

Christians in Strategic Leadership:
Towards an Integration of Faith and the Top Management Team

by

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Does a Christian, as a Christian, add value to top management in an organization? Do Christians in organizational strategic roles act differently or make decisions differently than their non-Christian counterparts? Should they? Is there a “Biblical” view of strategic leadership? The purpose of this paper is to identify what is meant by ‘strategic leadership, and to define what is meant by Christian Strategic leadership (CSL). Through a thorough review of the strategic management and leadership literature we will identify issues and characteristics that are specific to Christians. The result is a definition of CSL that can be utilized for further research into this important construct.

Does a Christian, as a Christian, add value to top management in an organization? Do Christians in the strategic roles in an organization act differently or make decisions differently than their non-Christian counterparts. Should they? Are the financial or strategic results for the organization different if the top management team members are Christians? Should they be? In other words, is there a “Biblical” view of strategic leadership?

Questions such as these launched the inquiry that resulted in this paper. Previously developed faith-based models of leadership (i.e. Tucker, Stone, Russell, & Franz, 2000; McCormick & Davenport, 2003; Zigarelli, 2002) explored the construct from a more general framework, not from the specific context of the top executives of an organization. Most academic theory that focuses on the characteristics and performance of a top team of managers has been written from a secular perspective. Consequently, many faith-based questions remain unanswered. As a beginning towards bridging this gap, we propose in this paper to develop a foundational approach to top strategic leadership from a uniquely Christian biblical worldview. Our intention is to create an initial theoretical base from which appropriate future research can be initiated.

The direct purpose of this paper, then, is to address the area of strategic management identified in the literature as “strategic leadership” from a Christian biblical worldview. We identify “strategic leadership” as the CEO of the organization and those that report directly to him or her. This group includes individual top executives (CEOs, COOs, or CFOs) and key business unit managers (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick, 1989). This influential group of executives at the apex of the organization is commonly referred to as the top management team (TMT). These are the people who have the responsibility to create, and direct the implementation of, the complex decisions that determine the current and future viability of the organization. These decisions are so critical that many organizations actually become reflections of the TMT. The focus of this paper will be on the top executive leadership of an organization, the TMT.

In the first section of our paper we will present a background review of the mainstream academic literature on strategic leadership and top management teams followed by an exploration of the stream of Christian faith-based leadership research. In the next section, we will utilize the review to refine the definitions of terms that we will use in the rest of the paper. Following that, we will propose and discuss a foundational definition for Christian Strategic Leadership (CSL) and outline principles that deal with the Christian dimensions of strategic leadership. We close the paper with a conversation about possible directions for future research in faith-based strategic leadership.

A HISTORY OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

Pre-1983 Research

In the early years of strategic theory formulation the leader was viewed as a hero figure. As early as the 1930's, Barnard (1938) and later Selznick (1957) developed theoretical arguments that supported the importance of analyzing top managers and their impact on their organization. Top managers became almost the entire focus of strategic management research. This view culminated in the 1960's and 1970's in the Harvard model (Lerner, Christensen, & Andrews, 1961; Andrews, 1971), which focused on the individual personal role of the senior manager and how his¹ leadership shaped and molded the strategy of the organization.

In the late 1960's and the years following, a significant group of researchers shifted their focus away from the leader/hero and toward the techno-economic aspects of business (Hambrick, MacMillan, & Day, 1982; Harrigan, 1980; Porter, 1980). These researchers held the view that an organization's strategy was "determined by such factors as environment, technology, and size" (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996), not just by its leadership.

In the 1980's, theories developed by the population ecologists (Hannan & Freeman, 1977) and evolutionary economists (Nelson & Winter, 1982) came to dominate a significant area of strategic thinking. The central propositions of these theories were that organizational outcomes were the result of external factors rather than managerial decision-making (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Nelson & Winter, 1982). In comparison to industry and other environmental factors, managers were postulated as having little affect on firm performance.

¹ There were few women in senior management at that time.

Post-1983 Research

In late 1982 the pendulum swung back again. An influential book by Kotter (1982), entitled *The General Managers*, shifted the attention of the academic community back toward senior managements' behavior, background, and characteristics in relationship to the organization. Others researchers also began to re-focus on people at the top of the organization (e. g. Donaldson & Lorsch, 1983; Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly, 1984).

However, in this swing the ideal of the solo hero/leader evolved into the idea of a top team or group. Hambrick and Mason (1984) were particularly influential with their macro-organizational theory they called the "upper echelons" model. Researchers who follow this model argue that a firm's performance and organizational outcomes can be, and are, affected by the strategic decisions of its top management. However, they postulate, CEOs seldom make strategic choices by themselves; rather strategic decisions are generally made together by a group of the top managers (Cyert & March, 1963; Allison, 1971; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). As a central focal point of the "upper echelons" research, the concept of the top management team (TMT) was seen as the primary strategic decision-maker within the organization.

