
Western secular theories and muted Christian approaches to leadership in Africa

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Abstract

In many countries today people are experiencing serious problems with their leaders. As was done in two previous articles in this journal (cf. Van der Walt, 2019a, 2019b), the focus here is on the leadership crisis in mainly the West, looking for its causes in different worldviewish presuppositions. It follows on the above-mentioned second article about the possible influence of the traditional African worldview and culture as well as Western colonialism on leadership.

The present contribution firstly investigates how Western secular theories may influence leadership on the continent. These secular theories and practices, which developed through different phases and paradigms, are often of a reductionist and pragmatist nature and plagued by a dualism between fact and value, thus lacking clear normative direction for good leadership.

Secondly, an analysis of different muted dualist and thus reduced forms of Christianity follows, starting with the missionary Christianity of the past, moving toward present types, like the Prosperity Gospel (of Health and Wealth), spreading like wild fire on the continent. The question is asked why the Christian faith, in spite of its phenomenal numerical growth on the continent has so little impact outside the churches, including leadership. The need is clearly felt for an integral and comprehensive

Christian worldview and Christian public philosophy, enabling leaders' involvement also outside their churches in every area of life.

The third main section asks attention for the fact that many Christian writers still employ Scripture as a guide toward sound leadership by using Bible texts, biblical concepts or metaphors and leading figures from the Word of God. Since these efforts, in spite of their value, contain some weaknesses, the concluding contribution in this series (cf. Van der Walt, 2019c) will be devoted to an analysis of the structure and direction of leadership from an integral biblically-grounded worldview.

Opsomming

Westerse sekulêre teorieë en beperkte Christelike benaderings van leierskap in Afrika

In baie lande ondervind mense vandag ernstige probleme met hulle leiers. Soos wat uit die twee vorige bydraes in hierdie tydskrif geblyk het, val die fokus in hierdie reeks veral op die leierskapskrisis in Afrika en meer spesifiek op wat die moontlike lewensbeskoulike redes daarvoor kan wees. In die vorige bydrae is reeds die invloed van die tradisionele lewensvisie van Afrika ondersoek.

Die huidige artikel ondersoek eerstens hoe Westerse sekulêre teorieë ook leierskap op ons eie kontinent beïnvloed. Hierdie teorieë en praktyke is dikwels reduksionisties en pragmatisties en toon 'n dualisme tussen feite en waardes, sodat hulle nie 'n duidelike normatiewe koers kan aandui nie.

Tweedens word die aandag gevestig op die moontlike invloed van verskillende dualistiese of afgewaterde en nie-integrale vorme van Christelike lewensvisies, beginnende by die Westerse Christelike sendingbewegings van die verlede en daarna hedendaagse vorme soos die "Gospel of Health and Wealth" wat tans in Afrika veld wen. Hulle mag 'n rede wees waarom die Christelike geloof, ten spyte van sy fenomenale groei in Afrika, so 'n geringe impak buite die talle kerke, insluitende leierskap het. 'n Groot behoefte bestaan aan 'n integrale en omvattende Christelike lewensbeskouing en samelewingsfilosofie wat leiers in staat sou stel om ook buite hulle kerke in die samelewing betrokke te wees.

In die derde plek word aandag gevra vir die feit dat verskeie Christenskrywers uit Afrika tog die Bybel as 'n gids vir gesonde leierskap gebruik deur gebruik te maak van tekste, konsepte, metafore of figure uit die Skrif. Sekere leemtes in sulke benaderings word egter aangetoon. Daarom sal die vierde en laaste artikel in hierdie reeks handel oor die struktuur van en rigting vir goeie leierskap vanuit 'n integrale Bybels-begronde lewensvisie.

1. Introduction

This article continues the previous two investigations (cf. Van der Walt, 2019a and 2019b) about the possible worldview reasons for weak and even bad leadership on our continent. It consists of the following main sections. Firstly, it traces the possible influence of secular Western leadership theories; secondly, the impact of earlier limited or truncated missionary as well as contemporary forms of Christianity; thirdly, how African Christians still employ God's Word to direct them to be the good leaders He wants them to be.

2. Influence of Western theories about leadership

The influence of the Western worldview and leadership culture during colonialism on the continent (cf. the previous article in this series) influenced its leadership ideas and practices. Contemporary globalisation intensified the process. The market today is flooded by manuals how to be an effective leader, in our economically driven world, especially in business. (For examples the internet may be consulted.)

To precisely determine the influence of these mainly secular, often ten-step, quick-fix publications, will be difficult and not attempted in this short overview. Suffice it to say that they are also consulted and applied in the African context. Important, however, is to notice at least different emphases, an evaluation through different phases and paradigms employed and to offer a brief evaluation.

