion over creation. In the same way that God rules over the entire universe, humankind functionally emulates God by ruling and exercising dominion over the earth.

Ellis (1995) affirms that the image of God in man is foundational to a biblical understanding of stewardship: “To speak of humans as God’s representative rulers is to speak of their stewardship” (5). As a biblical theology, *imago Dei* speaks primarily of one’s relationship as steward to God, and only inferentially to one’s relationship as steward to other human beings (e.g. NPO stakeholders). Although one’s particular view of the substance of the *imago Dei* in humanity may vary according to the views previously discussed, they all inform an understanding of biblical stewardship:

1. Stewards share certain characteristics with their masters that allow them to manage the resources of their masters as functional representatives.

Regardless of whether the shared characteristics are innate (substantive

view) or modeled (relational and functional views), the presence of these characteristics allows for a competent stewardship.

2. Stewards must be in relationship with their masters to appropriately serve as their representative. This relationship exposes the steward to the necessary knowledge, awareness, and understanding that allow him or her to “image” the master.
3. Ruling and exercising dominion over resources are part-and-parcel of the steward’s role just as they are integral to the master’s role.
4. The steward exists to be the face, hands, and image of the master in the same way that humans were created to be the face, hands, and image of God on earth.
5. God’s benevolent rule and dominion over the universe is a dominant theme in Gen. 1-2, creating a planet that is called “good” and managed with edenic harmony and care. Man’s steward-rule is to reflect the same benevolent dominion as he rules with the image of God (not with a rapacious or selfish disregard for creation).
6. As stewardship is rooted in the image of God, it exists as a quality of continuous *being* more than an *action* that is performed from time-to-time. By bearing the image of God, humanity also bears the identity of a steward.¹¹¹

God’s sovereign ownership and humanity’s stewardship

From the very first interaction between God and man recorded in the Bible, the foundational principles of God’s sovereign ownership over earth and humanity’s role as stewards are at the forefront (Kiser 2005, 12). Although an owner has the right to exclusive control and personal use of his or her resources, God chooses to share control and

¹¹¹ Gill (1996) connects continuous image-bearing with continuous stewardship: “Stewardship is not one remote decision grounded in the past; the essence of life as a steward is a daily answering to the call of God. Stewardship is not the static signing of a pledge card in the annual drive (although this concreteness is not without significance). Stewardship is a responding with my ‘Yes’ to God’s constant call that I live life in God’s image, as God’s steward responding to God’s will. This sense of being daily addressed as a steward uplifts life from the banal struggle for existence and places it on a plane of the redemptive” (17).

consumption of his creation by positioning humanity as his trustees, stewards, or representatives. God does not share ownership, although it appears that he permits humanity to act as temporary owners as long as his divine ownership is always acknowledged.¹¹²

Taylor (1973) elaborates on this tension between divine ownership and human possession:

In the Genesis account, God created the earth and set men and women in it to tend it according to God's will. When this is combined with the idea of the Divine Fatherhood, the earth is seen as being given to people in trust so that they will use its resources to sustain the human family. These ideas suggest that God wants humans to look upon themselves as trustees of their possessions, property, and productive capital, seeking to use them in the light of their understanding of God's purposes. (25)¹¹³

Another important biblical principle is that all humanity is given stewardship of creation, not just a select few. Therefore, no single person or group of people has the right to view any other person or group as anything less than fellow stewards, equally created in God's image and equally given the responsibility of stewardship.

The master's trust and the steward's authority

Specific examples of stewards in the Old Testament demonstrate the essential authority and trust that masters placed in their stewards. The master vested representational authority in his steward that was both wide-ranging and dependent. Old Testament examples, such as the steward of Abraham and Joseph, demonstrate how stewards are trusted to represent their masters in most personal and business affairs, and are even able to exercise a limited level of independent judgment and authority. Even at the divine level, God vests authority in humanity to rule and exercise dominion over his creation in accordance with the same care and attention he gave in creating the world. But all such

¹¹² See previous comments on private ownership in the Old Testament and the Jubilee Year in this chapter.

¹¹³ A major discussion could commence at this point concerning the concept of private property ownership within the Old Testament, but such a discussion would take the reader down a path that is not germane to this thesis. For detailed analysis of the various Christian views of property rights and human ownership, see Grace (1953, 150-56); Terrell (2000); and North (1973).

authority is rooted in the steward's intimate knowledge of the desires and principles of the master.

However, the master's trust in the steward is different at the human and divine levels. At the human level, trust in the steward's faithfulness is an essential value for the master and is earned slowly by the steward as he proves himself through successive responsibilities. On the other hand, God gave humanity stewardship responsibilities of creation as a gift of grace before any trust could be demonstrated or earned. But God's gift of stewardship is not an eternal entitlement, and at various times in biblical history God has rejected humanity's irresponsible stewardship of the earth, as he will once again do in the future when he restores his creation into a "new heaven and earth."¹¹⁴

The Steward in the Parables of Jesus

A study of the characteristics of the steward in the New Testament spans less than a century of time and contains both didactic stories of pre-Christian stewards (as told by Jesus in the parables) and theological letters or Epistles addressed to the young Christian church (written by the Jew Paul). This study will approach the typology of the steward in the New Testament by researching the steward in the parables separate from the steward in the Epistles. As the reader will see, both sources offer distinctive presentations of the steward that are better studied separately and in detail to develop a more comprehensive typology of the biblical steward. An exhaustive review of *all* pertinent New Testament passages on the steward and stewardship would be a significant scope of work in and of itself.¹¹⁵ However, by focusing on the roles and responsibilities of the 1st century steward as demonstrated in the *primary* New Testament parables and Epistles, and to a lesser degree on the spiritual or interpretive application of the passages, this study will establish a convincing and comprehensive typology of the New Testament steward.

¹¹⁴ For example, see Gen. 6:5-7; Lev. 18:25-28; Isa. 24:4-6; Rom. 8:18-23; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; and Rev. 21:1. Stigers (1976, 62) is one of the commentators that acknowledges the conditional nature of humanity's stewardship.

¹¹⁵ "Sixteen of the 38 major parables of Christ are concerned with this idea [of stewardship]. It has been said that 1 out of every 6 verses in the gospels deals with some aspect of stewardship" (O'Connell 1969, 5).

We begin with a study of the Greek words for steward to establish a baseline for the historical and cultural context that both genres of the New Testament, parable and Epistle, share in common.

Greek Words for Steward

The words used in Greek for the steward have already been reviewed in chapter 3. The most common word is *oikonomos*, a compound word early in the classical period the term came to mean “one who manages a household” (Liddell and Scott 1996), but soon it came to refer to a broad range of household administrators, estate stewards, managers, subordinate state officials, financial officers, or any official holder of an office. The word did acquire religious connotations before it was adopted by the biblical writers when it was used of persons who were given responsibilities in connection with cultic practice (Brattgard 1963, 41).¹¹⁶ Of the uses of *oikonomos* in the New Testament, Danker (2000) finds three main types:

1. A manager of a household or estate, (house) steward, manager (Luke 12:42; 16:1, 3, 8; 1 Cor. 4:2; Gal. 4:2)
2. A public treasurer (Rom. 16:23)¹¹⁷
3. One who is entrusted with management in connection with transcendent matters, an administrator (1 Cor. 4:1; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10)

The second most common word associated with the role of the steward in the New Testament is *epitropos*,¹¹⁸ and designates a person “to whose care something is committed” (Vine 1940). It is used of the guardian of a minor, a steward, trustee, administrator, or of political offices such as procurator or governor (Liddell and Scott 1996). Other minor Greek words that have at times been associated with the steward are *tamias* (“one who cares and distributes, dispenser, steward, housekeeper”) and *phrontistēs* (“one who takes care, a house-steward”) (Liddell and Scott 1996). Within the text of the New Testament

¹¹⁶ See also Reumann (1958, 339-49).

¹¹⁷ Although there has been some debate concerning the status and authority of this office, most commentators such as Murray (1968), Bruce (1963), and Clarke (1991) maintain that the public treasurer was a significant responsibility in Paul’s time.

¹¹⁸ Found in Matt. 20:8; Luke 8:3; and Gal. 4:2.

oikonomos is used ten times, *epitropos* three times, and *tamias* and *phrontistēs* are never used.

Exegesis of Primary Parables on the Steward and Stewardship

A popular form of narrative instruction incorporated by Jesus and recorded in the New Testament is his frequent use of the parable, a short story drawn from the common culture of the day used to illustrate or teach a moral or spiritual lesson (Ramm 1970, 276-79). Although the spiritual content or teaching may at times be germane to this study, our primary interest is in the cultural content of the story as it reveals information about the 1st century steward. Even though the content is culturally situated in fictional stories, the content “is taken from the surroundings and everyday life of the hearer” (Mickelsen 1963, 219), and although not prescriptive, it none-the-less reveals cultural and historical clues to 1st century life. Thus we will follow Mickelsen’s advice when interpreting the cultural details of the parables: “Seek to understand the ‘earthly details’ of the parables as well as the original hearers did” (229).

