
QUAKER CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

In addressing the theme of spirituality and leadership, this article argues for an alternative to noncritical application of religious categories to leadership and also to reductionist tendencies that reduce spirituality to generic humanistic qualities. Rather than disconnect spirituality from religion, this article contends that what one considers to be spiritual is influenced by the values associated with the faith tradition to which one subscribes. Drawing upon an understanding of Quaker spirituality, an argument is made that it is at the level of internalized values that a genuine impact of spirituality upon leadership is to be found.

Introduction

An interest in spirituality and leadership has emerged in recent years at Earlham School of Religion, a Quaker graduate theological school in Richmond, Indiana. The interest was initiated by students who repeatedly asked, “What, exactly, constitutes ‘spiritual leadership?’” That is to ask, “What distinguishes spiritual leadership from other leadership?”

Judging from the number of available book titles, the association of spirituality and leadership is clearly a popular topic at the moment. Three types of text are readily available. The first utilizes anecdotes from the author’s life or the lives of other admired individuals to describe how faith guided the individuals’ leadership and decision making. These can be inspiring narratives replete with authentic faith and even dramatic circumstances; however, they often lack evidence of critical assessment of the leaders’ motives and responses, as well as the theological reflection that is fundamental in such an assessment.

A second type of literature applies spiritual language to secular or corporate leadership concepts, as though a simple renaming of leadership practices makes them spiritual. The result is a religiously veiled veneer that infuses faith suppositions into leadership concepts. This approach can apply religious language to leadership that, on the surface, sounds spiritual; but in effect, this application produces trait models of leadership that offer religious underpinnings to styles of leadership that can operate just as easily without them.

A third response utilizes reductionism in the quest to define and describe spirituality in leadership. Along the way, it divorces the word *religious* from *spiritual*, removes references to divine involvement in the discipline of leadership, and ultimately equates spirituality with the pursuit of being an exemplary human being. For example, in nonreligious settings, Robert Greenleaf's servant leadership model is sometimes reframed so that altruism replaces the example of Jesus as the motivation for servant leadership.¹ The end result is a list of qualities that the writer's culture has deemed to be exemplary and desirable of those who aspire to lead with humanity's best interests in mind. The case is sometimes made that these qualities span the great religious traditions,² and thus represent genuine spiritual truth before it is codified or even misappropriated by the special interests of particular faith traditions. Caution is in order when generalizing across such a diverse field.

None of these three approaches provides a model that critically engages the topic while avoiding reductionism with regard to spirituality and leadership. Within the Quaker tradition of which Earlham is a part, this matter is further complicated by the fact that Quakerism's antiauthoritarian and antihierarchical roots truncated the development of a

¹ Daniel Wheeler, "Servant Leadership for Higher Education: Principles and Practices" (presentation at LIFE Conference, Grand Rapids, Mich., April 12, 2012).

² Louis W. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 14 (2003): 706.

thoughtful response to the issue, except to provide the tautologous statement that spiritual leadership is leadership guided by the Spirit. The importance of equality as a theological value and the decided preference for practice over theological formulation have limited Quakerism's interest in thinking intentionally about how leaders engage with the group.

As dean of a graduate school of theology whose mission is to prepare persons for a range of ministries that require leadership in some capacity, it is clear to me that spirituality cannot be reduced or ignored in the development of leaders without compromising the integrity of our program. As a scholar who is religious and a religious scholar with an interest in leadership, I find that an approach to spirituality and leadership that is deeply rooted in religious experience is a preferable alternative to those named above. This approach is necessary in part because faith and spirituality are intertwined, if not inseparable, from this perspective. Those attitudes or attributes categorized as spiritual ones are the results of faith forming or transforming prior perspectives. That is to say, although these attitudes or attributes exist among the range of choices available to humanity, for persons of faith they might not have been embraced until the individual was convinced by the persuasiveness of religious experience.

From this alternative perspective, I would argue three points. First, it is not necessary to completely disconnect spirituality from religion when defining and describing spiritual leadership. Second, what one considers to be spiritual—as an attitude, a belief, or a practice—is influenced by the values associated with the faith tradition (or lack thereof) to which one subscribes. Third, it is at the level of internalized values rather than that of doctrines or espoused beliefs that one finds the genuine influence of spiritual formation upon leaders.

Reconnecting the Disconnect

A complete disconnect of spirituality from religion is not necessary or even advisable in leadership discussions.