The reader is requested to keep in mind that the aim of this brief, general overview is not to analyse in detail past and present leadership ideas in the Western world, substantiated by numerous required references. (It would require much, much more than the available space. Please also see my remarks in this regard as well as my use of some older sources by African writers on pages 141-142 of Van der Walt, 2019a). The aim is simply to draw

attention to the fact that these theories were also influenced – like the rest of Western culture – by the growing spirit of secularization. Belief in the God of the Bible and His directions for human life gradually became of less and finally of no importance for what leadership really *is* and by which *normative direction* it should be guided.

2.1 Different emphases

Very broadly stated, the British may tend to emphasise the *attributes* of a *leader*, the Europeans his *authority* while the Americans are inclined to focus on the *results* of his leadership. (cf. Van der Walt, 2003:146.)

And if we compare African and Western leadership in a nutshell, we may say that both tend to be one-sided. The African tradition tends to emphasise the leader as the father of the *community*, while the Western often tends to focus primarily on the task of the leading *individual*. As a result of the growing global commercialisation, leaders are often one-sidedly regarded as managers. This tendency may create a situation of being overmanaged and under-led. Just as in Africa too much is then expected from people in managing positions (cf. Fowler, 1993 and 2002).

2.2 Different philosophies, phases and paradigms through Western history

One may make a distinction here between broad philosophical currents on the one hand and more specific phases or paradigms.

2.2.1 Philosophical influence

Leadership ideals in the West changed according to worldviewish and philosophical trends dominating this part of the world. Both in rationalist modernism (starting from about the 16th century) and more contemporary postmodern irrationalism contributed towards the secularisation of Western ideas about leadership.

Secularisation basically means that this world is regarded as the only reality. Also leadership should no longer be studied in the light of God's revelation and guided by divine norms.

According to modernism it should be analysed in a so-called objective, neutral or factual way. Also its normative direction should be determined solely by the human being's character, needs and desires, like liberty, power, progress, success and more. Therefore, in general it could be said that the factual side of leadership previously received the most attention.

But with the arrival of postmodernism the idea of neutral, factual theorising about leadership also came under fire. It was realised that scholarship can never be totally objective since all facts are value-laden. In order for leadership to have transformal power it has to be guided by values.

However, in spite of this correct insight, postmodernism resulted in relativism. And often also reveals a kind of “intolerant tolerance” towards a Christian worldview. I therefore have the impression that the dualism between fact and value is still present in contemporary thinking, including its leadership theories and ideals.

A careful reading of the following brief overview of the development from about the 19th century of leadership ideas in the West will indicate this tension between a more factual to a more normative emphasis.

First the focus mostly fell on the leaders. For instance, their various leadership skills and traits needed (e.g. extroverted, emotionally stable, open to experience, agreeableness, social ability, determination, self-confidence, cognitive capacity etc.). Then it shifted to their preferred behaviour (e.g. task- or people-oriented) or the styles of leadership (autocratic or authoritarian, democratic, pseudo-democratic, passive or laissez-fair, charismatic, facilitative and more). But gradually the emphasis in Western thinking shifted from the leader to his followers and later on to the cultural-historical situation or normative context of both the leader and those to be led, providing a much broader approach to what leadership entails.

2.2.2 Phases, periods and paradigms

Wilhelm (1998:151 ff. Cf. also Bujo, 2018:4-6) provides the following more detailed overview up to the end of the previous century of six major phases, eras or paradigms:

Phase 1: The great man era (1841-1904)

Phase 2: The trait era (1904-1948)

Phase 3: Behavioural era (1948-1967)

Phase 4: Contingency era (1967-1980)

Phase 5: Complexity era (1980's)

Phase 6: Transformational era (1990's)

The following is a brief summary of how leadership ideas evolved.

During the first era the unique qualities of the “great men” were studied since it was believed that they shaped history. Two sub-theories developed. According to the hereditary theory leaders were regarded as superior because of their genetically inherited qualities – leaders are born. But the subsequent social stimulus theory emphasised that the emergence of leaders results from time, place and circumstance – leaders are made.

During the second era the focus of research shifted to the needed inherent traits of the leader for effective leadership. Up to then studies narrowly concentrated on how to understand a leader. During the next four eras writers looked more broadly at leadership as a process. Research about leadership in especially psychology and sociology also became increasingly more sophisticated, also requiring an interdisciplinary approach.

During the third phase the focus was on how a leader should behave (his leading style) in relationship to his followers. Should he, for example, be task- or relationship-oriented? And what should motivate him/her?

Phase 4 moved away from a behaviour analysis of leaders alone to the wider historical, cultural, social, political and economic contexts in which they have to function.

During phase 5 (the complexity era) the emphasis on a single best leadership style gave way to leaders employing multiple styles to fit the complexity of their followers and the contextual variables. Leadership research was then focussed on the transactional relationship, the process and no longer merely on the leader himself.

The last phase (6) is called the transformational paradigm since it proposed that a good leader should not only work *within* a complex transactional relationship, but he should try to *transform* his followers and the context. This cannot be done in a value-neutral way but should be value-driven.