After these initial articles were published, hundreds of articles and books were written on top executives and their teams. Since 1984, strategic leadership research has primarily focused on CEOs, business unit heads, TMTs, and boards of directors (Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1996). However, the spiritual dimensions of this leadership level have not, to our knowledge, been explored.

Strategic Leadership Theory versus Leadership Theory

Strategic leadership theory finds its roots in the “upper echelons” theory. Upper echelon theory encouraged theoretical and empirical research into the impact top executive teams had upon organizational outcomes (if any), as well the role of symbolism and social construction in top executive influence (Hambrick & Pettigrew, 2001; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Other studies focused on issues such as strategic decision-making (Amason, 1996; Hitt & Tyler, 1991), TMT demography (Smith, Smith, Olian, Sims, O’Bannon, & Scully, 1994; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992; Barsade, Ward, Turner, & Sonnenfeld, 2000), TMT heterogeneity (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Michel and Hambrick, 1992), and TMT influence on organizational learning (Vera & Crossan 2004), as well as numerous other topics.²

Recently, Vera and Crossan (2004) noted a key distinction between the terms “*leadership*” and “*strategic leadership*.” They argued that leadership theory refers to leaders at any level in the organization, whereas strategic leadership refers to the study of people at the top of the organization only. Leadership research, they say, focuses primarily on the relationship between leaders and followers. Strategic leadership research takes a more macro focus and deals with executive work, not merely as relational activity, but also as strategic activity. While we agree with Vera and Crossan’s contention that strategic leadership theory should be distinguished from leadership theory, we argue that their approach provides an inadequate definition of strategic leadership. A more complete definition of strategic leadership will be proposed later in this paper.

² The interested reader is directed to the many fine books on the subject. One of the better summaries of this literature is found in Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Leadership Research from a Christian biblical worldview

Christian or faith-based scholars have tended to focus their leadership research on what Vera and Crossan (2004) call leadership theory. For example, there has been a plethora of books and journal articles written on servant leadership (i.e. Greenleaf, 2002; Tucker, et. al., 2000; Beadles, 2000; Porter, 2000; Smith, V., 2000). In 2003, McCormick and Davenport presented a theoretical leadership concept they termed “shepherd leadership;” however, this book also was primarily written within the context of leadership theory. Zigarelli (2002) did an extensive research project on the values and activities of Christians in leadership positions but did not specifically focus on the top executives. Most popular articles in Christian magazines are grounded in the leadership theory perspective.

Until recently, the Christian academy has not examined strategic leadership from a Christian biblical worldview. However, in a recent article, Martinez (2003) suggested that different levels of organizational leadership might have different spiritual imperatives and issued a challenge to develop a faith-based framework for this key organizational role. This paper has been written in partial response to Martinez’s challenge.

A DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

What is strategic leadership?

There are many levels in the organization where leaders exercise strategic oversight. For example, middle managers are responsible for functional activities and for aligning those with the strategic imperatives of the firm. Therefore, before we can develop a framework of strategic leadership from a Christian biblical worldview, we must be clear what we mean by the term.

Previous research has given top management many names: CEO leadership, executive leadership, leadership (in general), upper echelons, top managers, the top management team (TMT) and so forth. The term *strategic leadership* did not become widespread in the literature until Hambrick (1989) formally proposed both the term and a definition. “The study of *strategic leadership*” he said, “focuses on the people who have overall responsibility for an organization--the characteristics of those people, what they do, and how they do it.” (Hambrick 1989, p. 6) Later this definition was refined as “the executives who have overall responsibility for an organization---their characteristics, what they do, how they do it, and particularly, how they affect organizational outcomes” (Finkelstein & Hambrick 1996, p. 2). This definition is consistent with Hambrick and Mason’s (1984) “upper echelons” theory in that there is an inherent presumption that strategic leaders will have a direct effect on organizational outcomes.

A narrower definition by Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2005) proposes that strategic leadership is the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary, so that the organization can have a viable future. This definition focuses primarily on what strategic leaders do, which fits within one of the components of the definition of strategic leadership proposed by Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996). While each of the above definitions provides a relevant description of strategic leadership, we have chosen to follow the broader definition proposed by Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996).

Who are Strategic Leaders?

