
The contours of sound leadership according to an integral Christian worldview

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Abstract

In preceding three articles in this journal much was written on problems connected with weak and even bad leadership, especially on our African continent. It was necessary to penetrate to the deep traditional African, secular Western and muted Christian worldview causes of this state of affairs since a thorough diagnosis prevents one from simply treating the symptoms of the unacceptable behaviour of many, even Christian, leaders.

This last article presents a possible therapy from an integral Christian worldview perspective. As an introduction, it first provides the outlines of such a biblically-based view and way of life. The second main section indicates its implications for good leadership by Christians.

Firstly, a structural analysis provides important insights indicating what it implies to be a gifted and called leader, who has authority and power to fulfil an office of service so that justice could be done, and to be accountable to his/her followers and finally to God. Secondly, a directional analysis indicates that not only some moral or ethical values but a whole spectrum of values is needed to improve the quality of contemporary leadership. God's fundamental commandment of love has to be applied in the form of contemporary relevant norms to direct leadership in the different domains of life.

Opsomming

Die kontoere van gesonde leierskap volgens 'n integrale Christelike lewensvisie

Die drie vorige artikels in hierdie reeks het gehandel oor probleme in verband met swak en selfs slegte leierskap, veral op ons Afrika-kontinent. Dit was nodig om deur te dring tot die dieperliggende tradisionele, Westerse en Christelike wortels van die situasie, want so 'n diagnose voorkom dat 'n mens slegs die simptome probeer behandel van die onaanvaarbare gedrag van baie, selfs Christelike leiers vandag.

Hierdie laaste bydrae bied 'n positiewe terapie vanuit 'n integrale, holistiese of omvattende perspektief. As inleiding bied dit eers 'n kort omskrywing van die buitelyne van so 'n lewensvisie, terwyl die tweede hoofdeel die implikasies daarvan vir gesonde leierskap aantoon.

Eerstens bied 'n strukturele analise van leierskap belangrike insigte wat, saamgevat, beteken dat 'n integrale leier iemand is wat (1) met toepaslike gawes, (2) deur God geroep is om (3) met gesag en insig asook (4) die nodige beperkte mag (5) 'n amp moet vervul (6) met die oog op diens op 'n bepaalde lewensterrein, sodat (7) geregtigheid daar kan geskied, terwyl so 'n leier (8) teenoor diegene oor wie hy gesag uitoefen en finalitêr aan God, verantwoording verskuldig is oor hoe hy sy roeping as leier uitvoer.

Tweedens dui die direksionele of normatiewe analise aan dat vir goeie leierskap nie net morele of etiese waardes geld nie, maar 'n hele spektrum daarvan nodig is om bestaande leierskapspatrone te verander. God se fundamentele liefdesgebod moet in die vorm van relevante, hedendaagse norme toegepas word om leierskap op alle lewensterreine positief te rig.

1. Introduction

Three previous articles in this journal (cf. Van der Walt, 2019a, 2019b and 2019c) described and analysed in general the crisis of leadership, in particular on the African continent and in South Africa. This concluding contribution will now propose a possible solution for the enigma from an integral Christian worldview. It will first draw the contours of such a worldview and in its light then analyse the structure and direction of leadership. (For details about a biblically based, integral worldview see e.g. Wolters, 2005 and Van der Walt, 2008a).

2. Basic contours of a biblical worldview

The inferior quality of leadership in Africa is often not because Christian leaders are satisfied to be mediocre leaders, but merely since they do not know what an integral Christian worldview entails and what its implications are for good leadership. Let me therefore first make a few remarks about the main contours of an integral biblical worldview before I focus on its implications for the structure and normative direction of leadership.

Every worldview provides an answer to (1) what *is* and (2) what *ought* to be done. This is also the case in the Bible where we get (1) a structural and (2) directional line.

2.1 *The two lines*

The very first verse of the Bible already reveals to us that we should make a clear distinction between the eternal, almighty God and that which He created, this vast cosmos. This is a structural or ontic distinction. From the rest of his Word it is also evident that He established clear ordinations or laws for the development of creation. This applies especially to one of his creatures, the religious human being which was created to respond to God, his Creator, in different ways but always according to His guidelines. They are called by different names in the Bible, like His will, laws, statutes, precepts, commands and ordinances (cf Psalm 19:7-9). This is the important religious-directional-normative line.

2.2 *The importance of the directional-religious perspective*

It is of the utmost importance to remember that God did not create us only as material, thinking, social, economic, political and moral beings. He created us with hearts as deeply religious beings. Thus, any human being after the Fall has no choice but to commit his heart to and obey either the true God or alternative gods which can only be, absolutized aspects of God's creation (cf. the valuable book by Van Belle, 2019).

In paradise for Adam and Eve, life was religion, a covenant relationship with God, directed by His instructions for every aspect of their lives. When life *is* religion – also for us today – it excludes the dualistic idea (discussed in the previous article) that religion can simply be a 'supernatural' addition to ordinary 'secular' life. One's so-called secular life will still be an expression of your deepest religious commitment – either in His service or an idolised part of God's creation.

2.3 *The importance of the ontic distinctions*

The biblical answer to the ontic question of “What is, what is real?” is a clear distinction between (1) *God* who exists, (2) his *creation*, and (3) his *ordinances* to which his creation is subjected.

This biblically-based view of reality should guide one in describing, comparing and evaluating the traditional African and modern Western views from the perspective of an integral Christian worldview.