Accepting this last model, the African writer, Aseka (2005) writes that leadership should not merely involve change, but influence towards transformation. It should transform the leader from mere self-interest, but also his followers by empowering them for their task.

2.3 Some comments

One can, no doubt, learn much from Western research on leadership, conducted already since the middle of the 19th century. It is to be appreciated

that it gradually developed from a narrow perspective to a much broader one. This is not the place for a detailed critique on these numerous theories, only a few comments now follow.

As is evident from the above overview it seems that Western thinking is still plagued by a dualistic tension between facts and values, the what and the how, is and ought, description and evaluation. During the first phases of Western research the focus was mostly on what leadership *is*, while the emphasis during the 90's shifted in the transformational model more to what it *should* be.

One can distinguish between structure (is) and direction (ought), but never separate the two aspects of anything in reality. There is no such thing as a brute fact or phenomenon. You can, for example, only know that a marriage is a marriage when measured against a norm for marriage. The same should apply to leadership. Without defining and determining norms there could be no facts. And without the facts, which answer and realize the demands of the norms, norms would be meaningless (cf. Olthuis, 1968:186). In our analysis of leadership from an integral Christian worldview perspective (see next article) the distinction and inseparable relationship between these two sides of leadership will have to be honoured.

Some other brief comments from an integral Christian worldview perspective on many contemporary Western theories are the following. (1) Many writers analyse and prescribe leadership models from a purely technical, secular-humanist perspective. (2) Their theories often tend to be reductionistic, developed for instance from a one-sided psychological, sociological or commercial perspective. They will therefore not be able to fully understand leadership as a multidimensional human phenomenon. (3) Little is often said about the basic building blocks or structure of leadership, for example calling, office, authority, power, responsibility. (4) Instead of providing biblically-based norms that should guide leadership in a healthy direction, theories are often simply pragmatically result- or goal-oriented.

2.4 Three aspects of leadership

From this very brief worldview overview of Western thinking about leadership it did become clear that leadership is a very complex, multi-dimensional human phenomenon. In spite of the many angles from which leadership was studied, one website, for example, states that leadership, although largely talked and written about, has been one of the least understood concepts across all cultures, full of flawed assumptions and myths.

From our view it is at least clear that leadership includes, apart from the leader, also those to be led as well as different institutional and cultural contexts in which this relationship takes place. It furthermore can be analysed from different scholarly perspectives, like psychological, sociological, political, economic and more. All of them can make valuable contributions. The present analysis, however, applies a broader and perhaps more penetrating analysis of the deeper worldview roots of the crisis in leadership.

2.5 The Western influence on leadership in Africa

To determine the real (theoretical and practical) impact of Western ideas about leadership on the continent and its different countries will require a separate detailed study, comparing African and Western literature on the subject and even including the practical behaviour of African leaders.

My own reading of different books by African leaders (cf. the bibliographies of the previous two as well as this article) indicated the mixed reactions of Africans to Western culture already described in the first article (cf. section 6.1 and 8.4) of this series (*Journal for Christian scholarship*, 55(1) of 2019).

Because of Western globalisation, African leaders and writers on leadership consult Western sources or simply adapt to Western styles in leadership. In some other cases old systems of leadership seems to remain dominant. For instance, the hierarchal and hereditary idea of big and strong leaders, usually only older people, who demand absolute obedience since they represent the ancestors.

On the other hand, secular Western ideas may even strengthen existing views. For instance, African leaders were always expected to possess sufficient wealth to provide for their subjects. The Western monetary economy and consumerism also introduced on the continent strengthened leadership as position, privilege, power and wealth. Politics for many African politicians became quite simply a struggle by any means, fair or foul, for power and its material benefits, a game without rules or morality. (cf. e.g. Okulu, 1987a and 1987b). Numerous present examples can be added from the contemporary situation in South Africa.

3. The influence of ‘part-time’ Christianity on African leadership

I now move – too briefly again – to a next influence on the minds of African leaders and their followers, the kind of Gospel brought to Africa by Western missionaries and often still practised all over Africa today.

Before I continue, let me say that what follows should not be viewed as an attack on the missionaries, as serious, committed Christians. I have the greatest appreciation and admiration for the many Western Christian missionaries from different dominations who willingly sacrificed so much, often their own lives, to obey Christ’s great commission in Matthew 28 verse 17 to 20. But they were also fallible human beings. One should not ignore the fact that they adhered to a dualist, truncated Christian worldview which seriously limited the encompassing scope of the Gospel. But by emphasising the shortcomings in their worldview, we should never forget the good they have also achieved, like providing education, medical services, agricultural development and more.

3.1 The phenomenal numerical growth of Christianity – also in quality?

Since the well-documented book of Falk (1985), describing the growth of the Christian faith from its earliest beginnings in about 100 AD to 1980 throughout Africa, from the end of the previous and the beginning of the present century a number of important books were published on the more recent growth of Christianity on the continent and in the Southern hemisphere (cf. e.g. Bediako; 1995, Jenkins, 2003, 2006 and 2009; Sanneh, 2003 and 2005; Tiénou, 2003; Johnson & Ross, 2010 and Walls, 2002).

