



Biblical Issues for Leadership

Chris Fletcher
Grace College of Divinity

The Christian leader's task to fulfill the Great Commission laid out by Jesus in Matthew 28 is to make disciples of all nations. This begins by introducing the non-believer to Jesus Christ and helping them understand the need for His Lordship in their lives. Unfortunately, many in the Christian church have only take the Great Commission to mean that once the Gospel has been preached, the job has been done. In order to make a fully replicating disciple, the Christian leader must help the follower learn and apply the principles of Christian spiritual formation in such a way that they not only begin to see the fruit in their own lives, but are able to lead others in the same discovery process. As this happens, the Christian leader lays the framework for an ethic that is grounded in the commandment of Jesus. To this end, Christian leadership must begin with an ethic that is powered by a proper understanding of the Lordship of Jesus from the act of Christian worship outlined in Romans 12:1-2 and is lead by Christian Spiritual Formation. This paper will examine ethics and Christian Spiritual formation while analyzing Romans 12:1-2. Finally, this paper will look at the affect of the combination of all these factors within the framework of the transformational and servant leadership styles.

Literature Review

Ethics

Vorster¹ begins the discussion of Christian ethics by stating that it is not an all-encompassing concept within the Christian church. Depending on the Christian's denominational background, thought differs on a variety of subjects from birth control, to consumption of alcohol and tobacco to just about every topic not explicitly covered in Scripture. Ethics is defined by Johnson² as a leader's process of determining the difference between what is true and what is not true. The Christian hero Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book on Ethics was published posthumously after his martyrdom at the hands of the Nazi's in 1945. Bonhoeffer³ states that the Christian ethic is begun and completed in the person of Jesus Christ. Vorster⁴ examined Christian ethics in the face of growing secularism and concluded that if Christian ethics remained rooted in its purpose as stated by the Christian Scriptures and remained committed to its social purpose, then Christian ethics would remain relevant in the shifting of society. A great source of divide among Christian leaders is on the topic of the nature of the forces that drive a Christian's ethics. Rae⁵ draws a distinction between the special revelation of God to man through the vehicle of the Christian Scriptures

¹ Vorster, Jakobus M. "Christian Ethics in the Face of Secularism." *Verbum Et Ecclesia*33, no. 2 (2012): 1-8.

² Johnson, Tom. Accessed July 08, 2016.
<https://gcd.populiweb.com/internal/education/onlinelearning/lesson.php?instanceID=4798593>.

³ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, and Eberhard Bethge. *Ethics*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

⁴ Vorster, Jakobus M. "Christian Ethics in the Face of Secularism." *Verbum Et Ecclesia*33, no. 2 (2012): 1-8.

⁵ Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

and the code of natural law. Rae⁶ defines natural law as those things that exist with the societal fabric of humankind that are widely repudiated to be “good or bad.” For example, being generous is seen as “good” and committing a murder is seen as “bad.” Christians fall prey to juggling between the two camps of arguing on behalf of a Christian ethic informed by natural law and one informed by the teachings of the Christian Scriptures. An example is the recent case of homosexual marriage argued before the Supreme Court of the United States. Judge Anton Scalia has been vilified for his belief in “natural law” that dictated, for him, the course or direction of his vote on the topic of gay marriage.⁷ In an attempt to see their beliefs upheld in the United States, many Americans go along with the “natural law” argument while missing the glaring error that cultural norms were never the Christian’s job to uphold. Natural law that is informed by the special revelation of Jesus through the Christian Scriptures is the only way that the Christian leader will be enabled to begin to form a proper pathway (ethic) towards morality (decisions) that are grounded in Jesus.

To this end, Hirsch and Ferguson⁸ state that the Christian walk can be summed up in the words “Jesus is Lord.” The entirety of everything’s existence is to place Jesus in His proper place as Lord and Bonhoeffer⁹ agrees with their

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Murray, A. "When Judges Believe in Natural Law." *The Atlantic*. 2014. Accessed July 08, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/01/when-judges-believe-in-natural-law/283311/>.