First, most Africans originally believed in a supreme being. But because of the so-called holistic, rather monistic nature of their worldview they did not always clearly distinguish him from earthly reality and he was sometimes not regarded as a person but called an ‘it’. This ‘it’ was also viewed as a remote and silent force, not involved in ordinary human life and requiring human responsibility.

In the post-Christian West of today the God of the Bible was declared irrelevant or even non-existent. He was replaced by idols, like materialism and naturalism.

Secondly, when one does not know the triune God, the Creator, Sustainer, ultimate Lawgiver, and his revelation (in creation, the Scriptures and finally in Jesus Christ), you are furthermore bound to have distorted views about the visible reality. It becomes impossible to fully understand what, for example, being human, time and history really means.

Thirdly, God’s directives for human life cannot be acknowledged when He is confused with or disconnected from reality (as in Africa), or his existence is denied (as in the secular West). The biblical demand of obedience to his ordinations for life disappears. And therefore one’s views about your own responsibility, disobedience, sin and guilt is affected.

But, as it is impossible for a human being to live without any direction, the norms for life in the African tradition was mainly found in the community of the living and the dead. In the West individual autonomy (being one’s own lord and law) became the main norm.

2.4 *The Fall and afterwards*

Apart from the fact of (1) creation, the Word of God continues the history of the world with (2) the fall, (3) redemption through Christ and, at His return, (4) the final arrival of a new earth. After phases 2 and 3 we now live in a time of “already but not yet”. After the sacrificial work of Christ life is not as bad as it could be, but also not as good as it should again be. We are still awaiting the completion of Christ’s work at the coming consummation. We still live in the

mixed situation of war between good and evil. (cf. Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004.)

At the fall evil entered into God's good creation for the first time. It was a reversal of everything good. Although evil does have *structural* implications, it is not something which changed stones, plants, animals and humans into quite different things. Evil is primarily something *directional*, rebellion against the sovereign God, the Lawgiver and his directives for us (cf. Wolters, 2005 for this important distinction between structure and direction). This is what the Bible calls sin of which every one of us are still guilty of. We should not blame someone else (as Adam and Eve already did) or circumstances outside ourselves as some leaders do today.

2.5 The implications of the Fall

Disobedience to God's instructions on how to live has immeasurable and devastating implications, it is a parasitic reversal of everything which God created as very good (Gen. 1:31).

In our biotic life health turned into all kinds of illness. Our rational life was changed from correct to fallacious thinking; flourishing cultural work turned into decay; clear language was turned into confused and deceptive talking; peaceful social life was substituted by strife and fear of each other; in the economic world scarcity and poverty took the place of abundance. Also, what was beautiful was replaced with ugliness; justice was exchanged for injustice, and mutual trust and fidelity with suspicion. Finally, in our confessional life, faith in the true God was replaced by belief in all kinds of idols, absolutized things of the created world. All these ills today influence also leadership styles the world over.

2.6 The demonic mastermind

Idols serve as a cover-up for the mastermind, the devil who stays *incognito*. As deceptions of Satan they can therefore also never fulfil any of their many promises. Nevertheless, they demand the unquestioned and total religious commitment of the idolater (cf. Goudswaard, 1984 and Goudswaard & Bartholomew, 2017).

At the beginning of Christ's public ministry, the usually disguised devil revealed his true nature, trying to tempt Jesus, first when he was hungry with the promise of food. And, on the condition that Jesus would bow down and serve him, he promised Jesus authority and power over all the nations of the world. Jesus, however, finally got rid of the tempter with the words – which also every Christian leader should always remember – “I will worship

and serve only the true God” (Matt. 4:10). However, very few people would listen to Christ, our Lord. The world abounds with greedy and power-hungry persons, leaders included.

The process of idolatry usually develops through the following three stages. First you give your heart, mind and life – everything – to an idol, for example wealth or power. Secondly, you yourself start reflecting the image of the idol which you serve, for example becoming a greedy or power-hungry person. Thirdly, especially when you are in a position of authority and power, you create organisations and institutions reflecting your own distorted image and finally the image of the god you decided to serve. When you have become a slave of mammon, you tend to treat your workers also as slaves. Idolatry, therefore, is not something purely personal or spiritual, it has devastating structural implications.

2.7 Structure and direction in leadership

The above mentioned basic biblical distinction between structure and direction on which an integral Christian worldview is built should also be applied to leadership. On the one hand the normative direction followed by leaders will shape the resulting leadership styles and structures. On the other hand, existing bad or good leadership cultures may influence individual people and groups to accept either a wrong or correct normative direction. (Note that this distinction between structure and direction should therefore not be confused with a dualism between fact and value, what is and what ought to be, discussed in the previous article, section 2.3.)

2.8 Three elements in leadership

Leadership is not only about (1) the leader (e.g. his character, competence, skills and more). (2) The second basal element is the followers (e.g. their abilities, motivations to follow, their education etc.). (3) And the third is the situational context (e.g. worldview, culture, social, political, economic etc. circumstances), effecting both the leader and the followers.

Thus-far we have only dealt with (1) and (3). What about (2), the followers? In my mind followers in Africa often tend to expect far too much from their leaders. And if the leaders do not perform according to expectations and deliver in their followers’ every need, the leaders have to carry the blame. Don’t followers also have responsibilities? Surely everyone is also a follower, even when she/he may be a leader in one or other domain. And the behaviour of followers is not without influence on that of their leaders.

Since this essay cannot cover all aspects of leadership the following section will mainly be focussed on the leadership of the leader. It does not imply that leaders' influence on their followers – to inspire them to be integral Christians in whatever they think and do – as well as the appropriate response of their followers are less important.