While Christianity are declining rapidly in Europe, most of these authors are enthusiastic about its phenomenal numerical growth in Africa. For example, according to the last-mentioned author to understand Christianity today, one should therefore look at Africa. African Christianity should be seen as the standard for world Christianity.

In my view this is perhaps too optimistic. One should carefully also evaluate the nature, content, quality and impact of missionary and subsequent forms of Christendom in order to see both its positive and negative implications, also for leadership.

3.2 Some points of critique

Let us first evaluate the earlier missionary forms of Christianity planted on the continent from the pens of both a Westerner and an African.

Boer, thirty years a missionary of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, wrote his dissertation on the missionary work on the Sudan Interior Mission (Boer, 1979), followed (in Boer, 1984) by a shortened version. Apart from appreciation he mentions (1984:130 ff) several weaknesses of the Evangelical missions in Africa which may also be applicable to the work of other Christian denominations.

According to Boer the missionaries often participated in the capitalist order of the day and gave little thought to its underlying philosophy. They sometimes merely tried to elevate the problems or rather symptoms the colonial economy created. Their approach tended to be rather ameliorative than structural, and also strongly individualistic. They did not realise that the suffering they wanted to alleviate was caused largely by the social-political-economic colonial order which they often had no other choice but silently supported.

Their weakness was that they regarded colonialism as a liberation from primitive paganism to civilisation. They mostly did not critique colonialism itself but only its corruptions.

Boer's main point of critique, however, is the dualist type of Christianity, transferred by Evangelical missions to Africa. He regards this as the primary reason for its powerlessness outside the churches (1984:132 ff). The ultimate concerns of those heralds of the Gospel were God, eternity and the salvation of the individual soul. They divided God's world into two realms: a natural and supernatural, secular and holy or religious, a material and spiritual, a temporal and eternal. Their relationship to this world was purely tangential if not negative.

The Christian education which the missionaries offered therefore often did not go beyond evangelism, Bible Studies, Theology and personal morals, while secular government textbooks for subjects like politics and economy were accepted. They naively believed that they simply have to preach the gospel, but were powerless against the increasing secularisation in the public domain and its leaders.

3.3 Comments from a black African perspective

From a Nigerian black African perspective Turaki (1999:11) agrees with Boer that the mode, form and content of the Gospel brought to Africa by the many Western missionary movements should be examined critically. But in a balanced way and with well-documented proofs he (cf. also Turaki, 1993:110 ff and 2010:91 ff) also relates the negative attitude which the missionaries experienced from their colonial masters since they often saw the missions as a threat to their rule.

The British administrators in Nigeria were, for example, pro-Muslim. They banned the Christian missionaries from the Muslim regions in Nigeria and in this way advanced the growth of Islam also in the non-Muslim parts of the country. They even made it difficult for the missions to obtain permission to plant churches and to build mission stations in the non-Muslim areas of Nigeria.

While the colonial rulers did not do much in terms of development of the Nigerian people, like education, medical services and literature, it was done by the Christian missions. The Nigerians also learned from the missionaries about human dignity, freedom and human rights, neglected by their British colonial masters.

In summary, according to Turaki, one should realise that, although both colonialism and the Christian missions were products of the West, they differed in their motives, goals and interests. This is the reason why they cooperated in some areas, but also entered in conflicts regarding their ends.

To me it is therefore wrong to call the missionaries mere tools of Western colonialism. Turaki (1997:79) correctly concludes:

... it is important to restate that the Christian missions and colonialism were products of the historical consciousness of the same (Western) society, but each had its own agenda and logic. Christian missions came to Africa not under the "Burden of the Empire", but the "Burden of the Gospel of Christ". They came not to colonise and rule over the Africans, but to serve and win the Africans for Christ.

But let us return to the basic form and content of the missionaries' Gospel since similar dualist types of Christianity are still present in contemporary Africa.

3.4 Deficient impact of Christianity outside the churches

One irony of Africa is its huge economic potential combined with the fact that it is one of the poorest regions in the world. Another irony is that it can be called the seedbed of Christianity (cf. Oden, 2007) and that today churches are again multiplying, but little is seen of the impact of the Christian faith outside the walls of the many churches.

Already three decades ago Okulu (1987b:2) from Kenya correctly described and criticised this muted, schizophrenic, two-tiered Christianity transferred to Africa:

... the church's duty was solely that of caring for the soul. It has nothing to do with the social life of the people and politics was a sin of the first order. The missionaries came to convert the heathens and to care for the souls of new converts, and so Christianity was built on the foundation stone of the Hellenistic idea of the disembodied soul in which matter is sin. Many staunch Christian men who found themselves torn apart between their political convictions and their loyalty to the Church finally took to politics and became rebels of the church ... It is not only politicians who have warned that churchmen should only pray and keep out of politics, which is synonymous with asking churches to support the *status quo*, but many Christians too believe that politics is a dirty game ... Such pietism is as bad as saying that God does not care about our social problems, and is interested in the salvation of souls only.