The parable of the faithful steward (Luke 12:42-48)

⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager [*oikonomos*], whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

⁴⁷ “That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” (Luke 12:42-48)

This is the first parable in the Gospels to mention the *oikonomos*.¹¹⁹ It gives the reader a clue as to the 1st century expectations of the duties and attitudes of the steward by illustrating opposing examples of two types of stewards. On the one hand, the “faithful and wise” steward¹²⁰ begins his responsibilities by dispensing or *servicing*¹²¹ the allocations of food to the other slaves, and because of his reliability is advanced in charge of all of the master’s possessions. On the other hand, Jesus presents the same steward taking advantage of his master’s absence by indulging a false sense of independence in abusiveness, self-gratification, and excessive consumption. This bad steward¹²² can only expect the most severe kind of judgment from his master.¹²³

Jesus’ conclusion to his parable supplies the reader with further clues as to potential roles and responsibilities of the steward. It is not enough that the steward ought to know the will of his master—he is also expected to intentionally and progressively act on it. His accountability as a steward is in proportion to the amount of responsibility that is entrusted to him. The steward is to view his responsibilities as a banker would view investments placed in his trust—he must eventually return to the owner more than what was deposited.¹²⁴ Scholars are divided as to the intended audience of the parable, with most

¹¹⁹ The synoptic parallel for Luke’s initial use of *oikonomos* is *doulos* in Matt. 24:45, the most common word in Greek for *slave* or *servant*. In Luke’s version of the same parable, he later switches to the same common term *doulos* (repeated four times in vss. 43-47) and does not repeat the more concrete *oikonomos*. However, this does not negate the specific application of *oikonomos* as evidenced by its forward placement. It does support the fact that most first-century stewards were still slaves.

¹²⁰ *ho pistos oikonomos ho phronimos*, literally “the faithful (to be trusted, reliable) steward, the wise one (prudent, sensible, practically wise)” (Vine 1940), bringing back to mind Joseph, the model Jewish steward (see Gen. 41:33). These adjectives are more descriptions of conduct than of character, but the definite article preceding each implies a resulting state rather than an ongoing action (Kim 1998, footnote 26, 138).

¹²¹ *therapeia*: “service, care” or “to attend to the care of the household” (Bauer 1959).

¹²² According to the synoptic parallel Matt. 24:48, this steward is called *kakos*, “in the moral sense bad, evil” (Bauer 1959). This second steward isn’t a completely different person but the same person who chooses to exercise his stewardship role in a totally different way.

¹²³ Commentators interpret the severity of the judgment literally as a violent death (Plummer 1922; Lenski 1946) or metaphorically as a severe loss of position (Morris 1974). An exact determination of Jesus’ intent is hard to resolve given his frequent use of dramatic hyperbole in parabolic teaching (e.g., Luke 12:49; 14:26).

¹²⁴ “The idea of *parenthento* [‘has been entrusted’] is that of a capital that is deposited with someone in order that he may do business therewith, and in *aitēsousin* [‘will be asked’] that the return of this capital together with the proper interest on it are rightfully asked. Hence, [...] more than was deposited is to be returned.” (Lenski 1946, 711).

leaning toward a metaphorical application as applying to the apostles or church leaders in Luke's time.¹²⁵

Thus, in the first parable of stewardship, the story reveals a number of characteristics and responsibilities of the steward:

1. The attitude of the steward is such that he recognizes that the resources that he oversees are not his own, but his master's. He uses them entirely at the will and order of the master—not at his own will or for his own sake (Kim 1998, 145).
2. The appropriate character of the steward ought to be faithful/trustworthy and wise/sensible, qualities that help ensure proper use of resources that are not one's own.
3. The steward is to carry out his duties with watchfulness, always ready to be held accountable when the master returns.¹²⁶
4. Resources can be gradually increased over time by the master who rewards faithful service with greater responsibility and resources.
5. A potential resource entrusted to the steward is the care and oversight of the other servants.
6. The greatest abuse a steward can commit is to treat the resources in his charge as though they existed for his personal consumption or service. If caught in such a state, he is liable for discipline or judgment in proportion to his awareness of his responsibilities.
7. In the story, hypocrisy, or lack of integrity, was not allowed on the part of the steward, acting one way in the presence of the master and another in his absence.

A parable of resource management (Luke 13:6-9)

⁶ Then he [Jesus] told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷ So he

¹²⁵ For example, see commentaries by Morris (1974) and Geldenhuys (1951). Kim (1998, 140-45) argues more practically that the parable is intended for rich believers of Luke's Christian community.

¹²⁶ See the immediate preceding parable in Luke 12:35-40 which develops in more detail this attribute of watchfulness and alertness.

said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’⁸ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it.’⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’” (Luke 13:6-9)

In the process of warning a crowd of listeners of the importance of personal repentance (Luke 12:54-59), Jesus is confronted by some in the group who present him with a commonly accepted moral principle. They assume that people who suffer disaster must have been greater sinners than others (Luke 13:1-5). To quell this common misconception, Jesus tells a parable about an unfruitful fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). Most commentators interpret Jesus’ story as a warning to his listeners of their urgent need for repentance and of God’s patience to punish, but the parable contains valuable information about the steward as well.¹²⁷

The parable assumes that fruit-bearing plants should eventually bear fruit. Even more so, a fruit tree planted in rich soil that remains unfruitful after a reasonable number of years¹²⁸ shouldn’t continue to occupy valuable resources¹²⁹ that could be directed elsewhere. Both the farmer and the vinedresser agree on this. Although the vinedresser is never specifically called a steward, his actions clearly represent stewardship principles and accountability. But what is interesting about Jesus’ parable is that the vinedresser—acting in his role like a steward—is just as concerned about the tree as the owner. It is he, and not the owner, who suggests a final experiment to help the resource produce fruit by fertilizing it for one more year.¹³⁰ The parable suggests several stewardship principles:

- **Principle of growth or return-on-investment:** Resources should grow and bear fruit or be transferred to other assets that will produce growth.

¹²⁷ See commentaries by Morris (1974); Geldenhuys (1951); and Lenski (1946). Most agree that metaphorically the fruit tree represents Israel, the fruit itself repentance, the owner God, and the vinedresser Jesus. See Isa. 5:1-7 for an Old Testament parallel to this parable where God is both owner and vinedresser.

¹²⁸ *Three years*: “A fig tree is said to attain maturity in three years, and a tree that remained fruitless for so long would not be likely to bear afterwards” (Plummer 1922). Lenski (1946) argues unconvincingly for three literal years that correspond to the length of Jesus’ public ministry after John the Baptist. See Plummer (1922) for a rebuttal of this type of symbolic representation. The number three may simply represent a reasonable but not lengthy period of time.

¹²⁹ *Use up the soil* (*kai tên gēn katargei*): “make ineffective, powerless, idle” (Bauer 1957). In commenting on the root word of this verb, Plummer (1922) writes: “Both *argos* and *argia* are used of land that yields no return” (340).

¹³⁰ As has already been observed previously in this chapter regarding Gen. 24, independent thinking on the part of the steward was encouraged as long as the master had confidence that the steward’s intentions and goals were the same as the master’s.

- **Principle of optimum investment:** Resources sometimes take additional investment or time to produce growth, but there can be a maximum limit to what can be invested before growth must occur.¹³¹
- **Principle of risk:** Sometimes investment in resources will produce growth and sometimes it will not, but maximum loss can be mitigated through prudent risk. Failure is not necessarily a reflection on the owner or steward and is often nothing more than a natural outcome (or risk) of managing resources.
- **Principle of responsibility:** A steward accepts responsibility for achieving the desired results of the owner, for redirecting non-producing resources, and in some cases for ending non-fruitful investments.

The parable of the shrewd steward (Luke 16:1-13)

¹ Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager [*oikonomon*] was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management [*oikonomias*], because you cannot be manager any longer.’

³ “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg--

⁴ I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

⁵ “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ ‘Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.’ ⁷ Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’ ‘A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied. He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’

⁸ “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their

¹³¹ A timely application of the parable to nonprofit management identifies a potential blind spot in many nonprofit leaders. Nonprofit managers sometimes persist in investing in nonproductive activities under the pretext of faithfulness (“at least we are doing our mission”) or inadequate definitions of accomplishment (“if we can only impact just one person, it is still worth it”). Nonprofits often engage in campaigns, projects, or activities without ever measuring the results or assessing the effectiveness of the resources invested. By doing this they confuse activity with mission, assuming that as long as they are busy doing things, the mission is accomplished. Sometimes the hardest thing for a nonprofit manager to do is to stop resourcing a nonproductive program—to “cut it down”—to redirect the resources and achieve the stewardship principles listed above. Several effective publications on measuring results in missional organizations are Drucker (1990, 107-42); Kearns (1994 and 1996); and Collins (2005).

own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. ¹⁰ Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

¹³ “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Luke 16:1-13)

This parable is one of the most difficult parables to interpret, and yet at the same time offers a rare glimpse into the scope and responsibility that might be vested in the steward by owners. The main interpretive dilemma centers around two perplexities: the commendation given by the owner to his steward for acting *shrewdly*, and Jesus’ recommendation that his followers “use worldly wealth to gain friends” for themselves. Since the principal purpose of this thesis is to discern a biblical typology of the steward, it is beyond the scope of this study to analyze all the interpretive positions published on this parable. Our focus will center on the major interpretative positions while elucidating what is germane to the role and responsibilities of the steward.