Building on the thinking of an H. Richard Niebuhr classic, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*,³ the loyalty, confidence, and even single-mindedness associated with hardened religious convictions are not limited to faith traditions alone, but are present in a wider spread of social and political organizations. Yet it is often that triad of characteristics within religious groups that so quickly motivates calls for the divorcing of religion from spirituality. Even so, it is not common to hear a similar call to dismiss the influence of the political or social from discussions of leadership as though their elimination would provide a more wholesome model of leadership. Consequently, a separation of religion and spirituality does not safeguard leadership from the perils of hardened dogma and doctrine as it claims to do; it merely limits resources and inspiration for leadership to the collective human experience. Meanwhile, oppressive or corrupt ideology, abuses of power, and misuse of resources can flourish without any encouragement from religious influences.

At the level of individual observance or practice, the connection between spirituality and religion might not be obvious, but in group settings, this dichotomy cannot be sustained. In its best sense, religion presents the organization of spiritual convictions and the regularization of rituals based on those convictions into communal forms and practices. Certainly, the degree of organization and formality can vary from one group to another. Efforts to maintain flexibility or spontaneity can affect organizational dynamics and resist rigidity. However, groups tend to form habits that become routines and thereby establish norms and traditions. This organizing tendency helps establish identity, solidify commitments, and set norms of behavior. From this perspective, one could say that religion is spirituality as manifested in communal settings, practiced over time.

Leadership, too, is practiced within communal structures over time. That is to say, leadership does not occur in

³ See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).

solitary settings of the individual, but only in groups or collectives. Whereas one can imagine individual spiritual practice apart from a community, an individual leading only oneself is better understood as autonomy rather than actual leadership. Leadership is crucial to organizational formation and survival, as it too contributes to processes that form and maintain identity, commitments, and norms.

Leadership and religion each play an indispensable role in the formation and organization of the life cycle and functioning of groups with a spiritual focus or commitment. One cannot with integrity dismiss the religious as though it is a corruption of the spiritual while maintaining that the spiritual is integral to leadership as a general truth statement. That is not to deny that religious organizations are not sometimes co-opted by ulterior motives that prevail over their expressed spiritual sensibilities; rather, it is to deny that this is a sufficient reason for concluding that religion is a corruption of spirituality.

Except for a hypothetical scenario of a spiritually sensitive individual who lives a socially isolated life and assumes a position of leadership within a nonreligious organization, it is difficult to imagine nonreligious spirituality influencing leadership in an organizational setting. Spirituality expressed in group settings will assume religious qualities over time, if not from the outset; leadership will arise in those same settings. Even as it affects the group, leadership itself will be shaped by the spirituality embraced by the group.

To summarize, leadership is a communal enterprise, as one does not lead apart from a group. Ongoing group life requires organizational structure of some form, common commitments that bind the group together, and with time, the formation of accepted practices and/or rituals. These are the points at which advocates of spirituality in leadership prefer to distinguish spirituality from religion, as religion is seen to be the organization in which spiritual traits become regularized and dogmatic, losing their authenticity in the process. Because leadership must operate in a group setting, it cannot avoid the same hardening tendencies within an

organization that happen to spirituality. The idea that spiritual leadership can completely transcend the hardening effects of time and tradition within an organizational setting is misguided. Those potentially negative effects can be mitigated if a dynamic quality of the spirituality practiced by individuals resists the calcification of organizational ritual and dogma.

Further progress in the discussion of the relationship between religiously rooted spirituality and leadership begs for a definition of *spirituality*. The term is variously interpreted with a wide range of meanings, so that writers can talk past each other while employing the same jargon. Definitions vary so significantly that a review of them is not possible here. For purposes of this discussion, the understanding of spirituality is drawn from the Quaker tradition of which I am a part. Quakerism embraces an understanding of spirituality that begins as a personal, interior phenomenon in which the Divine is experienced and known inwardly.⁴ A classic text by Thomas Kelly, *Testament of Devotion*, gives image to the idea when he describes an “inner sanctuary of the soul” that exists deep within all of humanity.⁵ Given larger connotations of the word *sanctuary* in religious contexts, this choice of image suggests that spirituality involves a sacred encounter within this inner process in which individuals commune with the Divine. This encounter gives rise to an inner dialogue between the self and the Divine that becomes a means of discerning truth and meaning. As such, it contributes to values held and practices embraced, becoming a trusted guide in decision making. In this manner, this understanding of spirituality becomes more than an interior, experiential phenomenon, also shaping life and practice. The connection between inner

⁴ It should be noted that Quakerism encompasses a significant range of understandings of the divine, from traditional Christian descriptions such as Father to abstract concepts such as Light.