As most readers would know, during the time of apartheid in South Africa, as white Christians we were often also told that the role of our churches was only to develop people spiritually. Christians should not apply their faith to politics, education, business etc. But in spite of that the Christian religion was often used to condone apartheid!

In the post-apartheid world of today we still hear the same. Religion is regarded as a private matter and should not interfere in the public domain of politics, education, labour, business etc. But at the same time some black churches are used to propagate certain political ends.

What should be the correct relation between the Christian religion and politics?

Christians can adapt themselves in different ways to the intentions and actions of a secular government. They adapt passively when they withdraw into a so-called purely religious sphere and abstain from any statement about the politics of the day. They adapt actively when they even allow churches to be used as propaganda for a specific political ideology or regime. The correct way is a critical-constructive engagement with the government of the day.

Only when this does not bear fruit, Christians should resist and oppose state power in order to be obedient to God's norms for government.

3.5 Two types of Christianity

Fowler (1995:24-41; 150-164), although not an African writer, but who was for many years personally and in different ways involved in Africa, describes two types of Christianity on African soil. According to the one politics is outside the scope of the church's and the Gospel's concern. It should only be concerned about the liberation of the individual from sin, with everything else following automatically. The second common position that Christians adopt is to see involvement in the struggle for social justice as an integral part of the church's calling, but unfortunately without an effective structural critique. His conclusion indicates a third way: "What Africa needs from the Christian church today is leadership in social and political issues that brings to bear on these issues critical and constructive insights that are firmly grounded in the Gospel" (Fowler, 1995:154).

As explained above, while the Western missionaries mostly avoided direct involvement in colonial politics, they generally saw the political role of the colonial administrators as, in principle, a righteous mission in the secular sphere that complemented their own spiritual mission. "They believed that the two together, by achieving the twin goals of civilising and evangelising, could only be in the best interests of the temporal and eternal well-being of Africans" (Fowler, 1995:31).

Additional points of critique from Fowler which can be added to that of Boer and Turaki above are the missionaries' individualistic interpretation of the Gospel (p. 33); that they confused the Word of God with Western civilisation (p. 34); that they propagated the wholesale rejection of traditional African social values, structures and practices (p. 36), and that – very important – they also accepted the Western secular seduction of the privatisation of the Gospel (p. 37-40).

Let me emphasise that the most crucial defect of both the missionary Christianity, of the past as well as most forms of contemporary Christianity, is the lack of broad social or public philosophy for Christian involvement in different areas of life outside the churches. (See further Van der Walt, 2019c. for an elaboration.)

3.6 The contemporary Gospel of prosperity

While their influence may be different today, Western versions of Christianity still impact the African churches. One example is the so-called “Gospel of health and wealth” exported mainly from the USA. It spread like wild fire across our continent.

It is also called the “Faith Movement” (cf. Gifford, 1988:23 ff; 1998 and De Visser, 2001:136 ff) since it is focused on the power which a believer’s faith provides over dangers in the natural realm (accidents, sickness, natural disasters) as well as the so-called supernatural world (demons, witch-craft, vengeful spirits etc.). Power, wealth and prosperity are viewed as the right of every true believer, a sign of real salvation.

The fact that many Africans are plagued by fear, witchcraft, sickness and poverty explains the immense attraction of this “power-Christianity”. But it can also encourage the idea that Christian leaders should be powerful and rich. It may again boil down to a privatised religion without any public role or any threat to an unjust status quo.

Gifford correctly writes that even with their attitude of “hands off politics” this type of Christianity still plays a political role:

... by focussing narrowly on supernatural causes, it diverts attention from the economic and political causes ... By advocating a gospel of prosperity, it dissuades adherents from evaluating the present economic order, merely persuading them to try to be among those who benefit from it. With the emphasis on personal healing, it diverts attention from social ills that are crying out for remedy. Its stress on human wickedness and the fallen nature of the world is no incentive to social, economic and constitutional reform. By emphasizing personal morality so exclusively, it all but eliminates any interest in systematic and institutionalized injustice ... By spiritualizing everything, it leaves no room for social involvement, except that of personal holiness. The whole package is a vote for the status quo (Gifford, 1988:69).

What Gifford writes does not imply that some African thinkers were not aware of the deficiency of a truncated Gospel (cf. e.g. Okulu already mentioned as well as Kinoti below).

3.7 Voices of African Christians

A colleague of mine from Kenia, once illustrated the abovementioned schizophrenia, not at all an integral and comprehensive type of Christianity, by the following. A person (he mentioned a name) got into a leadership position of power by military means, became president for life, fabulously rich at the expense of his subjects and even killed those who were not willing to accept

his dictatorship. But on Sundays he would regularly attend worship service in a church built with generous donations obtained through corruption.