Jesus’ parable concerns a wealthy business owner who fires his steward for wasting his assets.¹³² Knowing that the demanded accounting¹³³ of his stewardship was imminent, the steward quickly enacts a plan using his last opportunity to wield his stewardly authority. He goes to each of his master’s debtors and dramatically reduces their debt, thus binding his master by his actions as his legal “agent” while obliging the future friendship

¹³² *diaskorpizōn*: “scatter, disperse” or “waste, squander” when used in reference to property (Bauer 1957), and is the same word used in Luke 15:13 for the Prodigal Son who also squandered his father’s wealth. The exact nature of how the steward abused his master’s assets is unstated, although the abuse must have been known in order for others to accuse him and for the steward to make no effort to defend his innocence.

¹³³ *logon*: The word generally means “speech, word” or by usage “written words or speeches,” and then by application to the world of commerce, “make an accounting” (Bauer 1957). Munro and Mouritsen (1996) adds more detail concerning the classical method of stewardship accounting: “Under such systems, down through the eighteenth century, the dominant form of operative power relation was that of stewardship, and the form of one’s responsibility was to be answerable after the fact and grosso modo. So, for instance, on ancient and medieval estates, the steward (or bailiff or reeve) would be called every so often to account (perhaps annually, perhaps more sporadically), and made to answer for the detail of their stewardship. There would typically be some inspection of receipts and payments of money and produce, a form of information which is already found on estates in Greco-Roman antiquity (Macve, 1985). There might be an elaborate formal ritual, as in the medieval audit, the solemn and detailed hearing and examining of these accounts” (275).

and support of others.¹³⁴ When the master learns of the steward's actions, he praises the steward for acting shrewdly,¹³⁵ leaving the unstated reason for the commendation one of the first perplexing matters for interpretation. Jesus concludes his parable with a two-fold application intended for his disciples: encouragement to use worldly wealth in a similarly astute manner to further spiritual purposes, and encouragement to be a trustworthy¹³⁶ steward by drawing a parallel between the stewardship of earthly resources and spiritual resources.¹³⁷

Considerable controversy has surrounded the interpretation of the steward's actions.¹³⁸ In what ways were the steward's actions *shrewd*, worthy of praise, and not blatantly dishonest as they initially appear? A summary of the five major interpretive views will have to suffice:

1. Mosaic Law forbade charging interest on loans to fellow Jews (Deut. 23:19). The steward saw an opportunity to cancel inappropriate interest on his master's loans and restore the original amount of principal to be repaid, thus ingratiating himself to others while putting his master once again in right-standing with the law (Derrett 1961, 198-219).
2. Oriental stewards were known to extort large amounts from tenants or debtors to their master as their "commission" which they were entitled to keep. In this particular case, the steward was foregoing most or all of his commission to gain goodwill with others who might return the favor one day.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ See Kim's reference (1998) to the Greco-Roman ethic of reciprocity: "To help one's friends financially means in fact to lend money to them, and the recipient must give back the benefits he received to his friends later when needs will have occurred to them" (156-57).

¹³⁵ *phronimōs*: the adjectival form is normally translated "sensible, thoughtful, prudent, wise" (Bauer 1957), and generally refers to positive qualities—hence the Authorized Version translation *wisely*. By context the adverb is interpreted by some as "a shrewd adjustment of means to ends" (Plummer 1922), producing the translation *shrewdly* in the NIV.

¹³⁶ *pistos*: "trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust or faith" (Bauer 1957). Gersch (1974) adds: "This adjective, *pistos*, binds the three verses, the subject being the responsibility of the servant in handling wealth. The trustworthy Christian will not be after self-gain, even when legitimately permitted, but in faith will always seek the gain for God and others" (38).

¹³⁷ Luke calls these spiritual resources *to alēthinon*, "the true [thing]," "genuine, real" (Bauer 1957), with the subject of the adjective unstated for emphasis, but from the context meaning wealth or riches. "True riches are those that are valuable to God, that will last for all eternity" (Alcorn 2003, 146). Geldenhuys (1951) calls them "things of highest value" (417).

¹³⁸ See Landry and May (2000) for a summary of all major views.

¹³⁹ See Gachter (1950) and Fitzmyer (1985).

3. The steward was in actuality acting dishonestly, and Jesus uses this story ironically to emphasize how the “sons of light” should act the opposite: trustworthily, faithfully, and singularly devoted to spiritual instead of material resources (Fletcher 1963).
4. Although the action of the steward was dishonest, by distributing to those in great need (i.e., the debtors), he was engaging in the equivalent of generous almsgiving which the master commends.¹⁴⁰ Generosity in stewardship is a theme repeated in other parts of the New Testament (such as 2 Corinthians 8-9) following the lead of God as the generous giver.
5. Jesus and the master praise the steward’s shrewdness but not his lack of ethics (Jackson and Leightner 2007).

We now turn our attention to the characteristics or responsibilities of the steward expressed in this parable:

- Stewards may be called to account at any time for the management of the resources under their care.
- Improper management or abuse of resources may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the responsibilities of stewardship, and at times with severe consequences.¹⁴¹
- Character qualities that are commendable in a steward are shrewdness (or prudence), trustworthiness (or faithfulness), generosity, and integrity. Shrewdness by itself can spiral out of control (Jackson and Leightner 2007), and thus needs to be expressed along with other moral character traits.
- Trustworthiness can be tested through faithful stewardship of a small amount of resources, with greater resources as a possible reward.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ See Kim (1998, 145-60) for an excellent summary of all sources of this view.

¹⁴¹ See also Matt. 25:30 and Luke 12:46 for dismissal that results in death or banishment.

¹⁴² The trustworthy steward brings the same character and integrity to little or much, to material or spiritual resources, and to personal resources or God’s resources. The untrustworthy steward selectively applies character and lacks integrity. “One may think that what is ‘least’ does not count so that he may treat it as he pleases; but no, it is quite decisive as revealing our true character. One may think that if something very great were entrusted to him, he would be faithful; men will not agree with him, they will first want to test him out with something that is very small” (Lenski 1946).

- In the realm of spiritual stewardship, faithful management of material resources can result in advancement to managing spiritual resources (“true riches”).¹⁴³
- Effective stewards do not try to serve more than one master. In the same way that the unjust steward was attempting to develop multiple loyalties by endearing himself to others while still in the service of his master, Jesus pinpoints the problem by concluding that “no servant can serve two masters.” Another “master” that could divert a steward’s attention and service might be anything which absorbs the steward’s attention or allegiance.¹⁴⁴

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

¹⁴ “Again, it [the Kingdom] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ ²¹ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’

²² “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ ²³ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’

¹⁴³ “If one is unfaithful in the acquisition and use of worldly goods (which in the light of reality are ‘the least’ things and of the smallest intrinsic value), how can a responsible task in connection with the eternal and ‘true riches’ (the things of highest value) be entrusted to him? Whosoever is unfaithful and false in ordinary life, although he may pose as extremely pious, is also false and unfaithful spiritually, and so no spiritual gifts and blessings can be entrusted to him” (Geldenhuys 1951).

¹⁴⁴ In the previous chapter of this thesis which studied the Greco-Roman steward, stewards are warned to avoid the temptation of alcohol, sexual indulgence, mixing with society, engaging in building a personal business, etc.—all of which could become competing “masters.” See also Matt. 6:24, 33.

²⁴ “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.’ ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ ²⁶ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matt. 25:14-30)

This parable—and its close parallel in Luke 19:11-27¹⁴⁵—develops one of the richest sources of information about the steward in the 1st century biblical record. The three individuals in this story and in the Luke parallel are called *doulous* (*slaves*), and not the more specific *oikonomous* (*stewards*). However, even though the specific term for steward is not employed, the master treats the servants with such clear stewardship roles as to be considered stewards. Since the master assigns investments to three different servants to manage in his absence, it is possible that the master had not yet identified the steward of the estate and was testing potential candidates. Each servant is clearly functioning as a limited steward over a specific resource.¹⁴⁶

While traveling for a period of time, a wealthy master wants to continue the investment of his finances in his absence. He thus entrusts large sums of money¹⁴⁷ to three of his servants, giving sagaciously to each a different amount in accordance with their abilities (Hendricksen 1973).¹⁴⁸ The intended purpose of the trust was for the servants to

¹⁴⁵ Debate has surrounded these two parables concerning their relationship with one another. A few suggest that both parables come from a common source such as the “Q” material. A much larger group contends that because of differences, these are independent parables based on a common theme but spoken on different occasions. See Fitzmyer (1985) for a list of scholars on both sides. Because of their close association and potential common source, this study will draw details from both parables as needed.

¹⁴⁶ See Kim (1998, 162-63) for a more detailed rationale for referring to the servants in this parable as stewards.

¹⁴⁷ *talanta*: originally a measure of weight, then a sum of money in gold or silver equivalent to a weight whose exact monetary value differed from time to time and region to region (Vine 1940). However, the exact monetary value of the talent in this parable is not important to understand the nature of the trust given to each servant.

¹⁴⁸ In the Matt. 25 account, each servant is given differing amounts of money but two produce the same 100% profit margin. In the Luke 19 account each steward is given the same amount of money but produce differing profit margins. The story as recorded by Matthew stresses differing abilities resulting in differing

“put the money to work” while the master is gone by producing financial gain through trading or business (Matt. 25:16; Luke 19:13, 15).¹⁴⁹

Upon returning “after a long time,” the master asks for the expected accounting of the trust given to each steward. The first two stewards proudly display double the amount of money from what they were originally given, earning the same praise for being good and faithful.¹⁵⁰ Their reward was additional responsibility and a share in the master’s happiness at the successful outcome. On the other hand, the third steward takes his talent and buries it, excusing his behavior because of fear based on his perception—whether rightly or wrongly the parable does not tell us—of his master’s harsh and unethical character.¹⁵¹ In reply, the master points out the true character of the steward, calling him wicked and lazy,¹⁵² and turns the tables on the steward by accusing *him* of not acting in accord with his perception of the master’s character. If he thought the master was harsh, he should have acted accordingly and at least invested the talent with a safe banker for a minimal return of interest. This lazy steward’s punishment was total loss of his resources, possibly through dismissal or demotion.