⁸ Hirsch, Alan, and Dave Ferguson. *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

⁹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, and Eberhard Bethge. *Ethics*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

assessment. The ethic of a leader comes from the leader him/herself and this process of shaping is undertaken by the act of Christian Spiritual Formation. It is in the formational discipline of worship that the Christian finds a proper platform on which to build the shaping of their ethics.

Christian Spiritual Formation

Joann¹⁰ defines Christian Spiritual Formation as the process whereby believers completely embed themselves in the Divine Will and their human interaction begins to take on the nature of the Divine. Joann¹¹ continues by stating that spiritual formation begins when the Christian participates by activating their will in conjunction with God's leading. It is the process of sanctification at work. When a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, the work of sanctification begins in which the individual is conformed to the image of the savior. Serrano¹² adds that Christian Spiritual Formation is an interactive process in which God shapes us into the image of Jesus through the person of the Holy Spirit. Christian Spiritual Formation is the process of the Christian walk lived out in the correct manner on earth. As the Christian fellowships with the Trinity through the basic spiritual disciplines such as worship, fellowship, and

¹⁰ Joann, Wolski Conn. "Spiritual Formation." *Theology Today* 56, no. 1 (04, 1999): 86-97.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Serrano, Carlo. "Day 2 Lecture Notes" [PowerPoint Slides]. From 2015 Lecture. Retrieved from

<https://gcd.populiweb.com/internal/education/onlinelearning/lesson.php?instanceID=4798593&lessonID=2308311>

service, they must activate their will to participate with God's leading and shaping through the process of Christian Spiritual Formation.

Worship

Worship of Jesus can be summed up in Hirsch and Ferguson's¹³ statement that "Jesus is Lord." It is the proper placement of Jesus on the throne of all things and returns Him to center of everything. Piper¹⁴ states that worship on earth is such a powerful experience because it is the only action that is an end in and of itself. Worship is a heavenly action that can be undertaken on earth. VanderWilt¹⁵ states that Christian worship, at its height, leads the Christian community of believers in growth towards Christ. Nell¹⁶ adds that most churches are negligent in their understanding of the power that worship has to build character within the body of Christ. Worship in the life of a Christian Leader does three things in the life of a leader:

1. It places the leader under the proper standing of the Lordship of Christ.
2. It is the only earthly action a leader can undertake that is not a means to an end, but the end itself.
3. It teaches the Christian Leader a proper understanding of worship outside the liturgical context of a song time at the front of a meeting.

¹³ Hirsch, Alan, and Dave Ferguson. *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

¹⁴ Piper, John. *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Books, 1996.

¹⁵ VanderWilt, Jeffrey. "'Why Worship?': Schleiermacher Speaks to the Question." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 3 (2003): 286-307.

¹⁶ Nell, Ian A. and Neil Meyer. "Invited by God Onto the Worship Stage: Developing Missional Communities through Participation in Theo-Drama." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1-8.

As the Christian Leader undertakes the task of allowing his or her ethic to be shaped through the process of Christian Spiritual formation, it is important to assume the posture of a worshiper in order for the process to have the desired effect. As seen throughout the Old and New Testament accounts of the children of Israel, Jesus will be worshiped or as He said Himself in Luke 19:40 “I tell you, if these were silent, even the very stones would cry out.” Worship is a choice as the theological antinomy of human free will teaches: man does have a free will and is held responsible for their choice as to whom they bow their knee. If the Christian leader chooses a posture of worship and submission to Christ as the process of Christian Spiritual Formation informs his or her ethic, they do not force Jesus to force them into a posture of worship. Matthew 21:44, speaking of the Kingdom of God and its advance, chronicles Jesus stating “And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” With this statement, Jesus warns of the inevitability of the coming kingdom and that all people are helpless to stop its advance. The Christian worshiper is wise to position themselves under the Lordship of Jesus of their own volition as opposed to being a casualty of what God has already put into motion.