3. A structural analysis of leadership from an integral Christian worldview perspective

The following structural analysis should not be regarded as merely the parochial view of Bible-believing Christians. Since it is based on God's creational ordinances for leadership it has much wider implications also for other beliefs.

One may at least identify the following components or building-blocks in leadership: (1) gifts, (2) calling and mission, (3) office, (4) authority, (5) power (6) justice (7) transparent accountability and (8) integrity. Needed are gifted leaders, called and commissioned leaders, officers for service, leaders with authority, powerful leaders, just, accountable leaders and leaders of integrity.

An integral Christian worldview advocates a pluralist view of social life (see 3.2.2 below). It should therefore be kept in mind that these general characteristics of leadership will take on a variety of forms in different relationships, institutions and organisations.

3.1 Gifted leaders

Why do I start with the fact that we need gifted leaders? I do it for two different reasons. Firstly, since the secular leadership theories often only emphasise the skills one has to develop in order to be an effective leader (cf. again section 2.3 of the previous article). And, secondly, since often leaders accept leading positions without even asking themselves first whether they have the required gifts needed to fulfil their high responsibilities. Often those who have selected and appointed such unfit leaders are also to be blamed.

3.1.1 General human capacities

According to God's Word He appointed us as rulers or workers (Gen. 1:28) and caretakers (Gen. 2:15) of the earth, his creation. We have the task to act as his representatives, his stewards. What a very high calling!

To be able to do so He has equipped us as humans with many capacities above stones, plants and animals. We do not merely feel like animals, but also think, speak, behave socially, can be stewards of the wealth He has created, create art, are responsible for justice to be done, can be honest and trustworthy. With all these human possibilities we are called to serve God – not merely when attending church services or praying even twice a day.

3.1.2 Special gifts for everyone

Apart from these capacities God, through his Holy Spirit, provides a variety of spiritual gifts. If we look carefully at all the lists which the Bible presents in different places, these blessings are not ‘spiritual’ in the usual sense. They include down-to-earth gifts (cf. e.g. Romans 12:6). As gifts of the Holy Spirit they are also powerful (Acts 1:8, 10:35).

Note also that all these gifts are not given to a single person but divided among all of us. Every one of us is endowed with some gifts (Eph. 4:7,8). They should not be a reason to boast either, but to be used for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7)

In this chapter of Corinthians Paul uses the image of the one body with many limbs in order to illustrate the need of every gift for human relationships to function properly, in this case the church. But similar gifts are needed for a good marriage, family, school, business enterprise and more.

3.1.3 The norm for their use

After Paul had mentioned all these wonderful gifts, in the next chapter he indicates the way in which they should be used. In 1 Corinthians 13 he emphasises over and over that if any of these gifts are not directed by Gods fundamental law of love, they are worth nothing at all.

The fact of a variety of gifts given to different people already suggests a pluralistic instead of either an individualist or a communalist view of communal life as is the case in the West and in Africa.

3.2 Called and commissioned leaders

Like an ordinary gift, usually wrapped in paper, one should unwrap or discover one’s own unique gifts. Unlike an ordinary present you are also not permitted to keep any God-given gift for yourself. God wants it to be shared, used for the benefit of others. He calls every follower to an all-encompassing mission wherever you are or whatever your occupation is.

3.2.1 *God calls a variety of people for different tasks*

It is a great honour to receive a calling from God, a vocation. But when we read the Bible, we will discover that not everyone willingly responded to the voice of the Lord like Samuel (3:10b) did: “Speak, for your servant is listening”. Most of those called in the Bible had different excuses, like Moses who asked the Lord to rather send someone else (Exodus 3:11, 4:13). Also, Gideon was afraid to fulfil the task to which God called him (Judges 6:5). Jeremiah’s excuse was that he was too young (1:6). And Jonah (1:3) even tried to flee from God and his mission – but without success. God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable (Romans 12:29).

But let me add that God’s calling is not limited to those who know Him and acknowledge his authority. The Bible reveals that the Almighty God can even use leaders and nations who do not believe in or obey Him. He may also use them either as a blessing to themselves and others or as punishment.

An example of the first was the pagan Cyrus, king of the Persian empire. “I call you by name and bestow on you a little honour though you do not acknowledge me” (Isaiah 45:4). In spite of his own intentions Cyrus acted to the benefit of Israel!

But there are plenty examples in the history of Israel when God also used foreign leaders and their followers to punish Israel for their own disobedience and idolatry. This may provide some food for thought. Are our recent experiences with corrupt leadership perhaps a sign of God’s displeasure with and wrath upon our continent and country for ignoring his commandments? Is He perhaps also punishing “the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generation”? (Exodus 20:5.)

God often also calls and sends the most unworthy, unlikely people of no status in the eyes of the world to fulfil important tasks. Paul reminds the Corinthians “Not many of you were wise ... not many were influential, not many of noble birth. But God choose the foolish of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly and despised ... so that no one may boast before Him” (1 Corinthians 1:26-28).

With such a wide choice of possible vocations today it may seem easier to be called directly by God for a specific one, like in the abovementioned Old Testament examples. But He still calls you today

through his Holy Spirit by way of for example your prayer, the study of his Word, the gifts He has given you and the advice of people who know you well (cf. Van der Walt, 2008b).