Valuable observations about potential roles and responsibilities of the steward occur throughout this parable:

1. Fulfilling the master’s expectations is the principal goal of stewardship, which in many cases involves the expectation of growth or gain in the assets (Kim 1998, 164). In this particular case, the two stewards are praised for

levels of stewardship responsibility, while the Luke parallel stresses differing outcomes, resulting in differing future advancements. Both emphases are important aspects of stewardship.

¹⁴⁹ The three different Greek words used in these passages reveal different aspects of the steward’s commercial role: (1) *ergazoumai*, “to work, trade” (Vine 1940), is used in Matt. 25:16; (2) *pragmateuomai*, “to conduct or be engaged in a business” (Bauer 1957), is used in Luke 19:13; and (3) *diapragmateuomai*, “to gain by trading, to earn” (Bauer), is used in Luke 19:15. The latter two words are unique to Luke in the New Testament and emphasize the commercial nature of first century stewards. All three emphasize how stewards make resources grow: (1) to make them “work” for them; (2) to use resources to conduct business or trade; and (3) to use resources to create financial gain.

¹⁵⁰ *agathē*: “good, fit, capable, useful” (Bauer 1957) and *piste*, “faithful, to be trusted, reliable” (see comments on Luke 12:42 previous). “In the eyes of his master this man had proved himself to be thoroughly reliable. [...] Such moral soundness and such loyalty was what counted” (Hendriksen 1973).

¹⁵¹ Because the master responds to the first two stewards with sincere blessing and affirmation, this implies that his true character was probably not reflected in the third steward’s characterization.

¹⁵² *ponēre*, “in the ethical sense wicked, evil, bad, base, worthless” (Bauer 1957) and *oknēre*, “idle, lazy, indolent” (Bauer). “Wickedness and laziness are allies, not as if the wicked person is always lazy or slothful, but the lazy one is certainly wicked. In the original the combination is unforgettable, for the words used for ‘wicked’ and ‘lazy’ rhyme” (Hendriksen 1973).

applying themselves to growing the talents, not for any specific amount they were able to gain.

2. Stewards should not view all resources as static or as assets just to be maintained. Many resources are “living” and need to be wisely “put to work,” invested, used to conduct commerce, or converted to other resources for growth.¹⁵³
3. Prudent risk can be a necessary and unavoidable aspect of stewardship. However, risk-avoidance may be necessary under certain circumstances to protect the asset as long as it is not motivated by fear or laziness.
4. The manner in which a steward fulfills his/her responsibilities is based on any number of criteria:
 - a. The content of any direct instructions from the master
 - b. The steward’s prior experience or skill
 - c. The confidence and expectation of the master/owner in the steward’s ability to perform¹⁵⁴
 - d. The steward’s knowledge and understanding of the master’s character, expectations, and goals.
5. Stewards and masters can experience a reciprocal relationship that involves—at least to some degree—mutual awareness, understanding of one another, mutual reward, and mutual participation in the fruits of growth.
6. The master has the right to judge performance based on a steward’s potential to perform.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ “It is interesting to notice in this connection that the Greek word *tokos*, translated *usury* (archaic for ‘interest’) in verse 27, means ‘offspring’. Interest is the ‘child’ of capital” (Tasker 1961).

¹⁵⁴ In the Matthew version of the story, the first two stewards earned the same 100% profit using different levels of capital, emphasizing the master’s expectation of proportional growth. In the Luke version each steward began with the same capital but produced differing levels of profit, emphasizing the master’s expectation of minimal growth. Both are legitimate expectations.

¹⁵⁵ “This parable illustrates that proper accountability requires that the person to whom the report is being made is able to make an informed judgment about the outcome. In the parable, the owner was interested in what could have been done. As Collinson et al. (1993, 63) states: ‘One fascinating element of that story is the implicit reference to financial opportunity cost, for the owner indicated that he could have made interest on the money assigned to the steward if it had been deposited with a banker!’ However, financial statements say nothing about this, but this should be an essential requirement if one is trying to judge management’s performance. Rosenfield (1974, 127-28) considered that in judging managements performance: ‘The criterion is not how well they did compared with how well others did or how well they previously did, but how well they might have done in the circumstances.’ This requires detailed knowledge of the situation. In some ways

7. Stewards are singularly accountable to the master/owner. Each steward's work is judged on its own merit and results (Alcorn 2003, 149).
8. A steward focuses primarily on his *responsibilities* while the master focuses on his *rights*—not vice versa.¹⁵⁶
9. Stewards can be entrusted with wider service and greater responsibility as they demonstrate faithfulness and success in accomplishing the goals of the master.

Major Stewardship Themes in the Parables

Any attempt to summarize all of the theological themes concerning the steward and stewardship in the parabolic teachings of Jesus could consume the bulk of this study. However, it is appropriate to review several of the major theological themes in the Gospels that are most germane to the steward:

1. Stewards in the kingdom
2. A new kind of leadership
3. Character matters
4. Advancement of faithful stewards

Stewards in the kingdom

A central concept taught by Jesus from the very beginning of his public ministry was the announcement of the coming and imminent presence of the kingdom of God—the kingdom that is “at hand” (Matt. 4:17) and is “good news” (Matt. 4:23). In its most basic

this parable is more akin to an example of a management accounting situation (where a board of directors would know what to expect of a divisional manager) than a financial accounting situation (where the shareholders tend to be completely divorced from the running of the business)” (Higson & Tayles 1998, 81-82).

¹⁵⁶ “As stewards our rights are limited by our lack of ownership. Instead, we manage assets for the owner's benefit, and we carry no sense of entitlement to the assets we manage. It's our job to find out what the owner wants done with his assets, then carry out his will. If we focus on the master's rights, we will fulfill our responsibilities. But the moment we begin to focus on what we think we deserve, on what we think our master or others owe us, we lose perspective. The quality of our service deteriorates rapidly” (Alcorn 2003, 149).

sense, the kingdom is the rule and reign of God (Gill 1996, 102). The Gospel of Matthew critically positions this concept front and center as it “tells us first of the genealogy of the King, of the birth of the King, of the credentials of the King, [and] of the proclamation of the kingdom” (Habershon 1957, 104). Although there are many theological differences in how the nature and presence of the kingdom are interpreted, few would deny that the kingdom is central to Jesus’ parabolic teaching and to the concept of stewardship (Gill 1996, 102). Many of the parables that Jesus told concerned the nature of the kingdom were also parables of stewardship (e.g., Matt. 25:1-30; Luke 12:35-48; 16:1-13).

As a result, expositors like Rodin (2000) center their biblical exposition of stewardship in the kingdom motif:

By reclaiming the central motif of the steward, and building it on a sound theological and biblical base, we will be freed and empowered to live as joyous children in the kingdom of God. [...] That is the life lived by stewards in the kingdom of the triune God of grace. It comes through sacrifice, selflessness, giving and compassion, but it comes through a radical reinterpretation of what each of these means in light of our understanding of who God is and who we are as stewards in his kingdom. For this reason, the full, rich and abundant life in Christ is the life of the steward in the kingdom of God.” (10-11)

The kingdom that Jesus announces is a different kind of kingdom than most 1st century Jews and religious leaders were expecting. It is a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36) introduced by a new “gospel” of good news (Matt. 4:23) and comprised of completely different kinds of subjects: the poor in spirit, the meek, and the spiritually hungry (Matt. 5:1-12; 18:1-4). The king (Jesus) will have to leave his kingdom for a while but will entrust his kingdom to others until he comes again to reclaim it (John 14:3, 12, 18-20; 16:5-22).¹⁵⁷ Jesus uses various descriptions of the type of people that will be entrusted with his kingdom during his absence, using the role of the steward as one of the most frequent. These stewards of the kingdom function in much the same way and with similar characteristics as the cultural stewards familiar to Jesus’ 1st century audience. They are not a “new kind of steward” as some have called them, but they do consistently exhibit the distinctive characteristics of stewards. Therefore, stewards and the kingdom are inseparable themes in the stories and teachings of Jesus.

¹⁵⁷ Jesus also told his disciples of his upcoming departure in story form, likening his departure to a king who leaves his kingdom temporarily in the hands of stewards (Matt. 25:14; Luke 19:11-12).