Analysis of Text

Romans 12:1-2 presents the Scriptural underpinning for a Christian placing themselves in a posture of worship that leads to their ethics being informed by Christian Spiritual Formation. Paul writes:

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.^[b] ² Do not be conformed to this world,^[c] but be transformed by the

renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Cultural Texture

Paul’s epistle to the church in Rome is perhaps his most important theological work and Romans 12 is placed immediately following his talk on salvation for all, including the Gentiles. In its infancy, the church was steeped in the Jewish tradition.¹⁷ This is made clear through the Acts 11 account of Peter’s resistance from the “circumcision” crowd along with his reticence to consume unclean meat. Remaining in right standing with the temple and with the Jews in the surrounding regions was of great importance to the Christians. Clark¹⁸ states that rise of the Pharisaical sect was brought about in an attempt not to fall back into the state that led to Israel’s exile in the first place. Clark¹⁹ explains that the Pharisees were actively seeking a revival of traditions in their zeal to remain pure and avoid the potential recurrence of judgment.

Paul’s epistle is written in the midst of this time in history. As a result, Paul’s reader would have taken great interest in Paul’s statement that Christians were admonished to be “living sacrifices.” In Jewish tradition, the sacrifice was acceptable when the animal was slain and its blood poured out before the altar. As a blood sacrifice, this is what made it acceptable. Paul’s charge to be “living sacrifices” speaks to the need for the Christian to be found continuously on the altar. In the situation of the sacrifice, the

¹⁷ Nanos, Mark D. "The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (04, 1999): 283-304.

¹⁸ Clark, David G. "Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 1 (03, 1999): 131.

¹⁹ Ibid.

one performing the sacrifice is the one exercising the control within the situation and Paul is stating that the Christian should yield control of their lives. This action of turning over control to something else is what Paul is stating is a “spiritual act of worship.”

Paul states in the second half of the verse that upon presentation, the Christian’s sacrifices would be “acceptable to God.” In the cultural context, this is very important, as the sacrifice was the way that a Jew remained in right standing before God. The Pharisaical culture had reached its zenith in passion for right standing before God and all their actions, in the beginning, were predicated on being “acceptable to God.” Paul is posing a potentially deadly paradox between how the sacrifice is viewed, but is then following it up with the words every person steeped in Jewish tradition would long to hear and that is that their sacrifice was acceptable to God.

In verse 2, Paul pushes the envelope of a “priest centered” philosophy even further when he instructs believers to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. By doing this, their ethic is shaped into something that can text what is true and noble and good. This flies directly in the face of the mediator of the old covenant. In Jewish tradition, the priest was the only one authorized to make the sacrifice that would place the follower in right standing with God. This text suggests a change in the cultural norm in that a worshiper need not engage an intermediary, but could simply offer himself as a living sacrifice. From this posture, the follower would reap the reward of the ability to discern the will of God for their individual lives.

Inner Texture

The word “God” is mentioned three times and its repetition suggests that He is to be held in higher regard than anything else in the text. Worship is to God and through this

action, the believer is acceptable to God. This wording places the entire text on a slant with the worshiper at the bottom and God at the top. The language used suggests a God-centered disposition. When the believer is blessed with the ability to “discern the will of God”, the text does not return to any worshiper centered language. Miller²⁰ adds that when the prerequisite of undivided attention is given, the worshiper is granted access to understand the will of God. The worshiper is not meant to discern God’s will, necessarily, for their individual lives, but is meant to discern the will of God in general. The text does not speak to the potential for benefit for the worshiper as the actions listed are all directed at God. The “sacrificial” language of the text denotes the possibility that there may be harm that befalls the worshiper.

Discussion

Worship is the platform for the successful navigation of the Christian Leader’s journey of Christian Spiritual Formation that informs and guides the ethics that lead to the leader’s morality. As referenced in the literature review section, the posture of worship from the statement “Jesus is Lord” places the leader in a posture to receive the benefit of Christian Spiritual Formation.²¹ When Bonhoeffer’s Christocentric ethic is coupled with an understanding of the special revelation of Christ in Scripture, the Christian leader is placed on the pathway that allows the greatest opportunity for success. When these statements are examined within the context of the study of a transformational leader, the posture of worship becomes all the more important.

