

A METASYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN PSYCHOTHERAPY IN DEFINING LEADERSHIP AND ITS CRITERIA

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is a description of the concept of leadership as a key component in the Christian church community, as well as the criteria of a healthy leadership style not only in its internal framework, but in the overall social context. This paper is a qualitative-descriptive study with research on leadership, styles and personality of the leader according to Christian theology, and applying a metasystemic perspective within wider domains of society. We define criteria for healthy leadership in correlation with social deviations of the same, observed and described in the framework of Christian psychotherapy and application of the Transactional Analytical methodology in the analysis of the focused phenomena. Leadership in the Christian Church has an antinomian character and a pastoral dimension. The personality of the church leader is formed according to the criteria of the degrees of spiritual development. The presented model of church leadership with qualities of antinomy has its applicability in the social system of secular leadership, where the function of leadership paradoxically merges into a duty of service against its deviant social phenomena of identification (nation, party, state).*

Keywords: *leadership, antinomy, Pastoral dimension, Christian Psychotherapy, Transactional Analysis.*

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Introduction

Contemporary man is facing a series of challenges, both personal and complex social: turbulent lifestyle, climate change, poverty, deepening inequalities and intensifying conflicts, and the world is far from a safe place to live. We are witnessing a global crisis in all of its forms: moral, political, economic, and military.

Aiming at global prosperity of mankind The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity (UN, 2015).

Unfortunately, such desirable degree of functioning, by achieving an overall advancement of mankind seem to be very highly set goals.

While the existential problems remain unresolved it seems that for the greater portion of people it is a luxury to expect a higher material advancement, or promotion and prevention of mental health, or a continuous psychological development and growth or a more sublime spiritual evolution.

When speaking of the expected prosperity of mankind, and of man not merely as a biological or social entity, we bear in mind not only his basic existence but also the realization of all his powers and potentials, above all his freedom and autonomy. Otto Rank claimed that people are basically theological, not biological: "It seems to be difficult for the individuals to realize that there exist a division between one's spiritual and purely human needs, and that the satisfaction of each has to be found in different spheres (Rank, 1985).

From the viewpoint of humanistic personality theories the above refers to the continuous personal psychological growth and development, with the achievement of psycho-social maturity. The autonomy of being is set as a central pillar of such development. According to the Transactional analyst Eric Berne "The attainment of autonomy is manifested by the release of recovery of three capacities: awareness, spontaneity and intimacy" (Berne, 1964, pp. 158-161).

Besides the psychological development man strives for spiritual development as the highest stage of integrity and wholeness. Abraham Maslow defines it as "self-actualization with peak experiences", and explains it as "the attempt to explain wholeness and integration point to the longing to become whole in spite of fragmentation." Such spiritual entity is often in literature described as "true self" or "inner core", the inner core is at the centre of a person's being (James, 1981, p. 7).

The abovementioned qualities of a healthy and complete psycho-social and spiritual development are advisable to be implemented within the personalities of leaders, while followers would strive for integral prosperity, but unfortunately and contrary to reality man faces global catastrophes and crises.

1. Crisis, Global Policy and Leadership

Generally speaking, the word crisis (Greek κρίση) means a turning point, a judgment or condemnation, or the approaching of a key moment. In more concrete terms and according to the ecclesiastical teaching it means – the judgment of God.

Crisis is a great challenge for man and it is of great importance how man faces it. People, when faced with a crisis, either fight it in order to overcome it in a functional way through coping strategies and new forms of adaptation or use some of the models of escapism, that is primitive defense mechanisms (negation, projection, rationalization, regression) thus manifesting psychopathological states.

From the viewpoint of Christian theology and psychotherapy, an in accordance with the Holy Scriptures we see crises (personal, regional and global) as a consequence of the struggle to satisfy

the untransformed human passions: for governing and manly glory – vainglory, for money and possession – avarice, and for carnal pleasure – self-indulgence. (See James 4, 1-6).

Worldly leaders as creators of global politics, to whom leading positions are assigned and who have taken responsibility to correctly manage the situations in the world, are directly held accountable for the world crisis. No less accountable are the societies themselves and the individuals that choose those leaders and are led by them.

In such circumstances more than ever before there is a need of strengthening the capacities of a healthy leadership and of implementing a holistic approach.