3.2.2 *Called to be a leader*

Apart from a calling to a specific vocation, He may also call some to be leaders in one or more domains of life. If you have a family, you should serve as a parent, as a teacher at a school, as a pastor or an elder in a church, as the leader of an organisation, as a minister in the cabinet and many more. One is called by God to *different* tasks in a *great variety* of societal institutions and relationships. By serving one's neighbour here on earth in these different spheres of life, you are serving your Master in heaven.

I again draw attention to an important lacuna in the education of many Christian leaders. They were not equipped with a genuine Christian public philosophy. As indicated in the previous article the Western missionaries failed to pass on to the young African churches a coherent social philosophy.

A biblically based view on social involvement should neither be socialist, communalist or liberal, individualist, but a pluralist viewpoint. We already noticed a variety or plurality of gifts and callings. And in what follows we will distinguish a variety but interrelated offices, authorities, and different kinds of power. The interested reader may consult inter alia the following books on such a unique Christian public or social philosophy: Bratt (2013), Fowler (1985, 1993), Kuyper (1998), McCarthy, Oppewal, Petersen & Spykman (1981), Mouw & Griffioen (1993), Skillen & McCarthy (1991), Van der Walt (2010) and Vollenhoven (2005, 2013).

Such a plural public philosophy again follows the structure-direction distinction of an integral worldview based on Scripture. Apart from a variety of structures it also acknowledges a variety of religious directions and their structural influences. It advocates both structural and confessional pluralism. Accepting also confessional or religious pluralism implies that different faiths should not be confined to peoples' "private" life, but in appropriate ways also be allowed to be expressed in the so-called public realms of education, politics etc.

3.2.3 *Everyone called to full-time service*

Let me add, however, that not only leaders have a calling from God. According to an integral and comprehensive Christian worldview I believe in the divine calling of every believer somewhere in God's all-encompassing Kingdom – from the missionary to the manual labourer. It is not correct to call the first-mentioned a “full-time” servant of God, while the last-mentioned is supposed to serve Him only “part-time” on Sundays at church. I do not believe in such a dualistic distinction between higher or more important, sacred callings compared to lower, secular ones. The simplest kind of work can be service to the King of Kings, it can be called sacred.

To be called by God Himself – every leader is – is not a trivial but a very serious matter, requiring great responsibility with vast implications for numerous other people.

When leaders again realise that they are not appointed for the sake of their own salary or even to serve others, but are in the final instance called and commissioned by the Sovereign God, the quality of their leadership would vastly improve.

My third point is:

3.3 *Leaders as officers for service*

One should not confine the word “officer” to someone with a certain rank in the police or military force. Office can be defined as the right but also the obligation to serve in a specific societal relationship. The word “office” is derived from the Latin *officium* which basically means a duty, while *officio fungere* means to provide service (cf. also what was said in the previous article about servant leadership).

Unfortunately, this original meaning of office has been lost in our contemporary world. Office is often narrowly associated with prestige, status and power to govern and even dominate others often for one's own benefit. However, leaders are not there to *overpower* others but rather to *empower* them.

Lazy officers are therefore not leaders but leeches. Good leadership requires working hard, commitment, perseverance and (in the case of believers) prayer since it often involves conflict, disappointment, trouble, discomfort and even suffering.

3.3.1 *Following Jesus in humility*

Since leadership means service, a leader will put his/her own priorities aside and follow his Master in humility (Luke 22:24-27 and Filip. 2:6-8). The most important requirement for a Christian and especially a Christian leader is, firstly humility, secondly humility, and thirdly again humility. On the other hand, pride is the root cause of many sins. Turaki (2011) even regards pride and its implications as one of the three major sins of contemporary African leaders.

Christian leaders have to reflect the greatness of their God, not their own. God's power should become visible through their own weakness. That is why the great Christian leader, Paul, could write that he delights in weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties. For when he is weak, then he is really strong! (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Christian leaders should always be reminded of the fact that one should remain a servant since the world in which we live today usually regards humble, disinterested service – the hallmark of true leadership – as ridiculous and absurd.

If, as Christian leaders, we refuse to be servants of God, we have become like worthless salt. Then we have lost the unique saltiness of our Christian identity; we have forfeited our power to change the sinful world for the better. And we will be thrown away, ignored as irrelevant (cf. Matt. 5:13).

3.3.2 *Mutual trust*

It is not only important how one *fulfils* one's office but also how one gets into a specific leading position. In the Bible we have many examples of leaders who were appointed directly by God himself. Today it happens indirectly. Leaders are elected by their followers. It is illegal to grasp an office.

To be in an office – this is very important – therefore implies a relationship not of fear but of mutual trust (cf. Marshall, 1991:145). The citizens of a state or other human institution should therefore first have to ensure that their candidate for leadership has the necessary gifts, skills, experience, integrity and insight in what is expected of her/him before the person is selected and appointed in the specific position. Our criteria for appointing someone in a leading position should not be his/her status, wealth, seniority, family or ethnic ties. We usually tend to blame our leaders for all the wrongs in society, while we ourselves are often to be blamed for our choice of the wrong leaders.

But, as said above, the leaders themselves should also seriously consider whether they are fit for a specific task before accepting a position. They also have to realise that leadership entails not only a privilege but a great responsibility.

Leadership can have either a beneficial or a detrimental influence on a whole country or the entire world. Why? Because a leader has authority and power. What is the difference between these two concepts? Let us, fourthly, begin with analysing what authority really means.

3.4 Leaders with authority

One should remember the difference between, on the one hand, hierarchical authority – the dominant characteristic feature of the traditional African worldview – and, on the other hand, egalitarian authority – common among modern secular Western thinkers (cf. Van der Walt, 2003:155 ff). But let me only say something about a more Biblically-oriented viewpoint.