A new kind of leadership

In one of Jesus' more famous statements about leadership, we learn his intent to establish a new kind of leadership model and mentality among his followers—one centered in service instead of authority: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [*diakonos*], and whoever wants to be first must be your slave [*doulos*]¹⁵⁸—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25-28).¹⁵⁹ The life of Jesus exemplifies this new kind of leadership (v.28), and his followers are to express their leadership with the same selfless service. Christian steward leaders, the focus of this dissertation, are to lead with this same new kind of leadership. Hendriksen (1973) comments: “Jesus is saying that in the kingdom over which he reigns, greatness is obtained by pursuing a course of action which is the exact opposite of that which is followed in the unbelieving world. Greatness consists in self-giving, in the outpouring of the self in service to others, for the glory of God.” Rinehart (1998) makes this same connection between the serving leader and stewardship:

Clearly, leadership in the spiritual realm does not follow the same principles and practices as the world around us. The vision is greater, the focal point being Christ and His kingdom. The nature and character of spiritual leadership reflects the humble stewardship of those Christ has called as members of His body, the people of God. (98)

Character matters

The moral character of the classical and Old Testament steward is sometimes highlighted in the original sources, but none more so than in the parabolic teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Character plays a pivotal role in virtually every

¹⁵⁸ Although both terms, *doulos* and *diakonos*, are considered synonymous in this passage by many commentators, they do convey different perspectives on the nature of spiritual leadership. *doulos* often stresses the relationship of slave to the master, while *diakonos* stresses the work or activity of service that is done.

¹⁵⁹ See also Matt. 18:1-4; 10:39; 16:24-25; and Luke 9:23-24 for other key passages on leadership by Jesus.

stewardship parable told by Jesus, and the essential character traits necessary for successful stewardship are noticeably illustrated: faithfulness, wisdom, responsibility, integrity, and trustworthiness. If to emphasize the point, Jesus paints contrasting pictures of stewards whose behavior hinge on differences in moral character in several of the parables (Luke 12:42-48; 16:10-12; Matt. 25:14-30). Although other writers may talk about character, Jesus clearly makes it one of the central determinants of good behavior through his teachings on the link between inner character and outward behavior: “The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man unclean” (Matt. 15:18); and “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him” (Matt. 12:35).

Advancement of faithful stewards

Another theme that is common to many of Jesus’ parables of stewardship is the hope of advancement for the faithful steward (Luke 12:42-48; 16:10-12; Matt. 25:14-30). Faithful stewardship of a small resource may often be rewarded with greater responsibility, and trustworthy stewardship of material resources can result in the stewardship of spiritual resources (Luke 16:11). Although the parables of Jesus do not directly highlight differences in the stewardship of material resources compared to the stewardship of human resources (e.g., other slaves, employees), Jesus’ lack of differentiation seems to imply that according to him the same principles of good stewardship and advancement apply to both. For Jesus, faithfulness and advancement are important aspects of the steward’s hope and progress. From classical sources we know that stewardship is not a singular position that is held in perpetuity, but an incremental responsibility that has progressive accountability and levels.

The Steward in the Epistles

In the Old Testament we find a primarily non-theological use of the term *oikonomos* as the chief servant of a household or a governmental officer. Foundational truths—such as the image of God in man and God’s ownership of all creation—form a basis for understanding the stewardship of nature, but the theological implications are not fully developed until the New Testament. It has already been demonstrated that the qualities of the steward that are most critical are faithfulness and trust (Gersch 1974, 40). In the parabolic teaching of Jesus, the mundane steward additionally exhibits the qualities of accountability, prudence (or wisdom), risk-taking, and integrity, and becomes exemplary for Christ’s stewards in the kingdom. Jesus accentuates the correlation between faithfulness in this material world with increased responsibilities in the spiritual or future world.

However, it isn’t until the writings of Paul and the apostles in the New Testament that there is full development in the biblical idea of *stewardship*, which is *the quality or nature of the responsibility managed by the steward*. Paul’s life and teaching provide a good example of stewardship in its primary meaning as “a trust” (Foster 1995, 17). It is through the Pauline letters (also called the Pauline Epistles) that we see a theological and metaphorical meaning that firmly develops the work of the steward as *stewardship* (*oikonomia*) (Hall 1990, 35).

This study will demonstrate that Paul uses *oikonomia* as a description of spiritual authority, the Christian’s proper use of spiritual gifts and resources, and the privilege of managing the gospel of grace (Foster 1995, 17). Much could be additionally developed and researched concerning the biblical concept of *stewardship*, but the primary focus of this study rests more on the nature of the steward, *ho oikonomos*, than on *stewardship*, *oikonomia*. The two terms, *ho oikonomos* and *oikonomia*, share a wide range of meanings and applications in the Old Testament, Greco-Roman texts, and in the New Testament.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Excellent studies on the classical, biblical, and theology meaning of *oikonomia* include Kantonen (1956); Reumann (1957); Brattgard (1963, 31-41); and Gill (1996). Brattgard (32) summarizes the four primary meanings of the word in classical Greek: (1) “the management, direction, or administration of a household with its variety of concerns;” (2) “the administration of an entire state, particularly in the military and

Exegesis of Primary Pauline Passages on the Steward and Stewardship

The stewardship of the secret things of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-3)

¹ So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted [*oikonomous*] with the secret things of God. ² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust [*oikonomois*] must prove faithful. ³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. (1 Cor. 4:1-3)

Humanity has the tendency to elevate certain individuals in their thinking or to rally around certain teachers and leaders. The 1st century church in Corinth was no exception, divided across parties that rallied around peripatetic teachers (1 Cor. 3:3-4). The apostle Paul addresses this problem in the Corinthian church by calling the members “worldly” or immature for their inability to understand several great truths, one of which is that apostles like Paul are not accountable to the Corinthians because of a special trust or stewardship given to them by God, his true master.

The apostles are servants¹⁶¹ who are given a trust by God to manage as his stewards (see also 1 Cor. 9:16-17). They are men and women *under* authority, but are also people *of* authority by virtue of their special stewardship. Only a few have been given this stewardship, and as such they are not accountable to the Corinthian believers for how they exercise their stewardship. They are only accountable to God who gave them their trust in the first place (1 Cor. 4:5).¹⁶² Instead of material resources, their stewardship encompasses spiritual resources, “the secret things of God” (v.1), which was God’s plan of salvation that was previously hidden from man but has now been revealed—namely, the gospel (Hall

economic areas;” (3) “the assumption of a whole variety of tasks or the arrangement of material;” and (4) “the administration of the universe and its affairs.” The Gospels tend to speak of stewardship in the first meaning, while the Epistles primarily speak of stewardship in the third and fourth meanings.

¹⁶¹ *hupēretas*: “an under-rower who rowed in the lower bank of oars on a large ship” or “any subordinate acting under another’s direction” (Vine, 1940).

¹⁶² This singular accountability to God and not humans is a special feature of the apostolic office and, as we will see in the field research, should not be construed to necessarily apply to other stewardship roles of human institutions.

1990, 37).¹⁶³ Paul then appeals to a well-known requirement of all stewards—faithfulness. Since the nature of a steward’s work requires that he or she largely function without close supervision, a prime requisite is that he be faithful to the master who alone has the authority to judge the steward’s behavior (Morris 1974).¹⁶⁴ In the immediate context of 1 Cor. 3, Paul also adds that the steward carries out the specific trust given to him by the master and does not assume a trust given another (1 Cor. 3:5-15). This trust bears a unique kind of partnership with the divine Master since Christian stewards minister “as God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor. 3:9).

The two sides of stewardship (Ephesians 3:2, 7-9)

² Surely you have heard about the administration [*oikonomian*] of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. [...] ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration [*oikonomia*] of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. (Eph. 3:2, 7-9)

The apostle again refers to a very special *oikonomian*¹⁶⁵ given to him by God, here called “God’s grace” and “this mystery,” which in the context refer to the gospel (see earlier comments on 1 Cor. 4:1-3). Paul was no self-appointed steward. He became a servant-steward, not through the normal process of coercion, but “by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power” (v.7). Although most stewards are given their position through testing and appointment from their masters, Paul’s stewardship came as a gift of grace from God. The unusual form of his appointment was due not only to the

¹⁶³ See 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Eph. 3:2-12; and Col. 1:25-27 for Paul’s own elaboration on the content and nature of this secret. “The apostle is entrusted with the treasure of the Gospel; he has knowledge of God’s plan of salvation” (Gersch 1974). “[The apostles have] been given to understand God’s plan of salvation, long hidden to human minds but now revealed in Christ. Thus the ‘mysteries of God’ means the revelation of the gospel, now known through the Spirit and especially entrusted to the apostles to proclaim” (Fee 1987). See Brattgard (1963, 103-09) for an excellent review of the stewardship of the gospel.

¹⁶⁴ *pistos*: See footnotes 33, 51, and 67. We will see that this is the same quality required of all Christians who are also stewards (1 Pet. 4:10).