The main subject of this paper is how much the two-thousand-year-old experience of the Church (successful or not) may help the world in crisis, particularly in the area of leadership, or what might contemporary leaders learn from the spirituality of the Church – in case they are acquainted with it. Let us first introduce ourselves to the essence of the Church leadership..

2. Church Leadership

2.1. Basic Criteria in the Church Leadership

Within the Christian Church and community there is a unique and eternal rule when it comes to the principles of spiritual guidance. Namely, it arises from the holy Tradition of the ascetic-hesychastic spiritual life and feat in the Orthodox Church and it does not depend solely on the holiness of priesthood.

Instead, God through His only begotten Son, the Godman Christ, in the Church, provided us the strength and left us and equipped us with eternal criteria according to which we can lead ourselves.

Among these basic criteria is the obedience to a spiritual father at the beginning of the Orthodox spiritual life until receiving the gift of the mind and heart prayer. "The mystery of obedience is one of the foremost realities on the way to salvation!" (Sophrony, 1999:65–66). It also means that our feat to enter into union and personal communion with God is personal and independent of any person except ourselves.

2.2. Formal and Essential Dimension

The position of leadership in the Church arises, externally, from the hierarchical position, that is, from the authority of the high priesthood, and internally – which is an even more important condition, from the spiritual maturity and readiness of the holder of the priestly rank.

According to the Church teaching, there are three stages of spiritual development: purification of the heart from the passions, illumination of the mind, and deification of the person. The highest stage is the stage of deification. The stages of spiritual development are most easily determined by the quality of personal prayer: he who has only oral or mental prayer is at the stage of purification, he who has ascetic mind and heart prayer is at the stage of illumination, and he who has incessant or grace-filled mind and heart prayer is at the stage of Deification. (Ilievski, 2015a, p. 167)

There are also three priestly levels or ranks: the deacon's, the priest's and the bishop's. Among them the highest is the bishop's rank or level. According to the holy Tradition of the Church, a certain priestly rank corresponds to each of the stages of spiritual development: at the stage of purification it is the deacon's rank, at the stage of illumination it is the priest's rank, while at the stage of deification it is bishop's rank.

Also in the writings "On the Church Hierarchy" by Dionysius the Areopagite are described three stages that are associated with the three levels of priesthood: "Bishops fully possess the power of

illumination... Their task is not only to illumine but also to perfect. Priests are illumined and able to illumine, while deacons purify and know how to reason.”

It would be correct and ideal if every holder of any of the priestly ranks would have an inner spiritual covering for them, that is, if his priestly rank would correspond to the appropriate stage of spiritual development. This is how things are set up theoretically.

But, in practice, in the life of the Church, it is very rare for the holder of a certain priestly rank to have an inner spiritual covering for the rank he represents. The higher one goes to the higher priestly ranks in the Church, the greater the deviation from the ideal.

The bishop, by his position and function, is the supreme leader in the Church. However, due to a deviation from the above-mentioned rule and the Patristic Tradition, that is, due to the lack of inner spiritual covering among the bearers of this high priestly rank, there is a crisis in the effective institutional leadership in the Church today.

Therefore, despite the theologically and canonically firmly established position of the bishop in the Church, one cannot yet speak of his essential leadership. When we speak of the position of the bishop in the Church, we most often mean formal leadership. One is the authority of a leader-bishop that arises only from the significance of the institution he represents, and another is the authority of a leader-bishop that arises from the inner spiritual covering of his rank by which he represents the institution.

A true leader is the one who attracts us and whom we want to follow, not the one we have to follow. Thus, we can conclude that attaining the highest position in the Church does not in itself ensure the authority of leadership, nor does the absence of a formal priestly rank and position of authority in the Church in itself imply the impossibility of leadership with authority. On the contrary, in the history of the Church, when they did not coincide, charismatic leadership always had greater authority than institutional leadership.

The inner priesthood is the one which has the power to attract and which remains eternal. From it arises the charismatic leadership as opposed to the institutional one, which has a formal significance and the charismatic leader “is essentially a ‘charismatic’ and prophetic figure, accredited for his task by the direct action of the Holy Spirit. He is ordained, not by the hand of man, but by the hand of God. He is an expression of the Church as “event” or “happening”, rather than of the Church as institution. (Ware, 2000).

2.3. Antinomy Leadership and the Pastoral Relationship

Leadership in the Church is for the glory of God, not for your own glory and interest; you lead not by having others serve you, but by you serving others, by means of your example. (Ilievski, 2015). This is a basic definition of the antinomy character of the essence of true leadership as a Christian ideal. This also expresses its paradoxical nature of governing through serving.