When appointed in an office a person has authority in a *specific* societal relationship. Not because God has *delegated* or *transferred* his divine authority to a human being. Only because He has *ordained* or *instituted* that in any social relationship there should be a relationship of authority and obedience (See Van der Walt, 1988:28ff on Romans 13:1-7).

3.4.1 Diversified authority

Human authority is, firstly, fallible and therefore always open to correction. Therefore, those who have to obey authorities also have the right and obligation to judge the authority of their leaders. Secondly, no human being is entitled to have all-encompassing, totalitarian authority. There is no person or body on earth that can represent God's total authority. Neither the husband, nor his wife, parents, a teacher or lecturer, a business leader, pastor, the pope or a president can claim to be the ultimate authority.

An authority in one sphere of life should, thirdly, not override the authority in a different sphere of life. Each one has the *specific* and *limited* authority that goes with its specific calling in God's creation.

The government of a state should therefore not be regarded as the provider of every need or the rectifier of every wrong. It has the limited task of seeing to it that impartial justice is maintained among all citizens (Van der Walt, 1988).

It is of the utmost importance to be aware of the fact that authority is diversified, that there are different kinds of authority. The authority of parents over their children, lecturers over their students, the manufacturer over his workers, and the government over its citizens are all different in nature. For example, to rule over one's family like a military officer would be wrong!

The correct question to be asked oneself is therefore not "*How much* authority do I have?", but "*What kind* of authority do I have?"

3.4.2 *Insight*

Real authority implies, fourthly, insight in one's specific task as a leader. Someone, lacking insight and/or obedience to his/her task, may be appointed in a position of leadership. But his/her followers will be able to recognise whether a leader has real insight or not. The crowds were amazed at Christ's teaching because He taught with authority (insight) and not as their teachers of the law (Matt. 7:28,29).

Authority is therefore closely related to a leader's insight in the unique calling or task of a social relationship, institution or organisation and the specific norms that should direct it. A family, school, industry, farmers' cooperative, sports club, educational association and the state have different tasks and leaders should have insight in the difference. A sports hero will not be the best option to become the minister of health in the cabinet of a government or head of a medical school. And a politician may not be the best choice to run a business enterprise or vice versa.

A problem, however, may be that some leaders are well aware of what their specific task should be, but refuse to act in accordance. Real leaders should also *act* with wisdom, *apply* their insight. Governments and politicians are well-known for their many plans and promises which never turn into realities. But ordinary citizens will easily distinguish between leaders with insight in problems and a willingness to solve them and those leaders who merely sit in a position.

Schouls summarises: "The extent that a person gains and possesses insight, to that extent he obtains and possesses authority. And to the extent that a man possesses authority, he ought to be given the opportunity to act out his authority. Acted out authority is power" (Schouls, 1972:12).

In the fifth place, then, we have to focus on power.

3.5 *Powerful leaders*

God alone has absolute power over earth and heaven. But He always employs it in endless love to the benefit of his subjects. In the case of humans, the situation often portrays the opposite. Even mediocre leaders tend to misuse their power. We need to follow the divine, not the human example.

Sir John Dalberg-Acton is well-known for the following statement: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men” (as quoted by Bujo, 2018). This happens everywhere – among white, yellow and black leaders all over the world.

3.5.1 *A dangerous cancer*

We have indicated in the second article in this series that power-consciousness is one of the outstanding characteristics of the African worldview. Recently Bujo (2018:10) confirmed this when he wrote:

The question of African leadership is hinged on the question of power and control. Most African leaders, be it in the public, civic or political leadership or unfortunately in the private and Christian circles, tend to hold on to offices by all means in order to retain power. The question of power and authority has become a cancer that is destroying institutional and organizational reputation on account of individual interest and egos.

Already thirty years after independence, Okulu (1987) wrote the following. In Africa the party in power is sacrosanct and any honestly held opinion which is openly expressed in opposition is regarded as treason (p. 75). The state, individual government leaders and the ruling party are seen as identical (p. 82). Machiavelli’s political maxim – that in politics to be feared is better than to be loved – was written a long time ago but very well sums up Africa’s post-independence political belief (p. 93).

Also, the sage politician cum philosopher, Oginga Odinga, identified the fact that leaders do not know how to handle power themselves as a major problem with leadership in Africa. They use it to empower themselves and their cronies, instead of empowering all their subjects. They can therefore not be trusted by those they have to serve (cf. Oruka, 1992:48, 97).

Everywhere power can become very immoral and dangerous (cf. e.g. Fowler, 1991). It can grow out of the barrel of a gun! Leaders easily abuse their power to play god in the lives of others (cf. Grouch, 2013).

Politicians, executives and also today's ego-filled media stars are not the only examples. During the last few years the media informed us how often the world over even Christian leaders misused their religious power to sexually abuse young boys and girls. And how much power today also resides in nations and powerful international co-operations?

3.5.2 *Correctly used power*

According to Odinga (in Oruka, 1992) might cannot be regarded as right (p. 13). Power should be executed with moral honour (p. 25). It should not be a goal in itself, only a means to achieve something other than itself (p. 47). Politics should also not be a dirty power game, but guided by morality, truth, frankness and persistence (p. 71). Power should be executed with responsibility, accountability and respect for the freedom of the people (p. 97). A leader should not be the paramount example of power, but rather of justice (p. 106). And he/she should also be willing to endure hardships in the cause of justice (p. 139).