Some scholars summarize strategic leaders as all the officers above the level of vice-president (Hambrick, 1994). Broadly speaking, these are the people which empirical studies have shown that CEO’s identify as the members of their top management team (TMT) (Bantel &

Jackson, 1989; Smith et al., 1994). Other scholars expand the TMT concept to include those executives who served on a board of directors (Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1990). We have chosen to follow the majority of strategic leadership scholars by defining the leaders responsible for the strategic function of the firm as the CEO and those that report directly to him or her (CEOs, COOs, CFOs, VPs), plus key business unit managers (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick, 1989).

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

We have stated that our purpose in this paper is to lay the foundations for studying strategic leadership from a Christian perspective. One of the first steps towards doing this is to outline a normative definition for a Christian Strategic Leader (CSL). As we thought about this definition, two clusters of questions arose regarding the issue of Christians in strategic leadership:

- Would, or should, a strategic leader who is a Christian act or make different decisions from other skilled and ethical members of the top management team? If so, why and in what way? What exactly is “adding the spiritual dimension” in this context?
- Would, or should, a strategic leader who is a Christian have spiritual differences from a middle manager who is a Christian? For example, would there be a difference in Christian character or in spiritual gifting between the two? Or could character and gifting be the same and the execution different?

We do not know the answers to these questions and realized quickly that attempting to answer them in any but a superficial sense would be beyond the scope of this paper. Through future research, more specific theories and concepts need to be outlined. Further, appropriate research projects should be created to test the above questions, as well as others proposed by colleagues in the Christian academy. Nevertheless, we propose to begin the process by laying a

foundation for this research by creating a definition of CSL that could be utilized in the future. Asking these types of questions helped us more clearly understand what the genuine Christian Strategic Leader (CSL) should look like. Therefore, we propose the following definition:

"Christian strategic leadership refers to the top executives of an organization who are called and equipped by God to lead the entire organization and its resources from a Christian biblical worldview to the glory of God."

In the following analysis we will examine this definition more completely, explaining and discussing each phrase. We will also present examples from the marketplace and Scripture. We invite our colleagues to test this definition and work with us to strengthen it, with the ultimate goal of refining this concept into a testable set of propositions and hypotheses. To that aim, we look forward to future collaboration with those who are interested in bringing more depth to a Christian biblical concept of strategic leadership.

It is important to note that we realize there are Christians in strategic leadership roles that do not fit the definition we have proposed. In other words, just because a CEO or a member of the TMT is a Christian does not mean that he or she is necessarily a Christian Strategic Leader as we define it. The person could either be not acting in a way appropriate to a child of God or be incompetent in his or her role. This person would not be a Christian Strategic Leader (CSL) as we mean the term. While we believe it would be fruitful to explore this aspect of leadership in the future, it is not the focus of this paper.

**Christian Strategic Leadership (CSL) refers to
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We agree with the mainstream strategic literature that strategic leaders are the top executives of the organization, commonly called the TMT. However at this point we begin to

diverge from traditional thinking. We argue that the Christian strategic leader is a man or woman who has been called by God, and therefore equipped by God, to fill a particular organizational role. In the next section, we will examine the two key words “called” and “equipped.”

Called

People are promoted to the strategic echelon of an organization for reasons ranging from masterful competence to nepotism. However, we argue that whatever the human means of reaching the top are, the genuine CSL is in that role because God placed him or her there. In other words, CSL’s are set apart from other Christian managers and other strategic leaders because they have a vocation, a calling from God to the position of top management. This thinking about vocation is a reflection of the theology, formalized and popularized by Martin Luther, that there is no division in the eyes of God between sacred and secular positions or occupations.

Some Christians feel that God values certain occupations more than others. In this way of thinking, God approves occupational ministry, i.e. “full-time Christian work” as more sacred or blessed than secular positions. Many Christians would never admit they believe this way, but live as if they do. For example, how many times have you heard Christians talk about “full time ministry” when discussing occupations such as missionary or pastor? This implies that “real” ministry only occurs if the individual works in a church or Christian non-profit organization.

Of the secular occupations, serving professions, such as medicine or teaching, are unconsciously considered to be more spiritual, more valued by God, than “money making” occupations, such as a stockbroker, a pharmaceutical salesperson, or a production manager. One of the authors of this paper has had the experience of being introduced at church as “a professor

at a Christian university.” The person to whom she was introduced apologized. He was “only” a top manager on a space station project and he genuinely seemed to feel that his job was not nearly as spiritual as working for a Christian organization.