One, therefore, cannot but agree with Prof. Kinoti that the greatest challenge facing the churches in Africa is to teach and live the *whole* Gospel, to be *integral* Christians and Christian leaders,

... to bring the light and the requirements of the gospel to bear on every aspect of life – spiritual, social, economic, political, cultural, intellectual, moral. Africa requires the whole gospel, from Genesis to Revelation, not selections of it based on human priorities (Kinoti, 1994:56).

The following quote from Kinoti is again to the point:

Dissatisfied with Western theologies, which concentrate on man's soul and mind and which dominate the church throughout the world, some theologians have sought to redress the balance by developing liberation theology, black theology and African theology. While these theologies may be useful, they are also inadequate. We need a holistic theology, a theology that is God-centred and treats man and the creation in the integrative manner that the Scriptures does (Kinoti, 1994:88).

If we as Christians want to get Africa out of its wretchedness, Kinoti (p. 82) demands that we should furthermore cease being passive spectators and become active participants in the governments of our countries by becoming political activists, conscientious voters and political leaders. We must go beyond praying. Prayer and action should be combined (p. 84). This is also the alternative proposed by Boer (1984:147 ff) to the dualist legacy of Christian missions in Africa.

Recently Forster (2014) also rejected the kind of spiritualised Christianity which accepts a dualism between faith and ordinary life, church work (like mission and evangelism) and 'ordinary' work (which should not be a curse but a privilege), 'spiritual' leaders and 'secular' ones. Valuable literature about a more integral Christian view from outside Africa to consult in this regard are Green (2001), Volf (2011), Spade & Scott (2013) and Keller & Leary-Alsdorf (2017).

3.8 Syncretism?

Human beings are perhaps nowhere more conservative than in their deep religious beliefs. Therefore, messengers of the Gospel could up to today not always fully replace the traditional religion of Africans with the Word of God. Far from throwing off their old beliefs and worldviews, subjecting them to a 'foreign' gospel, as a number of studies have indicated – not to be rejected as Western paternalism – Africans have again and again assimilated it into their

own traditional beliefs, transformed it and stitched it into their own systems of thought. Where such hybrid forms arise, the Christian faith is often adapted to the original African religion rather than the other way around. The final result is another form of 'half-hearted' or schizophrenic Christianity or what Westerners called "a divided" soul or even syncretism.

We should, however, distinguish between dualist, muted forms of Christian worldviews and syncretism. The difference, though sometimes difficult to determine, is that in the first case some basic elements of the Gospel is still present, while in the last (syncretism) more or less the entire Word of God is lost. This happens not only when traditional pagan African beliefs dominate, but may also be present in the case of Western secularism.

3.9 Divided normativity

In summary we may today find Africans and their leaders whose hearts are divided between the traditional African, the secular Western and a muted and distorted Christian worldview, resulting in normative uncertainty. Will naked secularism soon gain the upper hand?

However, no one wants to live with a divided soul, conflicting directions for life, including leadership. One can therefore understand the reaction of many African leaders and writers about leadership to rather try to revive their traditional African worldview and its values.

Masango (2002) is a clear example of this effort to turn the clock back. He distinguishes between three periods and their influences on African leaders: the traditional (what he calls the religions), the Christian missionary era and the time of Western colonialism and later Western globalisation. While critical about the last two periods he is, at least to my mind, too uncritical about the first. He propagates a return to traditional African values to improve leadership. History, however, has time and again proved that to try to turn the cultural clock back will bring temporal euphoria but can never succeed in solving new problems. (See again the first article in this series, Van der Walt, 2019a.)

This brings us to the end of the complicated history of mainly three influences on leadership ideas and practices on our continent: the original African, the mostly secular Western and a muted form of the Christian worldview. All three of them contributed in different ways and degrees to various types of leadership in Africa – and also to its contemporary crisis.

But should I conclude on a desperate note? Some African Christians – different from many Westerners – still love the Bible as God’s Word and seek in it also inspiration for good leadership.

4. How the Bible is used to guide Christian leaders

Africans and Christians from elsewhere in the world have done so in the following three ways: (1) from biblical *texts*; (2) from biblical *concepts* related to leadership; (3) from the *examples* of a variety of biblical leaders, including Jesus Christ as God’s final revelation.

4.1 Bible texts

Numerous texts from both the Old and the New Testament can be quoted in this regard. Two examples are the following. Exodus 18 verses 21, 22 indicate why, how and whom Moses had to select and appoint as leaders to Israel since he could not handle everything himself. He identified and selected capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain – and appointed them as officials to serve as judges to the people.

Very often referred to is the following reminder in the New Testament of Christ to his own disciples: “You know that the rulers of the gentile’s 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, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – 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” (Matthew 20:21,23 and also Mark 10:35-45 and Luke 22:24-30).

These words of Jesus were his reprimand, following on what happened before his last meal together with his disciples, the Thursday evening before his crucifixion (John 13:1-17). Because of their open sandals and the then dirt roads, everyone’s feet had to be washed. According to the culture of the time it should be done by a slave. But no slave was present to perform this humble task.

