2011 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
ON MORAL LEADERSHIP:
The Classic Virtues in Organizational Leadership

The Gap between Secular and Sacred Understanding of Temperance in Leadership

Jacqueline A. Faulhaber
Johnson University
University of South Dakota
Black Hills State University
Mid-America Christian University

This paper discusses temperance within a worldview framework of four different eras in history: 1) Classical Antiquity, with particular attention to Plato and Aristotle; 2) the Middle Ages, with attention to Saint Thomas Aquinas; 3) the Modern Era that encouraged humanistic views influencing republican ideas for public leadership well into the current day; and, 4), the First-Century Christian worldview. Analysis of these eras reveals not only that the true character and form of temperance is found in the Triune God. It also reveals that an unchangeable understanding of temperance may be understood in the Imago Dei of God rather than the changing characterization defined by man. God’s grace further supplies the cause of temperance, and it is the Holy Spirit that that sustains the temperate Christian leader. It is by God’s grace and His sustenance that the Christian leader is temperate. It would be this character trait by which the public Christian leader can inspire others, to include its citizens, to solve its greatest societal problems.

No doubt that a culture of excess exists. From excessive personal and government spending to excessive use of alcohol and food, and abuse of all forms of drugs, it is certain that society at the collective and individual level lacks the virtue of temperance. Also known in the contemporary language as self-control, moderation, or restraint, there appears to be an inability to curb these appetites. Baumeister (as cited by Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 506) notes that central in nearly all personal and social problems that plague citizens in the modern and developed world (e.g. drug addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, personal debt, gambling, smoking, crime, violence, anger, hostility, etc.) is the failure to self-regulate or self-control one’s behavior. These excesses and abuses have and will continue to impact the common good and cost of services in public places, organizations, communities. Further compounding these problems that rely on revenues are an increased deficits and reliance on government. The increased taxes needed to pay for costs associated with a lack of personal and governmental self-control prevents economies to flourish. Recessional durations thus increase, and a general
decreased practice of individual prudence, wisdom, and responsibility manifests itself. As a moral imperative, public leaders ought to concern their selves with the role of temperance in their discourses and discussions on policy formulation to address these public problems. With this role and these current societal problems, authentic transformational leadership might very well add value to leading society in the changes necessary to deal with these issues. And because of the nature of authentic transformational leadership as an influence process, one that includes idealized influence as Bass and Steidlmeier (1998) assert, public leaders need to take care that their own character exemplifies temperance that inspires others to emulate or follow suit. Kanungo quoting House (1995), Kanungo (1992), and Kanungo & Mendonca (1996), assert further that in order to have transformational influence on employees, executives must practice virtues such as prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance and demonstrate personal integrity (1998, p. 71). Cox (2000) in his studies further found that self-controlled leaders when rated by their subordinates also were trustworthy, more consistent than other leaders, and fairer (as cited by Peterson et al., 2004, p. 507).

Yet, rarely does anyone today hear of the political clarion call for temperance. They rarely model temperance and communicate to citizens what it means to be temperate or self-controlled against vices that have gripped America, such as debt that have gripped America and Europe over the past couple of years. Yet, for a republic such as the American republican form of government that relies on self-governance, virtue is required. Instead, headlines, particularly in America note the growing protest movement against everyone else (government, Wall Street, the wealthy) rather than drawing attention to their own involvement and lack of self-control in the demise of their own finances. This climate of blame is contrary to the call a Christian has to restrain his or herself against fleshly desires (Galatians 5:13), in particular those noted in Galatians 5:19-21, having received liberty in Christ that frees from the bondage of sin (Galatians 5:1). Instead the Christian is to be content with what he or she has (1 Timothy 6:8, Hebrews 13:5, Philippians 4:11). And, all more important the Christian leader has the capacity for self-control through the work of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:23). It is the struggle with the flesh that tempts one to entertain these excesses of pleasure. It appears societally that the flesh has won over the Spirit. Many small victories transpired over all of human history, but over the past two centuries it is these small victories against the Spirit, through the use of philosophy, that societal norms and values have changed to a degree nearly unmatched in history. One contributor to this issue is the worldview and philosophy of Humanism that has churned, nurtured, and cultivated a different description of temperance than that affirmed in the Bible. More research, however, is needed on this universally valued virtue (Wells, 1998). As Wilson asserts, self-control becomes problematic “when one is faced with a choice between an immediate pleasure and a more distant one that is of greater value” (as cited in Wells, 1998, p. 155). The inability of a person to delay gratification or abstain from pleasures that do not lead a person toward God might just well be one of the most difficult virtues to develop. Why? The source of this virtue is disregarded by culture.