The idea of sacred vs. secular thinking arose from Hellenistic culture. The Greeks considered that paid work, particularly a trade, was beneath a gentleman and lessened the acquiring of virtue. Aristotle said, for example, that “any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice or exercise of virtue, is vulgar... likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind.” (*Politics*, Book 8, part II, quoted in Sherman, 1984.). Furthermore, the culture became steeped in Platonic dualism which maintained a strong division between the real and virtuous realm of Eternal Ideas (mind/spirit) and the illusory and the vulgar realm of concrete objects and matter (body) (Angeles, 1981; Plato, 1994 [*Allegory of the Cave; Republic, Book 7*]; Cicero, *Republic*, 1998). This contrasts directly with the Hebrew view, exemplified in Genesis 1, that God made both body, mind, and spirit and saw them as a “very good” unity (Sherman, 1984).

The early church grew during the height of Hellenistic culture. Early Christians, to their credit, gave slaves and workers value as people who God loved. Nevertheless, the church leaders were men of their culture; if they were educated they were steeped in dualistic assumptions. As a result, many prominent 1st century church leaders dressed up dualism in Christian words (Sherman, 1984). Ignatius, for example, argued that the clergy - of which he was one - were doing God’s work (work of the Spirit) and thus were of higher spirituality than the laity who were working in secular occupations (work of the body). This meant that the clergy were pure mediators between God and the impure laity (Schaff, 1996). Likewise, Cyprian argued that the apostolic succession from Peter promoted the clergy to spiritual heights far above the laity.

Another consequence of the division between the sacred and secular was a marked preference for the aesthetic life as superior to the life of worldly affairs. For example, Origen proposed two types of Godliness: a lower one that applied to all Christians and a higher one that applied to saints and those who separated themselves from worldly affairs and devoted themselves to prayer (Schaff, 1996). Even Augustine argued that it was better for a Christian to do manual labor and occupy one's mind with praise to God, than to work with one's mind and occupy it with the pursuit of riches (Augustine, [401] 1999).

This stress on a division between the clergy and laity and on the unsuitability of Christians occupying their mind with worldly affairs became part of what Geisler calls the Two-world View (Geisler, 1982). This view argues that a Christian's life is in compartments; his or her work world is separate from his church or ministry world - and the latter compartment is the one that God really cares about. We testify, through our experiences in providing legal and business counseling for hundreds of Christian business people over the years, that it is clear many of them compartmentalize their lives. Norm Geisler calls this compartmentalization the most prevalent heresy among evangelicals today (Geisler, 1982).

Martin Luther, however, strongly contradicted the division between the sacred and the secular and between different compartments of life. He argued that Scripture shows God as a working God, interested in all aspects of the human life whether physical, mental, church, business, or public square (Sherman & Hendricks, 1987). For example, he argued that Christ, the incarnate God, was a small business owner who worked with His hands, and that several of His disciples, notably James, John, and Peter were also businesspeople. The fact that God Himself worked as a carpenter made that secular occupation sacred. By extension, God did not consider secular occupations as less pleasing to Him than church-related ones. All occupations belonged

to Him and the work of every Christian, clergy or laity, had eternal significance (Wingren, 1957).

Luther used the term *Beruf*, “calling,” to suggest that God gives every Christian spiritual work on earth to do – his or her vocation (Wingren, 1957). An occupation allows a Christian to provide for his and his family’s needs, as the Scriptures requires. However, vocation is an additional summons, *Beruf*, by God to work for the sake of a person’s neighbors (Sherman, 1984). Anyone could have an occupation, said Luther, but only a Christian could be called by God to a vocation; vocation was a way of using the Christian’s occupation to 1) worship God and to 2) express loving service to his or her neighbors by honorably and honestly meeting the neighbors’ economic needs (Wingren, 1957).

Therefore, for Luther, the thing that set vocation apart from occupation was relationship. Vocation was service to God and to neighbor - employer, employee, supplier, co-worker, or customer – in *agape* love. This immediately excluded occupations that harmed others, such as robbery or prostitution. It also immediately excluded dishonesty, sloppy work, or exploitation of employees or customers (Wingren, 1957). As God moved in the human heart to overcome the ego-centered life, all honest occupations could become vocations (Sherman, 1984). Further, all honest work could become a holy activity, an act of worship pleasing to God. As William Law ([1728] 1955:31) later expressed this:

The profession of a clergyman is a holy profession because it is a ministration in holy things, but worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord by being done as a service to Him and in conformity to His Divine will. For as all men, and all things in the world truly belong unto God...so all things are to be used, and all persons are to act in their several states and employments, for the glory of God.