And like us and many of our leaders today no one of the disciples wanted to be a servant, but to be served, not to give, but to receive, not to deny himself, but to hold onto his own importance.

However, Jesus, the most important among them, became the slave of them all. And even when some of them were ashamed and protested, He bowed down and washed their dirty feet. He gave them an example of humble service, obeying his Father and serving his followers (cf. also Phil. 2:5-8).

Bennett (1993:192) says something very important about this event. Christ gave almost no direction about how the Christian community should be organised by their leaders, how decisions should be made, how vision and missions' statements should be translated into action, how followers should be mobilised and more.

He in the first place showed them the correct direction how to follow, how to obey, how to respond to the calling of God. The effective leader must first learn to be a faithful follower. Jesus knew how destructive attitudes of ambition and pride could be. Therefore, He taught them attitudes of humility and self-sacrifice, using the image of a servant.

4.2 Biblical concepts and metaphors

The book by Bennett (1993) is also an excellent and therefore highly recommended source on a total of thirty-five different biblical concepts and metaphors directly or indirectly related to leadership. From these concepts a wide variety of leadership models can be formulated. Examples are that of the servant leader, the leader as a shepherd (cf. also Wessels, 2014), leaders as stewards (cf. also Hall, 1990) and liberating, responsible, visionary, prophetic, transformational leadership. Something more about only the first two.

4.2.1 Servant leadership

Well-known is servant leadership on which the seminal book was written by Greenleaf (1977). African writers who followed in this same line were for example Osei-Mensah (1990) and Adeyemo (1993).

Greenleaf's idea about leaders as servants was also revived in the 21st century. Apart from the establishment of a "Robert K. Greenleaf Centre For Servant Leadership", books and articles were published propagating the idea of servanthood. (If one consults Google you will find at least a dozen recommended books for aspiring servant leaders.)

In his paper at a recent conference Rabali (2018) indicated that, although the idea may sound familiar to Christians, reminding them of Christ as the supreme example of humble servant leadership, its original meaning has today often become secularised. The biblical

message of serving above all God in everything one does, has often disappeared and became horizontalized. Servant leadership in these publications is now sometimes confined only to the leader or manager serving the wellbeing of his followers, the stakeholders in his enterprise. The leader should have empathy, the ability to listen to his inferiors, advance their empowerment, realise a mission, making personal sacrifices, et cetera.

But in spite of all those skills, our practical experience is that many leaders today are missing the perhaps most important characteristic of a true leader, viz humility. Of course, none of us are immune to all-too-human pride. But many leaders are too aware of their status, regarding themselves as superior to their followers. Often their arrogance is also a sign of their own insecurity and feeling of inferiority.

The word 'humility' is derived from the Latin word *humus*, meaning soil, earth or dust and connected to the word 'human(ity)'. All of us are dust, earthly beings (Gen. 2:7), born in the same way and we will one day die like all our ancestors. Even the greatest leaders are no more than tiny dust particles in the sweep of everything else in this vast universe that was, is and will be.

For Christians humility also includes the recognition that your position and gifts as a leader are from God to be used in His service and to the benefit of others. And if you are really a humble leader, you will be aware of your own limitations and foibles and be willing to keep learning from others, including your followers.

4.2.2 The shepherd leader

Another of the most common metaphors in the Bible is that of the leader as shepherd. The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah fulminated against the bad and corrupt shepherds of their times (cf. e.g. Jer. 10:21; 23:1; 25:34, 35; 50:6; Ez. 34:2 ff and Zech. 10:3; 11:15,17). Woe to them! For their time has come, they will fall and be shattered like fine pottery, will have nowhere to flee.

God is going to punish these leaders for many of the sins we today again see in our own leaders. They only took care of themselves and not their flock. They did not strengthen the weak and healed the sick, brought back the strayed or searched for the lost, but ruled them harshly. But God will hold them accountable, remove them and rescue the flock from their mouths (Ez. 34:1-10).

But some of these passages from the Old Testament also contained a promise, a glimmer of hope for the future. Isaiah 40 verse 11 prophesied about a future Leader:

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; He gently leads those that have young.

The promise was fulfilled, as we know, when many centuries later, God send his own Son to this troubled world. When He saw the crowds, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, He had compassion on them (Matt. 9:36). Therefore, He is called the Good, Chief or Great Shepherd (John 10:11,14; 1 Pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:20). He knows his followers and they know Him; He calls and guides them and they follow; He protects them and let them graze in peace. Finally, He was even willing to lay down his life for his flock (Filip. 2:8)

Today He is still our example *par excellence* of true leadership.