Society as a whole has disregarded the Biblical notion, foundation, and importance of the Triune God in developing the virtue of temperance. It has placed a mask of many layers over temperance’s face, deceiving the human mind, spirit, and soul of its true face. This paper will remove these layers slowly in an effort to pinpoint where its strength lies, as well where deception lies. Removing each layer masking a Judean-Christian worldview, and allowing the latter’s worldview shine in the reality of what it truly exhibits is the goal of this paper. It is hoped that it will better reveal the Imago Dei, the image of God that is manifested perfectly in God’s Son, Jesus, and has been given to God’s own children through the Holy Spirit. This paper will
further discuss temperance within a worldview framework within different eras of history, of which according to Nash a framework reflects the perspectives on issues in life that are most important (1992, p. 16) to a person, culture, or society. The four worldview eras reviewed in this paper include: 1) Classical Antiquity, particularly Plato and Aristotle’s view on temperance; 2) Middle Ages, particularly Saint Thomas Aquinas’ view; 3) Modern Era (Age of Enlightenment) encouraging humanistic views influencing republican ideals for public leadership well into the current day; and last but not least, but most important 4), the First Century Judean-Christian view. Each of these worldviews carries with it differing notions of the nature of man, thus promoting different perspectives on leadership. These worldviews with differing views of human nature are an important force behind leadership visions, decisions, and behaviors. For this paper, primary focus of these impacts is discussed within the sphere of public leadership. It is further important to note that each age contributed, extended, or revisited those views advanced in classical antiquity, and in some cases advanced understanding of temperance and in some cases misconstruing temperance.

**Classical Antiquity Perspective**

**Virtue and Temperance According to Plato**

Temperance (self-control, moderation) is one of the four cardinal virtues first categorized by Plato in *The Republic*. For Plato, temperance could not be explained outside of the virtue of justice within the soul individually that mirrored the collective character. According to Plato, the excellence of the state depended upon justice, in Greek the word *dikaisyne* (staying to one’s function or role in life and not interfering with others who have a different function), which further depended upon virtues of courage, wisdom, and temperance (“Plato’s Ethics”, 1994). His thoughts of how a society ought to function was in reaction to the increasing degenerating conditions in Athens, exemplifying political selfishness among the Greek world that caused excessive individualism resulting from the Sophist teaching of self-satisfaction (Bhandari, n.d.). Temperance, it might be suggested, plays a role in Plato’s view of justice in that it helps a person “set aside the irrational desire to taste every pleasure and to get a selfish satisfaction out of every object” when they set their focus on justice in carrying out their “single function for the general benefit” (Bhandari).

He further theorized that virtue (in general terms) was an excellence of the soul, which represented the divisions of the state (“Plato’s Ethics”, 1994), but again, is understood within the context of justice, of the harmonious relation of the functions in the state. According to Bhandari (n.d.), Plato describes justice using an analogy between the human organism and the social organism. The soul would be defined by three elements: 1) the human organism element of “reason” represents the social organism element of philosopher-king, ruling “on behalf of the entire soul with wisdom and forethought”, thus prudence (Kreeft, 1992, p. 59); 2) the human organism element of “spirit” subordinating itself to the rule of reason representing social organism element of the “auxiliaries”, the warriors and defenders of the country who exhibit courage “tempered by understanding” (Ebenstein, W., & Ebenstein, A., 1991, p. 22), thus fortitude (Kreeft, 1992, p. 59; and 3) in the human organism element of “appetite” (“or the desire to satisfy material wants” [Ebenstein et al., 1991, p. 22]) controlled by reason and spirit that controls the appetites “likely to grow on bodily pleasures” that represent the social organism element of the working class of artisans, farmers, etc. (Bhandari, n.d.). Plato thus asserts that individually justice would be a human virtue that makes a person consistent and good, and
socially it would entail a social consciousness that would make a “society internally harmonious and good” (Bhandari). Plato’s theory then integrated together individual and societal virtue, and specifically temperance would mean courage that was tempered by understanding. Plato’s Charmides would describe temperance (or the Greek word *sophrosyne*), as best as possible, as a strong definition was not established at this time in Greek philosophy, as the practice or science of self-knowledge...knowledge of what we know and do not know (of which is not resolved in Charmides), the study of good and evil (Jowett, 1891). Within the dialogue in Charmides, the conclusion results in aporia, an impasse of a definitive definition of self-knowledge (Woodruff, 2010). What becomes beneficial as a result of the dialogue and inquiry in Charmides is the ethical importance of investigating into the knowledge of good and evil (Woodruff, 2010).