⁵ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), 1.

experience and lived practice is anticipated in this understanding of spirituality.

With this personal orientation, spirituality is not wholly dependent upon institutional structures, decrees, or dogmas, yet it would be naïve to conclude that an individual is free from communal influence. Within Quaker spirituality, this immediate, individual experience occurs within the larger context of a faith community intent on listening together. The individual lives in connection to and tension with the community; consequently, a strong current of communal spirituality operates in authoritative, albeit often subtle ways that shape and transform the individual.

The effect of a larger organization or tradition is present in other ways, as well. The fact that one believes the possibility for such inner dialogue exists is likely the result of lessons learned from others. The decision to utilize the image of sanctuary to describe this experience draws upon the understandings of sanctuary as defined by others. Communal influences extend into actual practice, as well. For instance, in the Quaker tradition, periods of silence and waiting can be periods of listening for guidance or thoughtful, careful reflection; other cultures might view such silence as wasted time, or an indication that a leader is at a loss for words or incapable of making a decision.

Admittedly, this understanding of spirituality is highly experiential, leaving many specifics such as vocabulary, ritual, and disciplines undefined. For the purposes of this article, the intention is to situate the operational understanding of individual spirituality within larger religious tradition, thereby establishing the reciprocal influence of one upon the other. In this context, inner dialogue and communal standards contribute to theological reflection in which experience gives birth to standards and expectations that lead to belief and practice. This tradition is the foundational and formative core for the development of leadership as the leader determines how his or her spiritual experience affects or does not affect acts of leadership. A person's context and culture, religious and otherwise, will

always contribute to the ways such experience is known and interpreted.

The Impact of Spirituality on Leadership

I recently interviewed forty current Quaker leaders with the goal of understanding their assessment of how spirituality informed and affected their leadership.⁶ These individuals were identified by others as persons who exercise leadership. They work in a variety of professions, religious and secular. They each claim Quakerism as their faith tradition and believe that their attendant spirituality is rooted in their religious commitment and influences the quality and practice of their leadership.

Amidst the variety of personalities, expertise, and positions, certain features emerged as shared understandings of the relation of spirituality and leadership:

- the importance of a sense of calling;
- the effect of spiritual grounding on the character of leadership;
- the manner in which a leader engages the task.

⁶ The interviews were conversational in format and utilized the following questions:

1. Describe the work in which you were/are involved. How would you describe your particular leadership responsibilities?
2. How would you describe your spirituality, broadly speaking?
3. What are specific examples of how your spirituality influenced your attitude and action in this field?
4. How did/does being a Quaker affect the way in which you offer leadership? Think specifically about areas such as governance, vision, strategic planning, and personnel management.
5. Were there times when your spiritual convictions frustrated your efforts to lead well? Were these frustrations internally/personally motivated or externally/community rooted?
6. Can you share a story about a time when being a Quaker really mattered in the workplace (a story about a problem, a solution, a change of path, etc.)?

Calling

Interview participants frequently referred to a sense of calling to their work. In this context, “calling” functions as a summons, of sorts. This calling was their primary motivation for offering leadership to the group. In many cases, these leaders had not imagined undertaking this work until the call was noticed and acknowledged.

Multiple levels or types of calling are possible. In the broader discussion, a calling may start as simply a nomination of an individual for an open position, from which this single suggestion builds toward selection. It may come from the community or group that seeks to be led; in such instances, it is, in effect, an invitation. Many searches for new leadership begin with an ambitious position description that defines the qualities of leadership desired and the conditions under which leadership may be exercised. Whatever ambitions or aspirations applicants may have toward a vacant position, it takes a decision of the group entrusted with the responsibility of hiring to call or invite this person into leadership.

One frequently recurring theme in leadership literature that was absent in earlier generations is the role of the group in creating conditions in which one may lead, and even more, in assenting to be led. Although one may reasonably argue that this literature sometimes overstates the group’s role, moments like the so-called Arab Spring provide a reminder that there is substantial truth to that insight. Except where leadership is imposed on unwilling participants, a call or an invitation to lead is part of the equation for effective action.