The pastoral dimension implies the cultivation of a relationship of giving and self-giving.

The pastoral relationship allows us to transmit Divine values to the world, and above all His grace, while the identification is the reverse process – the values of this fallen world are incorporated into our religions.

The true leader - pastor, above all, has an inner covering that corresponds to his external formal rank. He is a person with integrity and autonomy, because people with a developed capacity for autonomy are integrated, aware, spontaneous, and intimate to a high degree. Their experience of their “selves” (body, me, I, and I-Am) in here and now is expanded greatly, perhaps far beyond the reaches of most people. (Mellor, 2008, p. 16).

In order for Christians to have a pastoral approach to social phenomena, they have to be at the stage of illumination of the mind with the gift of the mind-and-heart prayer, or to be at least strug-

gling to purify their heart from the passions through obedience, preferably to a true spiritual father (Ilievski, 2021, see Table 1.).

2.4. Identification with Social Phenomena – Fragmentation instead of Wholeness

Contrary to the striving towards the realization of the Christian ideal of love and communion, within the Christian community as a system, three failures of the whole are manifested. This happens because the evil uses Christians' personal inner split, their incompleteness and spiritual illness, that is, the split between the primary function of their non-illuminated mind and its secondary function—the overfed intellect (Ilievski & Ilievska, 2019).

Through this inner split of the mind, the evil manages to present a single part of the whole to seem as the whole itself, while overlooking the whole. Naturally, this overlooking is in accordance with their passions (Ilievski, 2021, p. 63).

1. The first failure is the identification with the state, when Christians for the first time take up arms to defend the Christian state from idolaters; until then there is no historical evidence that Christians defended themselves or their families with weapons, let alone anything else.

2. The second failure is the identification with the nation, when Christians of the same faith, but of different nationalities, begin to fight and kill each other. It was then that the Church reacted for the first time and condemned ethnophyletism as a heresy. As a matter of fact, the Church in its holy canons has never approved the killing of another person, so that even the participation in defensive wars was punished by prohibiting communion.

3. The third failure is the identification with the political party, when people of the same nation and of the same state show intolerance to the level of open aggression to others just because they belong to different political parties.

The essence of these three types of identification is the self-love, the individual disbelief, and basing one's individual security on the human schemes of organization of this world. Christians should cultivate a pastoral attitude toward these social phenomena, not a relationship of identification.

All of this is due to the person's remaining unhealed, which is the core of the deep internal individual division, that is the inconsistency between the primary function of our mind – the relationship with God and the secondary function of our mind – the relationship towards people and this world in general (Ilievski, 2014), in a word: the lack of inner spiritual covering for the formal positions.

3. Current Trends in the Society and Social Systems

A particular challenge for us is to apply the concepts of Christian psychotherapy and Transactional Analysis as a modern psychological school in defining and analyzing the social systems, and specifically the organization and leadership within them. In doing so, we emphasize the following conclusions:

- Primarily, as we emphasized above, not only among Christian believers, but in general in the arrangement of the social systems today, contrary to the principle of togetherness, the principle of fragmentation and identification with the social forms of state, nation and political party prevails, as opposed to the authentic capacity for “self-actualization with peak experiences,” the attempt to explain wholeness and integration point to the longing to become whole in spite of fragmentation (Maslow, 1965).
- This is very evident in this world of antagonism organized in the range of extremes, from highly technological and technocratic to the level of social inequality and unrest, there is

a displacement of the boundaries of individuals, groups and systems and “globalisation of problems” (van Poelje 1995).

- Some authors hold the view that the autocracy is the dominant form of government today, and that the number of autocracies is rising (Tullock, 1987).

3.1. *Psychological Games of Power and the Drama Triangle*

In the current constellation of interpersonal relations in most systems, an uneven distribution and abuse of power is manifested with various combinations of fixed roles taken by the participants and the dynamics between them.

Eric Berne, the famous Transactional Analyst, based on his long-term work in observing human behaviour and analysing communication patterns, came to the discovery and definition of dysfunctional forms of interpersonal communication and behaviour, which he defined as psychological power games. (Berne, 1964)

These are patterns of interaction that occur unconsciously between people and whose goal is to control the situation. In them, the method of communication is through an organized series of hidden transactions that occur on two levels: social and psychological, and result in a dramatic outcome when the two levels finally overlap.