¹⁶⁵ The Textus Receptus (on which the King James version of the Bible is based) has the word *koinōnia* (*fellowship*) here, but the bulk of manuscripts read *oikonomian*.

unique resource he was stewarding (“the mystery made known”), but also because of his own sense of unworthiness (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13-15; 1 Tim. 1:12-14). Hall (1990) sees another unique aspect of Paul’s stewardship—he is allowed to participate in the very resource (i.e., grace) that he is stewarding. Although Hall incorrectly applies the principle beyond the immediate context to *all* believers, his comments do bring out an important facet of Paul’s stewardship:

The new dimension in this important passage is what we may call the dimension of participation. Although the steward of God (or Christ), like the stewards of earthly lords, can claim nothing for him- or herself, that steward is not merely an outsider—hired help, so to speak. Rather, the steward participates in the very ‘household of God.’ As such, the steward is called and enable to share “this grace” (v.8) with others, and to bring them in turn into God’s household. [...] The Ephesians reference to stewardship accentuates the high meaning of the metaphor: the steward is herself a participant in the very bounty (grace) for whose distribution she has now a mandate. (30)

Qualifications of the church steward (Titus 1:5-9)

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work [*theou oikonomon*], he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Tit. 1:5-9)

The Apostle Paul’s visit to the fledgling church in Crete left unfinished business that he instructs his young disciple Titus to complete—to appoint elders¹⁶⁶ to oversee each church. Paul follows up his general instruction with a detailed list of elder qualifications

¹⁶⁶ In this passage Paul uses two terms that have been debated as to their similarity or distinctiveness: *elder* (*presbuteros*, v.5) and *overseer* (*episkopon*, v.7). Expositors differ over the relationship between the two terms and generally adopt one of two positions: (1) the terms refer to distinct offices (e.g., Bernard 1899, and Clarke 2008); or (2) both terms are synonymous (e.g., Hendriksen 1957, and Strauch 1986). This thesis will assume that the terms are synonymous, although adopting a different position will not change the exegesis of this passage with regard to stewardship.

that bear similarity to another list of qualifications given to Paul's other disciple, Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Centered within the list is a fundamental reason for these obligatory qualifications, namely, because the elder is God's steward (*theou oikonomon*).¹⁶⁷

Associating stewardship with the role of the elder is widely neglected by most expositors, but Strauch (1986) explains the importance of prerequisite qualifications and character traits for any steward of God's household, the church:

The term steward is an appropriate name for elders/overseers. Since the local church is called the household of God (1 Timothy 3:15), the elder/overseer who manages it can be called God's steward. So in this passage Paul emphasizes that an elder must be above reproach because he is God's steward. The emphasis is on God as the steward's owner. Thus, God demands that those entrusted with supervising His house be morally and spiritually fit. (271)

The qualifications listed pertain to the elder-steward overseeing the affairs of the church, and are considered "necessary" or "compulsory" for any steward over the church.¹⁶⁸ Since these qualifications are specific to the elder-steward, not all would be germane if applied in the context of nonprofit organizational leadership (e.g., "a man whose children believe"). However, this list does stand as one of the most complete lists of qualifications in the biblical record appropriate to many steward roles. Strauch (1986) summarizes the qualifications as follows:

1. Above reproach
2. The husband of one wife
3. A father who controls his children properly
4. Not self-willed
5. Not quick-tempered
6. Not addicted to wine
7. Not pugnacious
8. Not fond of sordid gain
9. Hospitable

¹⁶⁷ The NIV translation at this point is unfortunate since it confuses the simplicity of the phrase, which literally means "as the steward of God." Because of the forward position of *theou*, emphasis is laid on God as the master of the elder, not on the Christian community as the master of the elder as some have practiced. "It is to God, not to man, that he is responsible for the due discharge of his office" (Bernard 1899).

¹⁶⁸ Paul introduces these qualifications with the phrase *dei gar* ("for it is necessary") indicating a cause or reason (*gar*) for why the qualifications are necessary (*dei*) (Bauer 1957).

10. Loving what is good
11. Sensible
12. Just
13. Devout
14. Self-controlled
15. A man committed to the faithful Word
16. A man who can exhort in sound doctrine
17. A man who can refute opponents. (267-82)

Stewards of God's grace (1 Peter 4:10-11)

¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering [*oikonomoi*] God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 4:10-11)

In this and other Pauline passages it is revealed that every believer is given a spiritual gift of grace¹⁶⁹ to be held in trust and expressed for the benefit of others¹⁷⁰ to serve them (Stibbs 1959). The reason¹⁷¹ believers are called to serve one another through their gifts is that believers are “faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (NIV), or following a more accurate translation in this particular passage, “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (KJV).¹⁷² Within the New Testament record, *all* Christians in this general sense are called to be stewards—not just the apostles, spiritual leaders, or those with certain gifts—leading Brattgard (1963) to call this verse the “locus

¹⁶⁹ “In the New Testament Greek, the word for spiritual gift has *grace* as its root. ‘Spiritual gift,’ *charisma*, has the root word of *charis*, or grace. That is why in every spiritual gifts passage in the New Testament you will find the word *grace* alongside spiritual gifts. Out of God's grace come the gifts of the Spirit. [...] Thus, Peter calls us to be good stewards of God's grace, faithful in both our relationships and in the using of our spiritual gifts. You can learn to be who you are through your spiritual gifts, and learn to be right where you are in the relationships that God has given to you” (Ford 2006, 95-96).

¹⁷⁰ See also Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; and Eph. 4:11-12.

¹⁷¹ *hōs*: “as one who is” (Bauer 1957), giving the reason for an action.

¹⁷² The King James Version (KJV) is much more accurate to the Greek at this point than the NIV.

classicus” of the Bible which designates all Christians as stewards.¹⁷³ Stibbs (1959) comments, “God thus equips each one of His family or household for service, and makes him responsible as a steward to use his endowment in the service of his brethren. [...] Every Christian may expect particular divine endowment for some form of ministry, and he should recognize his corresponding responsibility before God as a steward for its proper use” (156).

Although only two general types of spiritual gifts are illustrated by the apostle Peter—ministry by spoken word and ministry in service—other lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; Eph. 4:7-16) reveal a wider range of possible spiritual gifts given in trust by God to every believer. A steward is generally given resources to bring benefit to the master, but in the process of stewarding the resources, benefit can also be experienced by those who are being served. In the same way, spiritual gifts or “graces” are given to believers for the ultimate praise and glory of God, but God derives additional praise as *other* people are served in the process. Barnes (1962) captures the broader context of every Christian’s stewardship in his paraphrase of this passage: “Regard yourselves as the mere stewards of God; that is, as appointed by him to do this work for him, and entrusted by him with what is needful to benefit others. He intends to do them good, but he means to do it through your instrumentality, and has entrusted to you as a steward what he designed to confer on them.”

The manner in which Christians are to steward grace to one another is expressed in several characteristics in the passage:

1. All Christians are to steward grace as morally good and upright people.¹⁷⁴
2. The purpose of receiving the spiritual gift of grace as a trust is to serve one another.
3. The ultimate goal of being stewards of grace is to bring praise to God (and by inference, not to oneself).

¹⁷³ See Brattgard (1963, 58-64) for an excellent exegetical review of the theme of stewardship throughout the entire First Epistle of Peter.

¹⁷⁴ *Good stewards (kaloi oikonomoi)* meaning “good, excellent, orderly, and upright” (Kittel and Friedrich 1965, vol. 3).

Other New Testament passages

1. **1 Cor. 9:17:** Paul repeats his affirmation made earlier (1 Cor. 4:1) that he has been given a special trust or *oikonomian* from God to preach the gospel. Although Paul considers himself free (1 Cor. 9:19), in one respect he performs this stewardship involuntarily because of his responsibilities as a steward-slave.
2. **Gal. 4:2:** In building an argument that believers are now “sons of God” with the full privileges of heirs, Paul contrasts their previous state as unbelievers with a fatherless child who is under the care of guardians (*epitropous*) and stewards (*oikonomous*). No further elaboration is given of these two positions, leaving expositors to assume one of three interpretations:
 - a. Both terms are meant to be synonymous, and stewards may have functioned in some guardianship capacity overseeing children.
 - b. Guardians were in charge of the care of minor orphans¹⁷⁵ whereas stewards might have been given the oversight of the orphan’s estate (Hendricksen 1968).
 - c. Both terms refer to different functions that can be fulfilled by the same person.¹⁷⁶
3. **Col. 1:24-29:** In a parallel passage to Eph. 3:2-9, Paul once again characterizes his position as a servant who has been given a stewardship (*oikonomian*) from God to preach the mystery of the gospel. This time, however, certain aspects about his stewardship are brought out by the context:
 - a. Paul specifically calls himself a servant-steward of the *church* (v.25)
 - b. The purpose of his stewardship is more specifically declared—“to present to you the word of God in its fullness” (v.25)
 - c. There is a cost to exercise his steward role in the form of personal suffering (v.24) and hard work that is only possible because of the energy that his ultimate master God provides (v.29)

¹⁷⁵ See previous discussion of *epitropos* in this chapter.

¹⁷⁶ See Burton (1921, 212-15) for one of the most detailed investigations of these two terms.

- d. The methodology that Paul uses to express his stewardship is preaching with admonishment and teaching (v.28).
4. **1 Tim. 1:4:** Paul urges his disciple Timothy to warn the Ephesian believers not to engage in heretical teaching or pointless speculations. The Ephesians could either spend their energy encouraging controversy or engaging in the stewardship (*oikonomian*) of God, which is characterized by faith. The meaning of *oikonomian* in this passage has been debated, but most expositors agree that it refers to a spiritual, metaphorical use of the word meaning the arrangement of God's "household," or his divine order of salvation,¹⁷⁷ leading to the NIV translation, "God's work." Possibly having in mind his own designation as a steward of the gospel (1 Cor. 4:1; Col. 1:25), Paul encourages others to promote and engage in God's work, or divine stewardship, rather than promoting meaningless conjectures about speculative truths.