We therefore argue that a CSL is a person in vocation, a person called directly by God to the position that he or she holds. We are aware that the individual may spend many years in

middle management before reaching the strategic management level. We are also aware that there are Christians in strategic management that do not act in vocation in that role. Nevertheless, if a man or woman is a CSL, he or she has been called, *Beruf*, to be one. God has put the person in that role as firmly as he put Joshua in the strategic role of military commander to lead the Israelites into Canaan, or put David in the kingly role of uniting the twelve tribes into one nation. Vocation means using one's occupation to glorify God and express *agape* love to one's neighbor. Therefore in all the decisions and activity required by the strategic role, the genuine CSL has one ultimate aim – to worship and glorify God and to act in love towards the persons he or she affects - employees, customers, suppliers, the community, and so forth. As A.W. Tozer (1982, p. 118) stated in his book *The Pursuit of God*:

The 'layman' need never think of his humbler task as being inferior to that of his minister. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called and his work will be as sacred as the work of the ministry. It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it. The motive is everything. Let a man sanctify the Lord God in his heart and he can thereafter do no common act. All he does is good and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For such a man, living itself will be a priestly ministration. As he performs his never-so-simple task, he will hear the voice of the seraphim saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (Isaiah 6:3).

God is primarily concerned with the heart and the motive of the person in whatever his or her calling may be, whether they serve in full-time professional ministry or as the strategic leader of an organization.

Equipped

But how does an individual know if he or she is in the right calling? The Puritans evolved a practical methodology for finding out. They suggested that a Christian pay attention to such things as “inward endowments and inclinations,” “outward circumstances which may

lead...to one course of life rather than another,” the advice of “parents [or] guardians,” and “nature, education, or gifts...acquired”³ (Ryken, 1986). In other words, one way to know if a person is in the right calling is if God has clearly equipped him or her for the work.

Scripture is clear that strategic leaders from Moses to Paul were called by God to fit a particular situation. When they were called each person discovered they had personal gifts, abilities, talents, and skills to do the job. For example, God initially gave Moses his brother, Aaron, to be the sense maker and symbol creator of the leadership team that led the Israelites out of Canaan. At the Red Sea Moses discovered that God had given him that ability as well. Paul’s clear scholarship and oratorical ability was the means by which he turned the entire Christian church towards his vision of evangelizing the gentiles as well as the Jews (Acts 15). Other biblical leaders - Deborah, Gideon, Hezekiah, Elijah, John the Baptist, Peter, Philip - were placed by God in a role and had or were given the gifts, abilities, talents, and skills needed to implement a strategic vision for a particular mission, organization, or situation.

Successful top organizational leaders have, or acquire, certain skills and abilities. We are not arguing “trait theory” herein. However, we acknowledge that to achieve success, strategic leaders need certain skills honed to a marked degree – the ability to think in terms of the entire organization for example, the ability to understand the industry and environment well, the ability to create vision in terms of the people involved, or to use signals and symbols appropriately to engage others in the vision.

Observation and experience reveal that there are Christians who inadequately and unsuccessfully lead organizations, who do not have strategic leadership abilities and are not able or willing to acquire them. We question whether these people have a vocation for strategic

³ These suggestions come from, in order, William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, Richard Steele, *The Tradesman’s Calling*, Thomas Dudley in a letter to John Woodbridge. Cited in Ryken, 1986: 28.

leadership. In other words, we agree with Luther and the Puritan writers that if God calls a person to a vocation, He will equip him for the role.

One of the main pieces of equipment God gives a CSL is a vision. A vision is a powerful statement of purpose and passion and is, says Kotter (1988), the thing that distinguishes a strategic leader from a manager in a leadership role. A leader is, by definition, a person with a vision; therefore the person who God calls to strategic leadership will have a vision for the entire organization. Good strategic leaders utilize their vision to help others see what is ahead and what the possibilities are; this engenders a confidence on the part of their followers that they are capable of performing the acts necessary to fulfill and realize the vision. For example, Steve Jobs is reputed to have recruited key people by asking them to “Join Apple and help change the world.” The point here is that visions are not solo acts; they incorporate the needs and ideals of the followers. Visions demand relationship.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) say that organizational visions that engage people have several core themes. These include a need for change, the ideal goals that can be created (not the exact end, but the ideal conditions), and a focus on people – how will people be benefited by the vision.

We propose that a CSL will have a vision that incorporates God’s mission into the organizational vision, at least implicitly. In other words, values that are compatible with God’s kingdom will be at the core of the vision. For example, the Johnson and Johnson credo says that the ultimate purpose for which Johnson and Johnson exists is to “alleviate pain and disease.” This is a vision that a Christian could welcome and embrace. There are many others. The real estate CSL could have a vision for creating a firm that honestly and competently serves people by helping them find appropriate and enjoyable housing. Evangelical Christian Credit Union

(ECCU), started by one of our students, “exists to help evangelical organizations and ministry-minded individuals become better stewards of their finances” (eccu.org). They loan funds to churches, serve as financial managers for missions and missionaries, and so forth. The vision that Joshua had for the nation Israel turned two generations toward the Lord God. “Choose today who you will serve,” he told the Israelites. “As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

In summary, a CSL is a person who God has called to a particular role and has equipped him or her with the necessary gifts, abilities, talents, skills, and vision to fulfill that role. In response, the leader in vocation uses his or her role in ways that glorify God and that allow stakeholders to benefit in love.