In the analysis and simple definition of psychological power games, the concept of Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968) is used with three defined dramatic roles: persecutor, saviour and victim. Namely, the psychological power games are a form of manipulation, in which there is an abuse of power by the party that is in a superior position (the dramatic role of the Persecutor) and this party is in an attempt to control its external environment and the people in it in such a way that it keeps them in a devalued position by subjugating and placing them in the victim position.

In such a case, the centre of power, which creates the matrix of behaviours and places the psychological power game with the aim of achieving expected outcomes, at the same time and in the same circumstances, can position itself in the role of saviour towards another participant, who is favoured.

Such dynamics of relations at one point escalate to dramatic outcomes, with the results always being negative, from more subtle psychological ones to serious consequences and damages.

3.2. *Secular leadership*

In terms of the comparative analysis between church and secular leadership, what is true for the personal quality of church leaders is no less true for the personal quality of secular leaders. So, according to church teaching, secular leadership originates from church leadership. Throughout history, church leaders have blessed and crowned secular leaders so that they can take over the burden of secular leadership from them.

From this realization has come a call for more holistic leadership that integrates the four fundamental arenas that define the essence of human existence—the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings), and spirit (Moxley, 2000).

A person's spirit is the vital principle or animating force traditionally believed to be the intangible, life affirming force in self and all human beings (Anderson, 2000).

The most illustrative example of failure and wrong leadership (secular or church) is presented in the parable from the Gospel according to Matthew 21, 33 - 41. The vinedressers, i.e. the leaders, cultivate the vineyard, i.e. the civil society or the faithful people entrusted to them, in such a way that they can satisfy their passions: vainglory, avarice and pleasure-indulgence - without objection. In order to achieve their goals, they agreed to kill the Son of the Lord of the vineyard. It is a very much

recognizable model of governing this world, starting from education, through media maintenance, and up to covert economic and open military control.

Polarization and overzealous fundamentalist, whether derived from movements that are religious, social, or political, right or left, radical or reactionary, psychoanalytic or humanistic, Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, have gripped us with a particular intensity. Perhaps it is not yet time for alarm, but surely we must learn to recognize leaders with autocratic tendencies before they attain power, before it is too late. (Jacobs, 1987, p. 2)

We do not claim absolute correctness of our views, nor do we want to impose them without questioning them. Consider this presentation as a contribution, from a spiritual perspective, to the comparative and holistic approach towards the mystery of man who is also a leader.

4. Spiritual Leadership

In addition to the parallels drawn between leadership in the church community and secular leadership, we believe that the useful components of Christian leadership would be good to implement in the broader social system, in terms of enriching the value system of leaders and applying the principles of serving and of unifying individuals in community and unity.

This not only enriches leadership with a new quality of spirituality, but it also differentiates the phenomenon of spiritual leadership as an original entity.

Contemporary authors already define spiritual leadership: "spiritual leadership as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership (Fry, 2003).

Some are even already exploring the phenomenon of spiritual leadership as a new paradigm in relation to other types of leadership – transformational leadership from different systemic perspectives (Crossman, 2010).

5. Discussion

The Church needs pastors-leaders who will renew spiritual life and will strengthen the faith; who will actualize the holy Tradition in practice by their personal example; who will care for the unity and supremacy of honor among the Churches; who will preserve the dignity (ecclesial fullness) of the local episcopal Church, as well as the pastoral authority and credibility of the Local Church. In a word, holy men are needed. The emergence of such bishop-leaders will certainly enrich the communication and dialogue of the Church with other Christian Churches, as well as with the monotheistic religious communities, in order to establish as much as possible God's message of peace, tolerance and coexistence among people, in a world that is constantly suffering from various crises and conflicts.

6. Conclusion

The leader-follower relationship is not a once-for-all established and unchangeable, idolatrous relationship, it is a relationship that should raise new leaders. Its goal is eschatological, the Kingdom of God. Every other true leadership, even the secular one, should arise and be based on this, that is, on the leadership of Christ.

Leadership in the Church has two dimensions. Personal, which arises from the church leader himself in the sense of his powerful testimony of Christ in power, and a conciliar, that is a church dimension that depends on the believers and their commitment.

Spiritual components and values should be implemented in all types of leadership by increasing the capacities of serving, giving, and realizing missionary and charitable activities.

The true leader, either ecclesiastical or secular, should be a conductor of God's grace in the world, an axis of unifying and of spreading peace in the world.

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