Major Stewardship Themes in the Epistles

An elevated view of the slave-servant

Significant research and exegesis have been conducted on the concept of the slave in the New Testament¹⁷⁸—more so than can be reviewed in the limited scope of this thesis. However, the Pauline and General Epistles address slaves directly enough times to make this a theme that cannot be ignored, particularly in view of the steward as slave.¹⁷⁹ In the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles never outwardly denounce the practice of slavery, nor are Christian slave owners ever told to manumit their slaves.¹⁸⁰ It is a social condition that is assumed and addressed primarily from practical and theological perspectives. The metaphor of a slave or servant is used by Jesus Christ 3 times¹⁸¹ and by the apostle Paul

¹⁷⁷ For example, see Hendriksen (1957); Bernard (1899); and Guthrie (1957).

¹⁷⁸ See Harrill (2006); Barnes (1969); and Bartchy (1985).

¹⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 7:21-22; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10; and 1 Pet. 2:18-21.

¹⁸⁰ Slave owners are primarily told to treat their slaves with kindness (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1) and a runaway slave is even encouraged to return to his master (Philem. 10-16).

¹⁸¹ Matt. 20:27; Mark 10:44; and John 8:34.

over 25 times¹⁸² in both negative and positive applications representing spiritual bondage to sin or to God. Paul often called himself a “servant of Jesus Christ.” Modern opinion concerning the meritorious value of the slave metaphor in the New Testament varies from commendation for the “spiritual emancipation” given 1st century slaves (Finley 1968, 189) to denigration for the dehumanizing “psychological domination” of slaves in the name of religion (Bradley 1994, 150-53).

Given the opposing ways the slave metaphor is used in the biblical record, and the silence of Christ and the apostles with regard to the appalling nature of slavery in society, the modern reader needs to keep an open perspective with regard to the personal views of the biblical writers on slavery. They likely believed that “slavery was a matter of the spiritual or moral domain and that physical, earthly bondage was immaterial to spiritual progress. [...] The slave who pursued truth and virtue was not really a slave at all” (Bradley 1994, 150). The biblical writers called slaves to act with virtue, respect, other-worldly mindedness, and with a heart of service because their true master was the God who rewards. The New Testament writers equally elevated the position of the steward to encompass all Christians who served one another as they served the eternal Master. This stewardship of all believers was holistic of all of life, and driven by a relationship between the steward and the divine master that was virtuous and intimate.

Stewards of the household of faith

The New Testament takes a common concept, the *oikos*, or household, and extends its meaning to the spiritual household, the *oikos* of God, the church (Gal. 4:10; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 4:17). Just as the steward in some of the domestic households exhibits special responsibilities to members of the household, in a similar way the spiritual steward relates similarly to the members of God’s spiritual household. Although the New Testament does speak of all believers as stewards of the gifts of grace to one another (1 Pet. 4:10-11), only a few can be spiritual stewards over God’s household of faith (Tit. 1:6-9). But for those who are given this responsibility, Ford (2006) reminds the reader of the relational role of the spiritual steward: “This word ‘steward,’ *oikonomos*, means that an

¹⁸² Such as Rom. 7:14, 25; Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 9:19, 27; and Gal. 4:7.

overseer is ‘God's household manager.’ He or she is the one relationally entrusted with the ‘household work’ of God. [...] Thus, God's economy of grace includes the building up of God's household, now with God's stewards, or relationship managers, as key players entrusted to help encourage and build up the body of Christ” (93).

Among some expositors there is a tendency to mix the metaphors of the steward and the household of faith, implying that since: (1) every believer is called to be a steward in one sense or another; and (2) that there are stewards over the household of faith (the church), that all believers are stewards over the household of faith.¹⁸³ According to Titus 1:6-9, the elders function collectively as steward *over* the household of faith while each individual believer functions as a type of under-steward of a specific gift of grace for the benefit of others.

The stewardship of grace

Divine grace or favor (Vine 1940) is a major theme of Paul in his letters, and has a number of expressions within his writings according to Bauer (1957): “The *possession of divine grace* as a source of blessings for the believer, or a *store of grace* that is dispensed, or a *state of grace* (i.e., standing in God’s favor) that is brought about, or a *deed of grace* wrought by God in Christ, or a *work of grace* that grows from more to more.” According to Paul, all three members of the divine trinity are involved in the delivery and expression: God the Father is the author and source of grace (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:10), the Son is the mediator and deliverer of grace (Rom. 5:15; Eph. 1:5-6), and the Holy Spirit demonstrates grace (Heb. 10:29).

Paul goes further, however, in his theology of grace by recognizing that God allows those that are recipients of his grace to also be stewarding instruments of its generous mediation and incarnation to one another. Paul sees in his own apostolic stewardship of God’s grace (Eph. 3:2-9) an example of what Hall (1990) calls “the dimension of participation”—he is not only generously given grace as a gift, he is appointed to steward

¹⁸³ For example, see Brattgard (1963) when he says, “To be an *oikonomos* in the biblical sense implies that one is a part of God's *oikos*, his congregation. [...] An *oikonomos* becomes a living stone in God's *oikos*. The attitude which results is described in the Bible with the word edification (*oikodomē*), which in turn implies solidarity with the others who are the stones in the wall, each in his own place” (50-51).

that grace on behalf of other believers, and is even allowed to enjoy that grace himself: “The steward is herself a participant in the very bounty (grace) for whose distribution she now has a mandate” (30). Paul goes on to remind individual believers that they too share the same dimension of participation, but now in a more general sense in which they are “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10-11). Believers not only are recipients of God’s grace, they are instruments of divine grace to other believers through the expression of their spiritual gifts, and are able to personally experience that grace in the process. Like the parable of the talents as recorded in Matt. 25:14-30, each believer is given a different measure of grace (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7) and is assigned to steward that grace for the benefit and spiritual growth of others (Eph. 4:11-16).

A Brief Biblical Theology of Stewardship

The primary purpose for this chapter is to develop a typology of the biblical steward, and only as supplementary support to develop a theology of stewardship. This paper has exegeted the relevant biblical passages on the biblical steward and has at times identified various elements of a theology of stewardship. It has not attempted to articulate a broader or complete theology of stewardship, and will conclude with a short list of a few remaining doctrines of a theology of stewardship that have not been covered previously.

Some contemporary writers develop a theology of stewardship that relates numerous doctrines of the Christian life to stewardship, rendering almost everything as stewardship, and the steward synonymous with being a Christian.¹⁸⁴ Although there is merit in reading the steward motif into many broader theological concepts,¹⁸⁵ this dissertation will limit its application of the steward motif to only those doctrines that directly refer to the steward or stewardship in scripture.

¹⁸⁴ Major contemporary works that develop a theology of stewardship are Brattgard (1963); Rodin (2000); and Hall (2000). Examples of works that equate stewardship with Christian living in far too general of a way are Trimble (1929); Cunningham (1979); and Valet (1994 and 2001).

¹⁸⁵ For example, many interpret Christ as the preeminent servant-steward of the God even though the specific words for steward are never used of Christ. See Hall (2000, 43-44); O’Connell (1969, 40); and Kantonen (1951, 121-122) for well-argued theologies of Christ as the steward.

The spheres of stewardship

Historical records of stewards demonstrate that a steward can be given management responsibility of almost any resource owned by another. A common alliterated summary of the spheres of stewardship in Christian writings of the last century focuses on the stewardship of “time, talents, and treasures,”¹⁸⁶ but many more spheres are illustrated in the biblical record. Thus, a review of specific spheres of stewardship can only be an approximation at best of what Kiser (2005, 127) calls “stewards of all of life”. The following list of the spheres of stewardship summarizes most of the Christian sources:

- Stewardship of time
- Stewardship of abilities (talents)
- Stewardship of money
- Stewardship of community
- Stewardship of natural resources (creation)
- Stewardship of power or dominion
- Stewardship of material resources (possessions)
- Stewardship of spiritual realities (the Gospel)
- Stewardship of spiritual gifts
- Stewardship of grace
- Stewardship of relationships
- Stewardship of the poor and disenfranchised
- Stewardship of self (mind, will, emotions)
- Stewardship of our bodies
- Stewardship of God’s image (*imago Dei*)¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ For example, see Kiser (2005, 97). See Brattgard (1963, footnote 67) for a list of other sources of this common tripartite division.

¹⁸⁷ Some of the better sources that review the spheres of stewardship are Briggs (1969, 159-65); Brattgard (1963, 64-115); Business Executives for Economic Justice (1992, 9-22); Foster (1995, 18-19); and Kiser (2005, 15-130).

Divine and human ownership of property

The scriptural record begins with a clear affirmation of God's creative power (Gen. 1:1) and later confirms his absolute ownership of all that exists (Ps. 24:1). One of the first actions of God towards humanity was to place creation in the trust of humankind (Gen. 1:26-30), giving man and woman stewardship and, to some degree, temporary possession. North (1973) affirms this balance between sovereign ownership and human delegation: "All property belongs to God. God delegates to individuals, as members of His covenantal institutions, the responsibility of acting as stewards of this property. God, as Creator, can alone claim total sovereignty over property. No single earthly individual or institution can ever legitimately assert the right of absolute ownership. All ownership is covenantal" (213-14).

But does God's sovereignty prohibit the concept of human ownership, if even temporarily? The vast majority of Christian theologians and economists affirm God's sovereign ownership of all creation, yet they hold varying views as to the rights of humanity to private property, property distribution, or temporal ownership.¹⁸⁸ However, the most commonly held position on the biblical view of human ownership is that "men are only tenants at will" and can never claim absolute ownership (Grace 1953). The Jubilee Year in the Mosaic Law seems to support this temporal ownership, and at no point in the biblical record does God ever relinquish sovereign ownership or human stewardship over creation.