But the solution is not weak power. Power as such is not sinful. Power can be defined as the authority given to a person in a specific office to fulfil his calling. If he does not have sufficient power, he cannot fulfil his specific task. Bujo (2018:2) correctly writes that the renunciation of power offers no solution, but the correct normative direction and channelling of power for its proper purpose. It should not be a weapon of control, but a means of enabling others to exercise their own gifts in accomplishing their specific callings.

3.5.3 *Different kinds of power*

The more basic question according to an integral Christian worldview again is not *how much* power, but *what kind* of power. We should not blame power as such but the wrong normative direction in which it can be executed. Correctly directed by God's norms, power creates possibilities, offers hope and makes human flourishing possible. The exercise of power should promote the dignity of everybody in a specific social relationship/institution. But disobediently, wrongly directed, it will destroy individual and communal life.

The Bible does not provide us with a detailed map of the boundaries of authority and different kinds of power for every social relationship. We must determine them by a careful consideration of specific social relationships in the light of Scripture.

It is also not acceptable to see power in terms of a hierarchy in which some structures or institutions have power over others. Various authorities and social relationships should be seen as a partnership in which the exercise of power of each advances the power of all (cf. Fowler, 1995:95).

A clear example of toxic power is a totalitarian regime. It clashes with the basic tenets of a biblically based social philosophy. According to Acts 4 verse 19 it should be opposed by Christians since they should rather obey God than men (See e.g. Van der Walt, 1991 for what the Bible and the Christian tradition taught about the rights of citizens to protest against their government.)

The next (sixth) point about responsible Christian leadership is that it requires

3.6 *Just leaders*

As emphasised, one cannot analyse the structural components *of* leadership in isolation from the normative direction *for* leadership. This is evident when we now focus on the urgent need for just leaders, leaders who have the high responsibility to see that justice is done especially to the marginalised and millions of the poor in Africa.

3.6.1 *Social injustice*

Achebe (1983:19-25 on “Social justice and the cult of mediocrity”) had this to say about the unjust situation in many African countries:

... it would be difficult to point out *one* important job held by the most competent person we have ... Social justice is therefore not only a matter of morality but also of sheer efficiency and effectiveness (p. 19).

He then mentions Nigeria’s collapsing public utilities, inefficient and wasteful parastatals and state-owned companies – results of the inevitable paralysis brought on by the cult of mediocrity. To him the denial of merit is a form of social injustice which hurts not only especially poor individuals directly but ultimately an entire country (p. 21). He calls it the institutionalised robbery of the common people by their public “servants” (p. 23). And finally, he draws attention to the fact that without social justice for all, peace will be impossible. Throughout his whole book (also Turaki, 1993) he emphasised that social justice should be the central guiding norm in nation building.

As Christian leaders we should therefore again ask ourselves what, according to God’s Word, justice means.

In the dualist, spiritualised Christian tradition, discussed in the previous article, the priority was often given to spiritualised righteousness over against more secular views of justice. The first biblical concept (righteousness) was regarded as something heavenly, a vertical relationship with God, while the second (justice) was viewed as indicating the earthly, horizontal relationships to one's fellow humans. Righteousness was then associated with love and justice with power (cf. Rooy, 1980:12).

This kind of thinking is not at all in agreement with God's word. Especially the prophets like Amos told Israel that the Lord hates, despises their religious assemblies, feasts and offerings – their so-called spiritual righteousness. What He really wants is: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream" (Amos 5:14. Cf. also Jeremiah 22: God's judgement on the evil kings of Israel who built their palaces by unrighteousness and their houses by injustice).

3.6.2 Justice implies more than rights

In our contemporary secularised world justice is usually narrowly based on human rights. Justice is viewed as granting everyone his/her rights (cf. Van der Walt, 1999:35 ff for Christian viewpoints on secular human rights doctrines). But is that enough? When we merely depend on human rights and the legal procedures based on a bill of rights it may still happen that real justice is not done. Rights are only a minimum requirement for a just society.

God loves justice (e.g. Psalm 37:28 and Isaiah 61:8). His love for justice compels Him – and us – to seek justice for and do justice to the victims of injustice (e.g. Psalm 103:6; 104:32; 146:7-9 and Wolterstorff, 1995:17). His kingdom is founded on righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14).

To be just according to God's Word is simply to obey all God's guidelines for life, to do his will here on earth. As a just God He does not tolerate disobedience to his commands, or any compromise with the evil of injustice. He calls all of us, but especially leaders, responsible for the wellbeing of many, to act justly.

3.6.3 A comprehensive concept

Justice in the Bible is a comprehensive concept. It has to direct our total life, personally, socially, economically, academically. Especially in the state which is responsible for the people of an entire country it should be *the* guiding light of political leaders (cf. Du Plessis, 1978).

As justice is something comprehensive it can, as already stated, never be fully achieved by a juridical process based on human rights alone. Courts are often viewed as the only way to deal with corrupt leadership. Often justice is also delayed and finally denied. And even the best legal system in the world will not be able to change the hearts and values of bad leaders.

Justice is also not the opposite of love as some Christians may argue. It is one of the many ways in which one loves one's fellow humans. Love should be justice-seeking love. The two go hand in hand in the Word of God. Justice implies obedience to God's law, and love is the fulfilment of the law (Van der Walt, 1980:121). From a Christian perspective full justice is impossible without love. Without love justice can also become a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. But the reverse is just as true: one cannot claim to love the other without being just toward that person.