²⁰ Miller, James C. "Hate the Evil, Hold Fast to the Good: Structuring Romans 12.1-15.1." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (01, 2007): 160-162.

²¹ Hirsch, Alan, and Dave Ferguson. *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

A transformational leader exercises leadership that transforms and changes the individuals being lead.²² The transformational leader is driven by the mission and displays a fierce drive to better those around them, even at the risk of their own demise. Mwambazambi²³ adds to the definition that a transformational leader also identifies the areas of growth that are necessary for individuals and groups to find success in whatever mission they are attempting. What sets the transformational leader apart from the transactional or the servant leader is that the motivation for these seemingly selfless acts towards others is not primarily driven by the people, but is driven by the success of the mission or the group.²⁴ The transformational leader leads by empowering people and eliciting the most out of their followers, but always for the sake of the mission as the core motivation. Bass²⁵ introduces four “I’s” of a transformational leader:

1. Idealized influence: the ability to move leaders along toward a common vision.
2. Intellectual stimulation: the ability to get them to think about problems in a new way.
3. Individualized consideration: the characteristic of being people-first almost to the point of becoming a servant leader.

²² Northouse, Peter Guy. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010.

²³ Mwambazambi, Kalemba and Albert K. Banza. "Developing Transformational Leadership for Sub-Saharan Africa: Essential Missiological Considerations for Church Workers." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014): 1-9.

²⁴ Rowold, Jens. "Effects of Transactional and Transformational Leadership of Pastors." *Pastoral Psychology Pastoral Psychol* 56, no. 4 (2008): 403-11. doi:10.1007/s11089-008-0121-6.

²⁵ Bass, Bernard M. *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press, 1985.

Bass, Bernard M. "Two Decades of Research and Development in Transformational Leadership." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 8, no. 1 (1999): 9-32. doi:10.1080/135943299398410.

4. Inspirational motivation: when the leader catalyzes movement based on commonly held goals.

The key statement regarding a transformational leader is that the mission as the primary driving force for his ethic can consume him. The pitfall can be an ethic that strays into utilitarianism, which Rae²⁶ defines as a scenario where the end result renders the means moral or immoral. A transformational leader's goal may always be the "right" goal to pursue, but the process of arriving at the destination is as much a part of the process as the destination itself. When the transformational leader applies the guidance of Romans 12:1-2 and places himself daily on the altar of God's will and direction, he postures himself correctly. The transformational leader, by nature, is driven by vision and seeing a preferred future for the group of followers. The promise of Romans 12:2, once Romans 12:1 has been followed, is that the Christian leader will have access to knowing the will and plans of God. This is invaluable to the transformational leader as it keeps their ethical process rooted in the person of Jesus by continually finding himself in worship of him.

The concept of the servant leader is that the focus shifts from the end goal of the mission to the follower.²⁷ The servant leader, like the transformational leader, will give of themselves and their power to their followers, but the motivation is different. The servant leader's end goal is the betterment of the team being lead. Chen et. al²⁸ stated that servant

²⁶ Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

²⁷ Greenleaf, Robert K. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

²⁸ Chen, Chin-Yi, Chun-Hsi Vivian Chen, and Chun-I Li. "The Influence of Leader's Spiritual Values of Servant Leadership on Employee Motivational Autonomy and

leadership was grounded in promoting the well being and inner drive in the followers of the leaders that they studied. Examples of servant leaders were Ghandi, Mother Theresa, and scholars even list Jesus Christ among those driven by the betterment of the people who followed them. This is not to say that servant leaders do not have the mission as the end goal; they simply arrive at the destination on a different path. To use an American football analogy, one might say that the transformational leader is driven by the end zone and the servant leader is driven by the individual plays that make up a scoring drive.