Caretaking dominion of earth

In spite of humanity's sordid history of a self-interested, indulgent consumption of creation, God's original command and personal example to Adam and Eve was to manage creation quite differently (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15). Humanity is to exercise dominion over creation by filling and subduing the earth, and their models are both divine and human. Humanity's divine model is God, whose sustaining and generous care is repeatedly

¹⁸⁸ Some of the better Christian sources on the problem of property rights are Evans (1906, 275-85); Grace (1953, 150-56); and Terrell (2000, 1-9).

affirmed when he calls his creation *good*. Adam in the Garden is man and woman's human model of creation-care, who tilled and kept it under the approving eye of God. Stewarding creation is a contrast of power and tender caretaking, of self-sustenance and the obligation to tend it as trustees for posterity (Hay 1991, 19). But most important, humanity stewards and cares for creation in the same way that the divine owner cares for it.

Humanity's creation-dominion is mentioned again in Ps. 8:6-8, bringing out new aspects and purposes to the stewardship of creation: "You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas." The ultimate purpose for humanity's stewardship of creation is mentioned twice, framing the beginning and the end of the psalm: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens" (v.1). Biblical creation-dominion is for one purpose only—to bring glory to the divine owner.

The serving steward

Even though the core identity of biblical stewards was that of a slave,¹⁸⁹ most Christian expositors overlook this foundational identity or give it only cursory affirmation.¹⁹⁰ Jesus, considered by some as the Bible's preeminent steward, affirms repeatedly that he came primarily to serve: "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).¹⁹¹ Paul equally acknowledges that his stewardship also came in the form of service: "Men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and those entrusted with ["stewards of"] the secret things of God" (1 Cor. 4:1).¹⁹² Thus, the work of a steward is the work of a

¹⁸⁹ The only biblical exception being governmental or military stewards who may or may not have been slaves (e.g., Erastus as *oikonomos tēs poleōs*, "treasurer of the city" in Rom. 16:23).

¹⁹⁰ It is surprising that the three primary exegetical works on the biblical steward (Brattgard 1963; Hall 2000; Rodin 2000) all fail to develop the relationship of the steward with regard to his core identity as a slave or servant, only acknowledging its historical roots. It isn't until Block's 1993 non-religious treatment of stewardship in the workplace that service and servanthood are developed with any detail with regard to stewards.

¹⁹¹ See also Matt. 20:28; Luke 12:37; John 13:12-16; and Phil. 2:7.

¹⁹² See also 1 Cor. 3:5; 9:19; 2 Cor. 4:5; and Col. 1:25.

servant:¹⁹³ “We are stewards here only as we participate *in* Christ in his work as the faithful servant of God. This participation is the work of the steward” (Rodin 2000, 116). Even though Block (1993) wrote a non-religious business book on stewardship, he affirms this biblical premise when he relates how service is central to stewardship:

To hold something of value in trust calls for placing service ahead of control, to no longer expect leaders to be in charge and out in front. There is pride in leadership, it evokes images of direction. There is humility in stewardship, it evokes images of service. Service is central to the idea of stewardship. (41)

Stewardship rooted in classical doctrine

Many of the writers on biblical stewardship demonstrate how stewardship is rooted in and derives its importance from some of the major theological doctrines of the classical and reformed Christian faith:¹⁹⁴

- **Doctrine of Creation:** “The doctrine of creation not only establishes God’s absolute sovereignty but it also furnishes two concepts basic to evangelism and stewardship, namely, trusteeship and responsibility” (Kantonen 1951, 272).
- **Doctrine of Redemption:** The Old Testament repeatedly reminds Israel that they are a redeemed people, sought and bought by God to be a people of his inheritance (Ex. 15:13; Ps. 74:2; Isa. 43:1) (Gill 1996, 29). “Stewardship in the Old Testament rests on God’s ownership of the people of God, an ownership made double in the divine realities of election and redemption” (Gill 1996, 29). Redemption continues to be a major theme in the New Testament through the redemption price of Christ’s own life (Rom. 3:23-24; Gal. 3:13-14; 4:4-5; Eph. 1:7-8). “From the doctrine of redemption we derive our insight into the grace which restores sinners into fellowship

¹⁹³ It is important to point out that the reverse of this statement is not necessarily true (“the work of a servant is the work of a steward”). It would be a mistake to apply all characteristics of slavery to stewarding, or to say that biblical passages which concern the slave therefore concern the steward.

¹⁹⁴ Excellent sources that relate stewardship to classical Christian doctrine include Kantonen (1951, 271-77); Conrad (1954); Kantonen (1956); Brattgard (1963, 138-88); Briggs (1969); Gill (1996); and Rodin (2000). The list of theological doctrines included here is meant to be representative only, and not exhaustive of all related doctrines.

with God and awakens the gratitude, joy, and love which motivate us to give our lives to our Redeemer” (Kantonen 1951, 277).

- **Doctrine of Sanctification:** The process of sanctification, or of becoming holy and “Christlike,” is repeatedly exhorted and illustrated in the New Testament (Rom. 6:22-23; 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 6:1; Jas. 1:4). The work of the Holy Spirit is the work of sanctification in the believer’s life, providing the conviction, motivation, and power to progressively change. And according to Brattgard (1963), the steward’s role of obedience and service does not come natural to the believer without the sanctifying influence of the Spirit: “A person can be a good steward only if he is an instrument of the Holy Spirit. Under the guidance of the Spirit unexpected resources are made available. The willingness to give what is characteristic of stewardship is made possible by the influence of the Spirit” (169).

Stewardship of relationships

Stewardship in its base form implies responsibility, trusteeship, and accountability. A steward can fulfill his or her responsibilities with only a cognitive knowledge of the master’s intentions and desires. But the concept of stewardship as it is developed in the New Testament goes far beyond these base expectations to portray the idea of intimacy with the divine master, and even relationship (Matt. 25:21; Eph. 1:17, 4:13; Col. 1:9). We have also already seen how all believers are to steward the gifts of grace to other believers for their benefit and growth (1 Pet. 4:10). Biblical stewardship involves relationship on several different levels. Rodin (2000, 29-30) calls the biblical steward “a wholly relational term” that is developed in the Bible on four levels:¹⁹⁵

1. **The steward and the owner:** The biblical steward does not just know *about* the owner—he intimately bears the image of God and is privileged to know God as the self-revealer in Jesus.

¹⁹⁵ See also Rodin (2000, 72-83) for more detail on how each of the four relational levels is stewarded. Rodin’s 2010 book develops the relational aspect of stewardship among four different but related relationships: the steward with God, self, others, and creation.

2. **The steward and the recipients:** The biblical steward invests the resources of the owner in the lives of those to whom the owner is inclined, and thus exercises care for both the resources *and* those who will benefit from the resources (cf. Luke 12:42-43).
3. **The steward and self:** Rodin's understanding of the steward's relationship with oneself is supported by instructions to the classical steward: "There is a relationship between the steward and the steward's own needs. That is, while the resources are not owned by the steward, the steward is expected to live from the resources and in that way be a steward to himself or herself. There is a self-stewardship implied in the term" (30).
4. **The steward and the resources themselves:** Rather than give in to the temptation to dominate, exploit, or waste the material or spiritual resources, the biblical steward avoids the temptation to act the owner himself and exercises the same caretaking, investing, and use exhibited by the divine owner (cf. Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15).

The reward of faithful stewardship

Few of the writings on biblical stewardship address the reward of faithful stewardship with any detail. Most speak about the duty and obligation of stewardship, but few exegete the positive benefits for the faithful steward.¹⁹⁶ The biblical account, however, is not silent on a steward's rewards: greater responsibility (Matt. 25:21; Luke 12:44), a share in the master's happiness (Matt. 25:21),¹⁹⁷ greater trust (Luke 16:10), and oversight of spiritual resources (Luke 16:11). Kantonen (1956) adds his own understanding of the reward: "A reward there is indeed for the good steward, but it represents not wages or merit but 'the goodness, bounty, and mercy of God'" (115).

¹⁹⁶ Notable exceptions are the last chapter of Kantonen (1956) and a section in the 1992 National Conference of Catholic Bishops pastoral letter.

¹⁹⁷ "The parable of the talents reverses the customary view of the rewards of work. In the parable, the reward of the faithful stewards is the approval of their master. Financial rewards do not even enter the picture. Instead the master promises that because the workers 'have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much' and he invites them to 'enter into the joy of your master.' This is obviously a picture of heavenly reward for those who have served God by their stewardship" (Ryken 1995, 85).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to develop from the biblical record an exegetical, historical, and theological study of the steward and stewardship. It has focused on examining the characteristics of the steward in the Old Testament era, the parables of Jesus, and the Pauline Epistles in the New Testament. Its main purpose is to articulate a typology of the characteristics and responsibilities of the biblical steward. It has analyzed the Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible to describe the steward and stewardship, exegeted the primary Old Testament and New Testament passages that illustrate the steward in ancient Semitic and Christian life, and drawn theological conclusions from the biblical observations. The steward in the Bible has been drawn from a wide variety of cultural milieus—from 2nd millennium BCE Egyptian slavery to 1st century CE ecclesiastical roles—and a broad diversity of literature genres—from patriarchal biography to oratorical parable. The behaviors and responsibilities of the steward have been identified in their biblical context.

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