And I want to add that according to the Word of God real love not only require justice but also forgiveness, restitution, reconciliation and finally peace. In the present post-apartheid South Africa with its racial and other tensions, we need leaders – black and white – who do not keep blaming each other for the wrongs of the past or the present. We need leaders who, with the future in mind, are willing to forgive (cf. Van der Walt, 1996). No future without forgiveness! (Tutu, 1999).

3.6.4 *The golden rule*

Jesus Christ therefore radically changed the Old Testament legal system of *jus talionis* which we find in for example Exodus 21 verse 23 and Leviticus 24 verse 19: "If anyone injures his neighbour, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured".

According to Christ his followers cannot claim this primitive "right" any more. He replaced it with the golden rule: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12, Luke 6:31 and cf. also Stassen, 2006). Followers of Christ should even love their enemies and treat them justly (Matt. 5:44).

Justice should not only be practised by Christians. And Christians should be just towards other religions by accepting confessional pluralism as a basic part of their social philosophy, meaning that every religious group has the right to express its convictions also in the so-called public arena.

3.6.5 *Justice brings peace*

Why is justice of such vital importance? Because, as Achebe has emphasised above, without justice, peace is impossible on our continent as well as in the rest of the world. “Justice and peace kiss each other” (Ps. 85:10b, Is. 32:16-17 and 48:18). Where justice is done, peace flourishes and vice versa (cf. also Wolterstorff, 1983:69 ff and 1995 on the inseparable relationship between justice and *shalom*).

What God expects from Christians and especially Christian leaders is not too much: “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8b). However, not even the greatest leader will be able to realise complete justice and full *shalom*. But God’s promise of a new earth – the home of justice – will inspire Christian leaders never to stop doing his/her best to do what is just here on earth (2 Peter 3:13).

Now something about a seventh characteristic of good leaders:

3.7 *Accountable leaders*

Many South Africans and people elsewhere in the world are deeply worried about the lack of transparency and accountability among many managers and leaders. The daily, often violent protest marches of often hopeless poor people for basic services like housing, water, sanitation, electricity, medical services, education and jobs can also be viewed as efforts of the marginalised to force leaders and officials to be responsible and accountable.

Recently I had, for example, to waste precious hours to solve a very simple problem. At first my repeated telephone calls were not answered. At a personal visit to the responsible office I was referred from one person to another. No one seems responsible, can help or seems prepared to assist. I had to go there again the next morning, fall into a long queue – and perhaps be helped before the office doors would be closed again ...

What is the reason behind this kind of behaviour? Inexperience? Was it again a clear example of not knowing how to manage time? A lack of leadership control? An undisciplined happy-go-lucky attitude of the staff who only fill a job to be entitled to a salary at the end of the month? Are Christians among them not aware of the fact that they are ultimately in God’s service?

As previously emphasised, leadership implies reciprocal trust. People should select and appoint leaders since they can trust them. And their leaders should indicate that they deserve such trust and respect by being transparent and accountable. If not, they should be removed from office. But how should for

example the citizens of a country succeed in doing this in responsible ways? Should it be done in violent ways by looting shops along the way, burning trains and even schools and university libraries?

In conclusion a last characteristic of real leadership is:

3.8 Integral leaders

Dwight D. Eisenhower (the 34th President of the USA) said (cf. Bujo, 2018:1) that the supreme quality of good leadership – no matter whether it is the case in a gang, on the football field, in an office or an army – is unquestionable integrity.

Nearly everything so far can also be summarised with the one word “integrity”. To reflect now briefly on the meaning of integrity will thus be an appropriate summary and conclusion.

The Word of God described many leaders who were ever hearing but never understanding, ever seeing but never perceiving, for their hearts became hardened, calloused (Is. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:14, 15; John 12:40; Rom. 11:7). But a blind man cannot lead another blind man since they will both fall into a pit (Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:39).

Usually blinded people will not admit their own blindness (John 9:40,41). Jesus, however, did not hesitate to openly call even the religious leaders of his time, the Pharisees, blind guides (Matt. 23:16,24,26) and hypocrites (verse 13, 23, 25), people with two faces, double tongues, people without integrity.

The word “integral” (derived from the Latin words *integer* and *integritas*) has a wide range of meanings. But it contains two basic meanings: a structural and directional. Firstly, it indicates an untouched, unspoilt, unblemished person without any mark or stain. Therefore, it is used to describe the wholeness, soundness, uprightness and honesty of a person, someone without a divided soul whose behaviour is in accordance with a clear code of values. He or she is a credible, reliable person deserving one’s full trust.

Secondly, such an integral leader will also be consistent and unwavering in the normative direction in which he leads his followers. He will never speak from different mouths.

What such a person of integrity shows on the “outside” will not be different from what he/she is on the “inside”. Such a leader, firstly, knows what calling, office, authority, power and accountability really means. An integral leader, secondly, does not waver in the normative direction to be taken. He and she

follow the sure compass of God's guidelines based on his commandment of love. Therefore, you can respect and trust such leaders.

Leadership is executed in different domains of life, like in business, politics, law and religion, but it is always also ethically qualified. As noted previously, it is a mutual relationship of trust between leader and follower. Especially leaders should be above suspicion to deserve the trust of those they lead that they will fulfil their duties and promises.

No human being can be perfect, neither a leader. But reliability, credibility and trustworthiness are the *sine qua non* of leadership. This includes that s/he should also admit mistakes made and be willing to be corrected.

A leader of integrity will also be resilient, will know what perseverance means in this badly broken world. The Philippines illustrated this attitude of never giving up to do good with bamboo plants. They may be forced down by storms, heavy winds and rain. But they always bow back again – now stronger than before!