The servant leader has a variety of pitfalls that face him, but the chief of these is what Rae²⁹ defines as relativism or the belief that different individuals or cultures have a variety of acceptable moral codes. This is not to suggest that all servant leaders face this temptation, but in today's society, the notion of relativism is a prevalent notion. When servant leaders follow the instruction of Romans 12:1 to offer themselves as a living sacrifice, they model the posture of worship and submission to God to their followers. This engenders submission to Jesus as opposed to the fierce loyalty from followers. This also allows the leader access to the reward of Romans 12:2 and access to the mind and will of Christ. This keeps the leader's ethic close to the plan and path of Jesus and eliminates vestiges of relativism.

Conclusion

The Christian Leader should not be intimidated by the notion of constant sacrifice. The example laid out by the leader of the faith, Jesus, was one of continual

Eudaemonic Well-Being." *Journal of Religion and Health J Relig Health* 52, no. 2 (2011): 418-38.

²⁹ Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

emptying of self and worship to God. The Christian Leader's end goal is to be used by God to bring glory to Himself and this process is brought about by the moral decisions made by the individual. They allow themselves to be molded through Christian Spiritual formation that results in an ethic that creates a continual cycle of obedience. Does the authentic leader's core change when properly submitted to Christ in worship? Is there value to placing emphasis solely on the Christian spiritual practice of worship as opposed to other spiritual practices? Is there a common pitfall among transformational leaders and servant leaders that has a statistically proven track record of being lessened by proper worship? Further study should be conducted on other types of leadership and their correlation to worship.

Bibliography

- Bass, Bernard M. *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press, 1985.
- Bass, Bernard M. "Two Decades of Research and Development in Transformational Leadership." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 8, no. 1 (1999): 9-32. doi:10.1080/135943299398410.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, and Eberhard Bethge. *Ethics*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
- Chen, Chin-Yi, Chun-Hsi Vivian Chen, and Chun-I Li. "The Influence of Leader's Spiritual Values of Servant Leadership on Employee Motivational Autonomy and Eudaemonic Well-Being." *Journal of Religion and Health J Relig Health* 52, no. 2 (2011): 418-38. doi:10.1007/s10943-011-9479-3.
- Clark, David G. "Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 1 (03, 1999): 131.
- Greenleaf, Robert K. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.
- Hirsch, Alan, and Dave Ferguson. *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Joann, Wolski Conn. "Spiritual Formation." *Theology Today* 56, no. 1 (04, 1999): 86-97.
- Johnson, Tom. Accessed July 08, 2016.
<https://gcd.populiweb.com/internal/education/onlinelearning/lesson.php?instanceID=4798593>.

- Murray, A. "When Judges Believe in Natural Law." *The Atlantic*. 2014. Accessed July 08, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/01/when-judges-believe-in-natural-law/283311/>.
- Miller, James C. "Hate the Evil, Hold Fast to the Good: Structuring Romans 12.1-15.1." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (01, 2007): 160-162.
- Mwambazambi, Kalemba and Albert K. Banza. "Developing Transformational Leadership for Sub-Saharan Africa: Essential Missiological Considerations for Church Workers." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014): 1-9.
- Nanos, Mark D. "The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (04, 1999): 283-304.
- Nell, Ian A. and Neil Meyer. "Invited by God Onto the Worship Stage: Developing Missional Communities through Participation in Theo-Drama." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1-8.
- Northouse, Peter Guy. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010.
- Piper, John. *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Books, 1996.
- Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Rowold, Jens. "Effects of Transactional and Transformational Leadership of Pastors." *Pastoral Psychology Pastoral Psychol* 56, no. 4 (2008): 403-11. doi:10.1007/s11089-008-0121-6.

Serrano, Carlo. "Day 2 Lecture Notes" [PowerPoint Slides]. From 2015 Lecture.

Retrieved from

<https://gcd.populiweb.com/internal/education/onlinelearning/lesson.php?instanceID=4798593&lessonID=2308311>

VanderWilt, Jeffrey. "Why Worship?": Schleiermacher Speaks to the Question." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 3 (2003): 286-307.

Vorster, Jakobus M. "Christian Ethics in the Face of Secularism." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 33, no. 2 (2012): 1-8.