Calling assumes a different dimension when spirituality enters the discussion. Connecting with the Quaker spirituality described above but certainly not unique to it, calling carries with it the sense that a leader is summoned or nudged by the Divine to undertake a certain action or to make a certain commitment. A call might take the form of an internal sense of rightness that continues to grow when one considers the possibility. It could be a nagging thought that doggedly preoccupies the mind until one consents to

give the matter some attention. This interiority might sound absolutely absurd to anyone whose worldview does not permit for spirituality as personal experience, but it is strongly held by many who rely upon and trust such experience.

In addition to this personal, individual perspective of calling, an organizational dimension exists, as well. Quaker spirituality views the voice(s) of the group as another vehicle through which one might recognize a calling. In reality, the organization's or group's perspective is the collection of multiple individual points of view, processed to the point of a corporate perspective or decision that is supported by the group. This process further embeds the influence of organizational spirituality in leadership recognition and development as it defines the type of leader desired and discerns when such a leader has been identified.

Taken together, calling ideally has a dual dimension. There is a personal dimension in which the leader's own spirituality senses that an opportunity beckons. This personal call coincides with and is confirmed by an organization or a group that recognizes a leader as one whom they wish to undertake a particular work.

In these interviews, leaders spoke of the centrality of being called to the work. Called leadership is a response to a higher power. The call, rather than other personal aspirations, is the reason for offering leadership. Although other options for exercising leadership might be available and even more attractive or rewarding, these individuals accepted the opportunity to lead in the particular settings to which they felt a sense of calling. These leaders continued to look within to the source of the calling for guidance and direction on how to exercise leadership once the group had also confirmed the calling.

One immediate change that calling introduces into the leadership equation is that of motivation for leading. In contrast to a model in which a charismatic or highly skilled person enters a setting with the goal of imposing his or her personal agenda on the organization's mission and purpose, calling frequently reframes a leader's primary motivation.

Leaders who are called often choose not to step into leadership roles with the intention of imposing their own vision or will on the group; they have come as an act of faithfulness. Indeed, some would say holy obedience is the primary motivation. For that reason, listening is an important aspect of leadership, attending to the voice of the group, as well as the Divine. Even in accepting the authority that accompanies the leadership role, the participants in the interviews seldom understood themselves to be lone actors or solely responsible for the vision or outcomes of the group.

If the idea of the Divine or a calling from the Divine does not fit well with one's worldview, I would argue that leaders who are prone to reflection and introspection can point to some internal knowing that contributes to their willingness to say "yes" to the opportunity to lead. Without call or invitation, whether born or made, leaders are like a horse with no race to run or a parade marshal without a single float, marching band, or even a clown to follow. Short of invading and coercing, they have no one to lead.

Spiritual Grounding

Spirituality frames leadership, grounding or rooting the practice of leading in the leader's most deeply held convictions. One classroom exercise that I use in a leadership formation course requires students to think about their preferred image(s) of the deity. From that identification, students are directed to reflect on themes such as power, authority, and communication, as well as actions that are associated with those images. For instance, the power and authority of a parental figure differ from that of a warrior figure or a sage. Styles of communication, not to mention the quality and quantity of information communicated, differ as well. From those first steps, students then compare those qualities that they associate with these preferred image(s) of the deity with their denomination's or tradition's understanding of those same concepts. Next, they consider their own preferred images and styles of leadership, as well as their own leadership

tendencies. The correlations that students draw between images of the Divine and preferences in leadership suggest that leadership preferences, tendencies, and disaffections are influenced by spiritual formation. Building upon the idea that spiritual leaders are called to their work, this observation suggests that these leaders transfer qualities they associate with the Divine to their own leadership styles, as well as identifying ways they conform or do not conform to the expectations of their tradition.

The usual leadership discussion about innate ability versus acquired skill sets overlooks the matter of how spiritual formation further frames leadership. Both ability and skill focus upon action and outcomes; however, action is preceded by decision making, and this is where spirituality especially influences leadership. Spirituality shapes a leader by virtue of the values and commitments it emphasizes. Issues of authority, power, transparency, group dynamics, relational standards, and ethics are addressed in narratives and codes that form and inform the spirituality of faith groups; each of these subjects comes to bear on leadership and organizational dynamics. As values rooted in spiritual traditions become part of the leader's value system, they shape and inform perspective, create categories of what is acceptable and unacceptable, and guide decision making. Their spiritual grounding as supported by that tradition legitimizes these values as proper guides and standards of evaluation. In the realm of leadership, these decisions serve as the manifestation of a leader's ability and capacity; they are the primary litmus test of a leader's competency.