The apostle Paul reminds us that this can only be achieved through the surpassing power from God. Christian leaders may be “hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:7-9).

4. The normative direction of leadership

The dualism between facts and values in Western thinking also influenced its leadership ideas. As indicated in the previous article Western thinking about leadership initially focussed one-sidedly on the structures of leadership (what it *is*). Later on it shifted, again one-sidedly, to the values applicable (*how* it should be). As indicated above (point 2.7) one can distinguish but never separate in leadership its structural from its directional, normative or value side. This fact was already emphasised often on the previous pages. But now we make it our explicit focus, since without the following remarks about the important normative direction for leadership our analysis of leadership would be incomplete.

4.1 Confining values to moral values

To add some general values to leadership without a good understanding of the basic structure of leadership will not do. Neither will the solution be to add – like a layer of sweet icing sugar on an unpalatable cake – only some moral values.

With many different kinds of ethics (e.g. personal, social, political, environmental, business ethics and more) writers are today trying to solve our many contemporary problems. Better ethics or more morality is regarded as a kind of panacea also for the crisis in leadership – what we need is a moral regeneration or moral rearmament.

4.2 *The alternative*

However, an integral and comprehensive Christian worldview and way of life require much more. It has to integrate and direct one's entire life of which the moral or ethical is but one aspect. As multi-dimensional human beings and leaders we also need other norms of which a few follows.

At the physical level we should learn appreciation and care for ourselves and our natural environment. Biologically speaking, respect and care for our own bodies and others' health and life is needed. Also, emotional sensitivity, self-restraint, perseverance and more are required. Our thinking should reveal discernment, insight, clarity, convincingness and validity. Truth, reliability and credibility should be honoured in the language and other forms of communication we employ. Our social relations should be characterised by, for example, respect and care for all people, unselfishness, benevolence, kindness, graciousness, loyalty, forgiveness and reconciliation. In the economic sphere not only leaders but every one of us should be good stewards, guided by values like sobriety, thrift and charity towards those in need. In the state government leaders should strive for impartial justice and righteousness, while citizens should be obedient to healthy authority and law. Some of the moral values we badly need today are integrity, honesty, faithfulness, reliability, trustworthiness and humility. Above all Christians should accept as their highest authority the triune God. They will trust Him as their ultimate security, worship Him alone and obey Him and all the above-mentioned values derived from his fundamental love commandment.

Depending on the domain of life some of these norms may be of primary importance. If a leader in government is not guided by the norm of justice, how can he be trusted? If a church leader does not accept God and his revelation as highest authority and trust Him completely, how could he be the shepherd of his flock?

5. Striving towards a better future

When I now look back at all four articles on the leadership crisis, I realise how much I wrote on the past and its implications for today. This was necessary because the past is never fully gone or can completely be eradicated. Also, in Africa we should learn from our mixed heritage of African, Western and Christian worldviews. Remember: One cannot drive safely forward if you do not first take a careful look into the rear-mirror of your car!

But to take a step forward while keeping looking backwards would not be a good idea at all. Firstly, the clock of history can never be turned back. As indicated more than once in these articles, it may provide temporary euphoria but it will not be able to solve contemporary challenges.

A second danger is that one may keep blaming yesterday for today's problems. For instance, one may accuse Western imperialism and colonialism alone for today's weak leadership in Africa. Or, instead of accepting own responsibility, we attribute our present failures as Christians to the kind of Christianity planted here long ago by the missionaries.

Shifting the blame to others is one of the original sins of mankind. Our first ancestors already applied it. Eve blamed the snake and Adam even God for their guilt! (Gen. 3:12, 13).

A third danger is that, since all one's present problems are assumed merely to be implications from the past, one may become dependent, a captive of your heritage.

We should, therefore, stop spending valuable time fighting enemies of the past. Keep in mind the admonition of our Lord: "No one who puts his hand to the plough and look back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). In Christ we are not victims of the past but should be victors of the future.

In summary we as leaders should provide a vision, containing the following three elements. First *hindsight*, looking back correctly, neither ignoring nor idealising the past. Second *insight* in the present situation. Third *foresight*, looking ahead and planning to intervene before a disaster occurs.

6. Hope for the future

Academic articles, like this series, focussing on so many stumbling blocks on the way toward good leadership, may leave the impression that sound, Christian leadership can be no more than a dream, that the challenges we face are unsurmountable.

To prevent this impression, let me conclude with a very simple but inspiring metaphor for genuine leadership often used in the Word of God and already mentioned in the previous article. It will reassure us that good leadership is not an unsolvable academic enigma or an unattainable practical endeavour, out of the reach of ordinary people.

Readers still living in rural areas will know the shepherd of a flock of sheep. In Biblical times a shepherd was not regarded as someone of high standing. To be a poor shepherd was then and still is one of the humblest jobs.

And sheep were usually viewed as stupid, uncertain, weak and vulnerable. A good shepherd will therefore never drive his sheep into difficult and dangerous situations. With a wooden staff as the only weapon in his hand to defend himself and his flock he himself will go ahead, call his sheep by their names, showing them the correct, safe way. And his sheep will trust him and follow. As Psalm 23 states: they will lack nothing.

Jesus Christ, God's final revelation, called Himself our Good Shepherd (John 10). He knows every one of us, his followers, by name. He calls us to follow in his footsteps. He can be trusted completely. And through the power of his Spirit he will guide us in our quest to be the leaders He wants us to be.

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