4.3 Biblical figures as models

In the works of quite a few Christian African writers leading Bible figures are used as models for good leaders on the continent. Examples are again Osei-Mensch (1990) and Adeyemo (1993 on Daniel), including Adeyemo (2009:23 ff on Moses, Joshua, Joseph, Deborah, David, Peter and Paul), Mabula (2006 on e.g. Gideon, Samuel, Joshua). And recently Bujo (2018:6-8) referred to Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Daniel, Paul and Barnabas.

In these persons from Scripture different leadership values are identified, for example willingness to serve, humility, trustworthiness, integrity, justice, honesty, diligence, responsibility, perseverance and more.

The same is done in the case of Jesus Christ, the Leader of all. Two recent examples are the book by Youssef (2013) and the lecture of Bujo (2018:6). According to Youssef leadership is about influence. And no leader has had greater influence than Jesus Christ, the greatest leader who ever lived. We should adopt His leadership style to become more effective and productive leaders.

4.4 Comments

In these three ways indicated above (using Bible texts, metaphors and figures) Christians can already learn much about biblically based leadership and values. But is it enough to understand what a real leader according to God's will should be in the present African situation, two thousand years later?

Firstly, to base one's ideas on sometimes isolated, out of context used portions of Scripture carries the danger of biblicism, ignoring God's revelation in creation and culture. Bible texts from thousands of years ago cannot be directly applied to present-day leadership challenges, but has to be contextualised since the contemporary African world and its challenges are different from the bygone days of the Old and New Testament.

This does not mean that the African context should become the norm, but that God's central law of love (Matt. 22:37-40) should be positivised, or made concrete to be relevant to our present situation. This is no easy task but when left undone, will simply prove our own laziness and the irrelevancy of our Christian faith.

An example is whether we should today still wash each other's feet like Christ did to his disciples already mentioned above (Joh. 13:1-17). This actually happened when, some time ago, Mr. Adriaan Vlok, previously the Minister of Police, symbolically washed the feet of Rev. Frank Chikane, asking forgiveness for harmful behaviour of the security police of the apartheid government. But Vlok's otherwise commendable act may, however, also be viewed as rather Biblicist in nature. We urgently need research on how God's ordinations for good leadership should in a valid way be contextualised.

Secondly, a Biblicist use of texts may also include the danger that we simply read into the Word of God contemporary, even secular ideas about leadership (eisegesis) and read them out of the Bible again (exegesis) but now with biblical sanction. An example is the different images of Jesus amongst Africans. He was inter alia viewed as ancestor (cf. Nayamiti, 1984), potentate, chief, healer, liberator, master of initiation and more (cf. Schreiter, 1991). Which of these should be ours in following Christ's leadership?

Thirdly, isolated metaphors or concepts are susceptible to the same problems. Additionally, they could be applied either in a reductionist way or too broadly. Servant leadership may serve as an example. On the one hand leadership cannot be reduced only to service. Leadership also means calling, authority, power and more (See *Journal for Christian scholarship*, 55(4):185-212 of 2019). A leader who try to "serve" people by simply saying and doing what they intend or want him to say and do may be a bad leader. One should not identify humility with timidity. On the other hand, the general concept 'service' cannot distinguish clearly between different types of leadership, for instance the difference between ecclesiastical, political, economic and educational leadership. (See again aforementioned.)

Fourthly, one should also be careful of imitating fallible Bible figures because a human *model* or *example* is not the same as a *norm* to be obeyed. One has to distinguish clearly between the good and bad in those we want to follow and should not simply try to imitate them. Character traits, skills and leadership styles are not enough to teach one adequately about what leadership entails (its structure), neither do they provide clear and specific norms for leadership (its direction) today.

Especially important is to remember that Jesus Christ should not be seen merely as an ideal, inspirational model in leading, guiding and protecting his followers. He is Lord (*Kurios*) and Master, above every human leader and follower (cf. Matt. 28:18; Philip. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-16, 2:9; 1 Tim. 6:15).

Lastly, theological publications on leadership, although normally based on the Scriptures, are usually directed to church leaders, while Christian leaders in other domains of life (political, educational, labour etc.) may have an even greater need of guidance for their specific responsibilities.

5. Towards the finale

In this and the two previous articles (which should preferably be read in sequence and together) I have reviewed the crisis of leadership in especially Africa and the possible worldview factors underlying it. I have also given (with reservations) indications about past and current efforts to address leadership challenges in the light of the Bible.

The amount of information given may baffle even the sympathetic reader, now asking questions like the following: “What could be, according to the writer’s integral Christian perspective, a possible solution for the crisis in leadership?” Or: “What should be the central issues about good leadership to be addressed by a Christian thinker?”

What was written in the whole series clearly calls for such a final, more penetrating investigation in the light of God’s revelation about leadership.

What is left now is to determine whether an integral Christian worldview – one not hampered by pre-Christian African worldviews, post-Christian Western secular and non-integral, dualist Christian worldviews – can provide a solution for the challenges encountered in the three previous investigations. This will be done in a concluding, fourth contribution dealing with the structure or basic building blocks of and the direction or norms for genuine leadership (cf. Van der Walt, 2019c).

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