For instance, the most basic distinction between a judgmental and a loving deity leads to an easy description of stern, rigid, and even angry character traits versus approachable and compassionate ones. As values portrayed and endorsed by the deity, they permeate individual and group spiritual formation, affecting organizational structure in the process. As character traits embraced by persons in power, these have an immediate impact on organizational ethos. For instance, groups whose creation is informed by a rigid, demanding deity should not be surprised if they create

hierarchical organizations with strict processes and embedded distance, and perhaps barriers, between persons in power and others. In such structures, authority tends to be associated with position rather than shared widely. In contrast, the Quaker tradition of which I am part gravitates toward approachable, compassionate understandings of the Divine. With that preference, the default expectation is flattened organizational structures where authority is distributed with egalitarian assumptions, even when those assumptions are not practical. Similarly, one can test assumptions regarding how an understanding of grace as a compassionate gift versus a begrudged, unmerited favor might temper the environment created within the organization. Or with regard to communication, how does information flow within the organization? A flatter organizational structure or a more positive, gracious environment may well tend to be more collaborative, sharing all but the most confidential of information; on the other hand, the more formal, authoritative structures may be prone to utilize secretive, need-to-know communication styles. A comparison of organizations easily demonstrates that there are multiple ways to structure the group's work and to support that structure with compelling narratives that legitimize the decision making. Groups might not pause to consider the theological connections of decisions about organization or leadership, but the influence is noticeable.

As I was about to graduate from seminary, a classmate asked if thought I had really learned anything during my three years there. The insinuation was that she thought she was leaving pretty much the same as she had arrived. My answer was, "Absolutely, yes!" The learning was not so much in a tidy toolbox of skills and answers to fix every situation, but in worldview, self-understanding, and how I processed information and made decisions. Similarly, an Earlham School of Religion alumna who holds several degrees including one in the field of law has shared more than once that the impact of a theological education for her was that it provided an ethical grounding and spiritual framework from which to make decisions, and that this

framework was lacking in her study of law. She laments the fact that such an important educational and formational component is lacking in a field so dependent upon ethical judgment.⁷ My experience, and conversations like that one, persuade me that models for teaching about spirituality and leadership begin with attention to formation and values, not character traits, skill sets, or flow charts.

Manner of Engagement

Leaders' impact upon organizational environments has been described by Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, who noted that leaders affect the quality of organizational ethos. When leaders succeed in creating a more positive environment, they in turn improve the efficiency of the organization and the satisfaction of its members. In particular, the authors name an environment of grace, where grace is understood as "unmerited favor or concern" as one in which leaders will cultivate an improved organizational ethos.⁸ Servant leadership research claims that organizations committed to servant leadership philosophies demonstrate improved performance.⁹ The underlying assumption is that servant leaders operate with the well-being of the group in mind, which motivates group members to operate at a higher capacity.

Accepting the claim that a leader's manner of engagement affects the group either positively or negatively, a logical question is whether or not spirituality affects a leader's manner of engagement, and if so, how? When Quaker leaders described their manner of engagement growing from a spiritual foundation, "presence" was named frequently. In this context, presence is a quality of being and a practice. As a quality of being, it is an extension of a key

⁷ Anita Morse, personal communication to author, December 8, 2005.

⁸ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 29.

⁹ Jeremy Meuser, "What the Research Says About Servant Leadership: *Unde venisti et quo vadis?*" (presentation at the International Servant Leadership Conference, Indianapolis, April 12–14, 2013).

theme in Quaker understandings of the Divine, where abiding presence is a central component of the internal religious experience referenced earlier in this article. From this perspective, when one is present as a leader, one is attuned to the interior dialogue described above, resulting in a nonanxious manner of being that Quakers sometimes refer to as “centered” or “grounded.” From that centered or grounded place of leadership, a leader can hear, process, and thoughtfully respond to the various requests for input or decisions without overreaction or dismissive tendencies. In that state, the fullness of the leader’s spiritual capacity informs the decision. For Quaker leaders, as the Divine is present within an individual in an accompanying sense, so also Quaker leadership emphasizes a leader’s way of being present with those who are led. As an outward practice, being present has to do with leaders’ focus and attentiveness to the people and issues involved with and affected by the acts of leadership. The leader is fully engaged with the person and issue present at that moment. It bears some similarity to the Buddhist concept of mindfulness that now appears in some leadership models.¹⁰ However, in this case, the motivation is not about reducing stress or improving outcomes, but rather it is about assisting and supporting those being led.