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One corollary of a theology of calling is that any Christian in any occupation can be a steward who serves God as his or her boss. If God assigns people to their tasks, then a person’s job is personally chosen by God. Whether the occupation is a business professor, a sports reporter, or a member of a strategic team, it is a means by which the individual can live out a personal relationship to God and serve his or her neighbor (Packer, 1990).

If God has called an individual into the role of a strategic leader, He has, in a sense, placed the entire organization and its resources into his or her hands. God requires the CSL to be a faithful steward of these things. Stewardship is defined as the “conducting, supervising, or managing of something; *especially*: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care” (Merriam-Webster, 2004). When God created the world He did so with

the expectation that mankind, as His stewards, would manage the creation for Him with His end result in mind - to glorify Himself and to further His kingdom. After all, everything that exists, including an organization and its resources, are His (Chewning, Eby, & Roels 1990; Leviticus 25:23). In addition, Christians are one of God's resources, created to do "the good things he planned for us long ago" (Eph. 2:9).

Therefore, the CSL has a dual stewardship responsibility. First of all, as a strategic leader, he or she has a responsibility for entire organization. It is the decisions made by that top team (TMT) that determines the direction the organization will go, whether it will succeed or fail, whether it will act appropriately towards stakeholders and so forth. If, as we argued, God places a Christian in the top management team of a particular organization, He knows that decisions made by that person will affect many others. The CSL is expected to act with wisdom and propriety or the consequences will be far reaching. This principle is demonstrated throughout Scripture. Joshua's incorrect decision about the Gibeonites for example (Joshua 10), affected the entire city of Gibeon and the nation of Israel for generations. When David sinned by numbering the army (I Chron. 21:5) God did not punish him directly. Rather, the consequences fell on the kingdom.

The CSL has influence over a number of people and also has access to extensive resources. God has never implied in His Word that we have a right to use the resources He has entrusted to us in a selfish, wasteful or irresponsible manner. On the contrary, He clearly states that we are to use any resources given with wisdom. For example, in the "parable of the talents" Jesus instructed us about the accountability, rewards, and judgment that go with resources (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-13). Accountability and judgment were evident during the 1980s scandal involving Jim Bakker, who was prosecuted for fraud, tax evasion, and racketeering with regard

to his misuse and abuse of the resources entrusted to him through his ministry. “To whom much has been given,” Jesus said, “much shall be required” (Luke 13:42-48).

The CSL is responsible for using the resources he or she influences in a way that God desires. However, will that ensure bottom line success? Not necessarily. Here again, the Puritan theology of work and economics helps us understand the issues more clearly. According to the Puritans, it was not proper for a Christian to have the accumulation of wealth as a motive for vocation. Nor should the Christian use their vocation as a means for gratifying selfish ambition. The purpose was not even to make a living for one’s family, though the welfare of the family was important (Smith, 1997). Rather, the appropriate reward of a vocation was spiritual and moral: work was to glorify God and benefit society. William Perkins (Ryken, 1986) says, for example:

Some men will say perchance: What, must we not labor in our callings to maintain our families? I answer: this must be done: but this is not the scope and end of our lives. The true end of our lives is to do service to God in serving of men.⁴

If the CSL acts in stewardship to God, financial rewards and organizational success may, or may not, follow. The choice is up to God. If God decides to bless the CSL’s work with human prosperity it is His grace, not human merit that produces the blessing (Packer, 1990). The point here is not that economic outcomes of organization strategic initiatives are unimportant, but rather that they should not be the incentive for the CSL. Firm success, invitations to talk shows, or increases in personal income are desirable, but they have nothing to do with why the CSL should do his or her job well. These things, say the Puritans, are the by-product of doing God’s work, not the goal of doing it. The goal is to worship God through our service to others in love (Smith, 1997).

⁴ Tyndale, *Treatise on Vocations*. Cited in Ryken, 1986:29.

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from a Christian biblical worldview to the glory of God**

We have argued that Christian Strategic Leaders have a distinctive mission that sets them apart from other strategic leaders in carrying out their tasks and roles. We postulate that the vision of the CSL and how he or she influences the mission of the organization is a key element in this kind of leadership. This distinction provides what we see as a clearly mandated constraint from scripture that requires CSLs to lead the whole organization and its resources “from a Christian biblical worldview to the glory of God.”