In the interviews with Quaker leaders, this manner of engagement was further defined by integrity. Indeed, if one key value is put forth as fundamental for leadership formed by Quaker spirituality, it is that of integrity. For these leaders, integrity involves at least two dimensions. The first is integrity of commitment to the place of Divine in their lives. This emphasis is characterized by attentiveness to that inner dialogue, living and acting in congruence with its guidance. The second dimension is integrity in dealing with others. This focus translates into practices such as honesty and trustworthiness that will affect the sphere of public

¹⁰ Maria Gonzalez, *Mindful Leadership: The 9 Ways to Self-Awareness, Transforming Yourself, and Inspiring Others* (Mississauga, Ontario: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 2012), 13.

leadership, as is evident in this query contained in a book of discipline titled *Quaker Faith and Practice*:

Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations? Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility? Taking oaths implies a double standard of truth; in choosing to affirm instead, be aware of the claim to integrity that you are making.¹¹

The sentiments of this query were echoed in the interviews of Quaker leaders. Integrity was identified as a spiritual value that was formative and transformative for those leaders who had reflected upon the influence of spirituality on leadership practices. Integrity defined their intentions, governed their responses, and generated a trustworthiness that elevated groups' commitment to their leadership.

A leader's exercise of authority and decision making are additional areas where Quaker spirituality influences the leader's manner of engagement. Quaker theological convictions maintain that all human beings have inherent worth and equality before God. This belief, in turn, creates a disposition toward respectful dialogue, communal seeking, and collaborative styles of leadership. This value insists that any person might have an insight into truth that others might not have yet grasped. As a consequence, the merit of collaboration is something greater than building group identity, improving morale, or encouraging collective brainstorming. Quaker spirituality contends that truth is best discerned communally, and that any participant may pose the insight that leads to the eventual solution. Although collaboration is not limited to Quaker leadership styles, in this context the motive for it is rooted in theological convictions and resulting values. This tendency toward collaboration does not eliminate the option of leaders making decisions with little or no group input, but it does

¹¹ The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 4th ed. (London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 2008), 1.02.37.

encourage leaders to ask which decisions are better made with a wider circle of participation.

The Integration of Spirituality, Values, and Leadership

All people hold sets of values, but of course the same values are not necessarily held by all people. These values come from multiple sources, with many of them acquired before an individual realizes that he or she is being shaped and formed, and certainly before beginning to think deliberately about leadership. Whatever the origin of values, those that a leader embraces will affect the leader's perceptions of situations and the interpretation of those perceptions, as well as limitations or blind spots that a leader might fail to observe. Values define what one considers to be an ethical or an unethical response, and values influence the prioritization of decisions toward acceptable outcomes. For example, one may hypothesize how society would be different if the values of sharing or equality had been given a higher priority than accumulation of resources. From questions of world hunger to the specifics of corporate scandal, one can imagine that a value shift would alter decisions, which would result in different outcomes.

Values, including spiritually motivated ones, can embed themselves in an individual's manner and method, and continue to operate unexamined. However, spiritual practices, especially when they are utilized over time (hence, religiously), can encourage introspection and examination, which provide the opportunity to identify the values and motives that underlie one's actions. This, in turn, can prompt internal queries: What is the origin of this value, and why is it embraced by its proponent? What does it promote or serve? What does it protect? How does it harm or discriminate? How does it correlate with what one believes about the Divine? Does it align with one's intended purposes? As an example, consider any number of groups whose history includes discrimination or marginalization from membership in an array of organizations. From churches to country clubs to executive penthouses, we can recall historical examples and struggles that denied certain

groups entry, power, and privilege based on race, gender, regionalism, and/or sexual orientation. Values that contributed to the creation and perpetuation of these exclusions often included appeals to spiritual and religious principles. Often in retrospect, other less-flattering motivations like fear or the preservation of power are discovered to be the more significant motivations for exclusion, or further, the one whose values exclude others realizes an inherent contradiction with other equally or more important values.