Traditional scholarship assumes that the intent of strategic leadership is for the organization to obtain a sustained competitive advantage and earn above-average returns (Hitt, et al., 2005). For the CSL, we have argued, such success may be necessary but it is not sufficient. In order for the CSL to be truly successful, organizational goals and actions must be accomplished by and through his or her Christian biblical worldview, and must also glorify God. We will consider each of these terms in turn.

From a Christian biblical worldview

A person’s worldview comprises the assumptions, values, tastes, perceptions and perspectives that drive and influence his or her thoughts and actions (Sire, 2004). Sire (2004, p. 17) says it is:

...a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.

In other words, a worldview is deeply rooted within every human being as a commitment that involves the heart, mind, and soul. As Naugle (2002) expresses, a worldview “uncovers what is flowing out of our heart (our presuppositions) as well as what we are pouring into our heart (the proposition)” (Ward, 2003).

Scripture also profoundly reflects how our worldview is a matter of the heart. It describes the heart in terms of wisdom (Prov. 2:10), emotion (Ex. 4:14; John 14:1), desire and will (1 Chron. 29:18), spirituality (Acts 8:21), and intellect (Rom. 1:21) (Sire, 2004). All of these biblical concepts should permeate the worldview of a CSL in all areas of his or her life, including the leadership of the organization.

Life is not compartmentalized; God’s principles and judgments apply equally in one’s personal devotional life, in ministering to others at church, in family life, in entertainment, in how one responds to the government, society, and culture of the day, and in all aspects of one’s job and career. A CSL will hold a Christian biblical worldview at work as well as in the rest of life. That is, he or she fulfills the strategic task he is called to but is careful to carry out God’s specific commands and principles, imitate His nature and characteristics, and pursue His desired results. For example, as a CSL reads and studies God’s word, he absorbs it and gradually moves away from using derogatory language toward others (Matt 5:22). When a CSL’s subordinates make mistakes, he will balance justice and mercy in discipline (Prov. 3:3). A CSL learns to be upright and honest in all her dealings, even with vendors and major customers. She learns to see the vice presidents and office assistants in the organization as individuals loved by God, not as units of production or as means to getting something done. The CSL learns to view the goals of the firm, or the way she is pursuing them, as God would view them. Further, she is sensitive and

responsive to the cross-cultural issues of the organization and society in which he works and lives.

The way anyone can know God's commands and principles is through reading the Scriptures regularly and through the witness that the Holy Spirit has within each Christian's spirit. Living with a Christian biblical worldview, makes it more likely that the CSL will fulfill the dual responsibility of allowing his or her work to serve as worship to God and of placing our neighbor at the point of highest esteem (*agape*).

There currently is a significant "disconnect" in the business community among Christian business people regarding how their Christian faith and actions apply to business. This disconnection is also prevalent in the area of strategic leadership. Even though these issues may appear obvious to some, we believe that a CSL must begin at the foundational roots of the Christian faith. First, he must acquire a Christian biblical worldview through consistent reading of Scripture and interaction with God in prayer. Further, he must integrate that worldview with work roles, including that of the strategic leader.

The CSL must recognize that there is a significant difference between the world's philosophy of strategic leadership and the Bible's philosophy of strategic leadership (Rush, 1990; Beadles, 2000). Worldviews determine "life decisions, priorities, relationships, values and goals" (Heslam, 2004). A quick analysis of the business media shows that the members of the business community, including the strategic leaders, have allowed many worldviews to invade and dominate their lives and business practices. It is imperative, then, that the CSL's worldview continually is informed, examined, directed, and implemented through the reading, interpretation and application of Scripture (Smith, 2000). A Christian biblical worldview requires a strategic leader to think differently "about everything" including how he or she leads the overall

organization. This is not surprising. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” says Proverbs 1:7. It is also the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 2:1-10).

To the glory of God

Once a strategic leader has formulated a Christian biblical worldview, then everything that he does should flow out of that worldview to the glory of God. The apostle Paul understood the importance of this basic scriptural principle of glorifying God in everything we do when he wrote I Corinthians 10:31: “*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*” Glorifying God can be done in specific ways. Below are some examples. We do not argue that every CSL should, or can, implement every possibility. However, we propose that a CSL should:

- 1. Glorify God with the firm’s mission, vision, and strategic direction.*

There are ways that a CSL can influence and/or directly change the mission, vision, and strategic direction of the firm. For example, KB Home was once indicted for inadequate home warranties and shoddy construction. In the last two years, they have set up a certification program for sub-contractors, moved vigorously towards a more independent board and set up a customer response policy that states “All reasonably legitimate homeowner concerns raised during the first year of ownership should be repaired or resolved to the homeowner’s satisfaction. Period” (Palmeri, 2004). These policies arose out of external pressures. However, they could just have easily been developed by a CSL with a Christian biblical worldview. Many firms direct their profits toward supporting charity and community organizations. In some firms, the CSL may be able to influence the organization to financially support missions and para-church organizations. In others, the CSL’s might influence the direction of the organization’s

support to non-profits that help, rather than harm people. For example, community support could go towards literacy programs, or school initiatives rather than Rap concerts or the ACLU. . As another example, some builders are refusing to help build abortion clinics and networking with other builders to create a united front in this area.

A company could also have an evangelistic focus/aspect by reaching out to employees, customers, suppliers, the community, etc. This could be passive, such as the verses printed on In-and-Out cups; or it could be active, such as Bible Studies and/or prayer during the lunch hour.

2. Glorify God by maintaining Biblical ethics within the organization.

Good or bad ethics in an organization tends to start at the top. If the strategic leadership of a firm encourages an ethical atmosphere, and will not tolerate a lack of ethics, it is more likely that the subordinates in the firm will remain ethical in their business. For example, it is possible for the CSL to encourage or directly establish an organizational culture that promotes and implements biblical ethical standards in its accounting and financial practices, simply by making it clear that he or she will not tolerate inappropriate practices. A CSL can encourage Godly HR practices in developing policies that look beyond “policy” to people as individuals. Examples of such policies could include day care centers, creating a fund to help workers in short-term financial difficulty, giving employees days off to resettle elderly parents, or developing and implementing biblical conflict resolution policies and procedures. Through the use of influence and/or direct authority a CSL can create an ethos that manifests God’s holiness, justice, and love toward all who are considered the organization’s stakeholders (Hill, 1997). This glorifies God.

3. Glorify God by exhibiting and modeling Godly behavior in leading the organization and its resources.

We have already discussed some of this in previous sections. The CSL who personally applies wisdom, kindness, justice, love, peace, patience, longsuffering, meekness, humility, and other biblical qualities in his or her interactions with peers, subordinates, customers, suppliers/distributors, and competitors will glorify God.

LAST WORDS AND NEXT STEPS

We began this discussion with two broad questions that approached the subject of the Christian Strategic Leader from opposite directions: Is a Christian different from strategic managers in general and if so, in what way? What is “adding the spiritual dimension” to this role? Can we expect a Christian gifted in top management to be a different kind of Christian than a Christian in middle management? If so, in what way?

We have concluded that a Christian Strategic Leader is indeed different from his or her non-Christian counterpart in that he is called by God to the role. The CSL is also different in that her assumptions and motives arise from a different worldview than her colleagues, a Christian biblical worldview. We assume that, at least at times, different types of decisions would arise from the different worldviews.

We have also concluded that there are certain key characteristics that good strategic managers need and that the CSL is equipped by God with these gifts, abilities, talents, skills and characteristics to do the vocation to which God has called him. We are still wondering if this means there is an actual difference in gifting or character from the Christian in middle management or if the difference is in execution of the gifts.

In short, our research and analysis concerning these issues has left us with more questions than we started with, and all of these questions could yield fruitful areas for research. For example:

1. If God calls a CSL to a role, does He also anoint that person, in the sense that He anointed the kings of Israel and Christ anointed His disciples?
2. Are CSL's different from Christian middle managers in gifting, in character, in execution of gifting, or in all three, or in none of these?
3. It is a spiritual principle that a country is blessed if the leader is righteous. This principle is found multiple times throughout Scripture. Is this principle true of a company and a CEO or TMT? Furthermore, what does Scripture mean by "blessed" – e.g. does "blessed" go to the bottom line?
4. There are numerous indications in Scripture that a king or other strategic leader (such as a judge or elder) is supposed to show restraint and self-discipline (cff. Deut 17:14-20). How does this play into Christian Strategic Leadership?
5. Would, or should, a strategic leader who is a Christian act or make different decisions from other skilled and ethical members of the top management team? If so, why and in what way? What exactly is "adding the spiritual dimension" in this context?

As we continue to explore into the theoretical and conceptual aspects of the Christian Strategic Leader we know that the foregoing questions are only the beginning. Traditional academia has developed well established frameworks, which offer avenues for further research by the Christian academy. The concept of Christian Strategic Leadership is one that calls for further dialogue, research and development. We invite our colleagues interested in strategic leadership to join us on this journey of discovery. We believe the results could be extremely significant and the rewards great.

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