Once identified, values may be affirmed and continued; or, if it is revealed that these values support practices and prejudices that are now deemed undesirable, old allegiances can be dropped in favor of new commitments. Particularly if spirituality calls one to be transformed toward a model of religious virtue, or simply to be one's best self (with *best* defined by the tradition), the possibility for change and improvement is expected. At the very least, the alignment of personal commitments with spiritual values is a reasonable expectation for those who seek the integration of spirituality with the whole of life.

Once a leader has the opportunity to lead, she or he has some degree of power and authority with which to do good or to do other than good. Of course, that which is considered "good" or "not good" is itself largely determined by the set of values one holds. A pivotal moment for leadership occurs prior to the decision or act of leadership itself. In those moments when a leader analyzes data, contemplates circumstances, and intuits potential outcomes, multiple options for action are available. Each of those options represents the manifestation of particular values and commitments, some of which are tolerable but others which are not. For instance, what are the possible different outcomes if those in leadership with the power to decide a company's product line are driven solely by economic rather than ethical or humanitarian concerns? Profit is certainly not a bad motivation for a business, as a business cannot survive

without it, but should it be the only motive? Can successful businesses be ethical as well?¹² Decisions are seldom simple, but they are always manifestations of the values that have been adopted and internalized by the decision makers.

Values then, are the means by which spirituality bridges the span between belief and action, or faith and practice. If a leader's decisions are driven by the values the leader holds as applied to the issues and circumstances faced, then the quality and content of leadership depend as much if not more on the values the leader embraces than on the characteristics the leader possesses or the skills the leader acquires; indeed, the former can be considered the seedbed for the latter. Traits and skills operate upon a foundation crafted by the accumulated or adopted values of those who lead.

Conclusion

Those same students referenced at the outset of this article voiced a suspicion of “religious leadership” in which the influence of spirituality appeared limited to religious vocabulary or the use of biblical texts to support decisions that might otherwise seem suspect. Underlying that concern was the discontinuity between their understanding of authentic spirituality, the stated purposes of certain groups, and the observed behavior of those in positions of leadership. They desired an integration of faith and work, resulting in a substantive impact on the practice of leadership.

In accepting the position that the idea of religion as devotion or hardened commitment is not limited to faith traditions, the case can be made that various allegiances can reframe, realign, or even misguide organizations and leadership. One can then, perhaps, resist the demonization of religion as a corruption of some romantic notion of spirituality. In fact, what might appear as religion gone astray

¹² For an interesting discussion on faith, values, and business, including whether or not an ethical capitalism is possible, see Mike King and Sir Adrian Cadbury, *Quakernomics: An Ethical Capitalism* (London: Anthem Press, 2014).

may simply be a difference in underlying value systems. The more important point is that this change of perspective permits spirituality to be reconnected with deep religious traditions and the wisdom of communal practice rather than reduced to the least common denominator of largely humanistic categories.

In making a case to maintain the connection between religion and spirituality, this article intends to open a conversation about how spirituality unsevered from religion meaningfully influences leadership. It seeks to avoid the divisiveness of dogmatic statements in favor of focusing upon where spiritual experience most deeply affects a leader's formation; thus, *values* promoted or reinforced by spirituality are formative to the process of leadership. They contribute substantially to the foundation from which leaders make decisions and influence many key levels of the leader's engagement with the group.

Ultimately, this approach to spirituality and leadership permits an integration of faith, values, and practice that is frequently absent from discussions on the topic. The move from dogma and doctrine to values offers a valuable bridge between corporate spirituality and individual experience. Whatever position a faith tradition has proclaimed, it is ultimately up to the leader to embrace that value in her or his personal practice (or work to reform it). Perhaps the greatest gift in this transition is the gift of reflection, which encourages the examination of roots, motivations, and consequences. A high priority for a leader, particularly those who desire the integration of matters of the spirit and leadership, is the alignment between spiritual convictions or truths and the practice of leadership. Clarity around the identification of those values that are important and their influence on the act of leadership helps maintain continuity between religious elements and leadership output. This connection was evident in the interviews with Quaker leaders, where reflective leaders could easily describe how spirituality is not limited only to traditional religious settings. Integration of faith and values enables the transportation

director or the CEO as well as the pastor to identify where and how spirituality undergirds the practice of leadership.

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