Important to remember in Plato’s study of justice or virtue is that it “covers the whole field of the individual’s conduct in so far as it affects others” (Bhandari, n.d.). Plato thus advanced the notion of absolutes or ideals of the whole; his views were holistic in nature; whereas, Aristotle advanced the particulars, e.g. the particular things about the individual or self (Schaeffer, 1976, p. 52). The Judean-Christian religion however would foster a different view from Plato on the integration of the public and the private soul.

The Judean-Christian religion exchanged the notion of the city-state as a religious and spiritual entity as well a “social, economic, and political “state” with the concept that a person’s quality as a citizen was separated from the person’s soul, supporting the notion that the person’s spirit could not be destroyed or alienated by the domain of the governent (Ebenstein, W., & Ebenstein, A., 1991, p. 19-20). This latter concept was foreign to Plato, and countered the notion that the “gods were community gods”; he was however very aware of *res publica*, or the “‘common thing’ in the mutual relations of human beings” (Ebenstein et al., p. 20). It seems, however, that Aristotle makes it more difficult to understand the mutual relations of human beings by focusing on the particulars of virtue or the good society rather than the “whole” of things theorized by Plato.

**Virtue According to Aristotle**

Aristotle delves into the particulars of virtue to facilitate a practical system by which a person becomes virtuous, with virtue not only practiced by the leader, but also habituated by the citizen. Ebenstein states that their [public leader] “superior virtue and political capacity given them the right to ‘practise compulsion and still live in harmony with their cities, if their own government is for the interest of the state’” (Ebenstein, W., & Ebenstein, A., 1991, p.85). Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, paragraph 1103b further writes,

> But we do take on the virtues by first being at work in them, just as also in other things, namely the arts, the things that one who has learned them needs to do, we learn by doing, and people become, say, housebuilders by building houses or harpists by playing the harp. So too, we become just by doing things that are just, temperate by doing things that are temperate, and courageous by doing things that are courageous. What happens in cities gives evidence of this, for lawmakers make the citizens good by habituating them, and since this is the intention of every lawmaker, those that do not do it well are failures, and one regime differs from another in this respect as a good one from a worthless one. (Aristotle, 2002, p. 22)
Aristotle extends in his thoughts on virtue, specifically temperance, by asserting it results from knowledge of “what we know”, as Plato asserts. But Aristotle goes further, he, as mentioned already, asserts now that knowledge of virtue begins with a study of those persons who have practiced virtue. In Book I, paragraph 1095b, Aristotle writes:

Perhaps then we, at any rate, ought to begin from the things that are known to us. This is why one who is going to listen adequately to discourse about things that are beautiful and just, and generally about things that pertain to political matters, needs to have been beautifully brought up by means of habits. For the primary thing is that something is so, and if this is sufficiently evident, there is no additional need for the reason why. (Aristotle, 2002, p. 4)

This person of example “belongs to a man of serious stature”, who accomplishes their work, whether as a harpist, doctor, housebuilder, general, etc., well and beautifully (kalos in Greek) (Aristotle, 2002, p. 11). Sachs notes, however, the word “serious” (spoudaios in Greek) has lost its root meaning. He goes on to state that the serious person then was not only highly skilled technically, but also was one who “chooses well the uses worthy of that skill”, the nobleness of that skill. According to Sachs, even assessing that what someone did was beautiful or just would be to open the possibility that one judges something on a more stable basis (Aristotle). He infers that in the practicing of habit, character is developed. And, it is character that requires a conscience choice rather than habit that requires no choice; but, in the end “good habits are described as a precondition for good character” (“Nicomachean Ethics”, n.d.). Ultimately one’s habits and virtue is accomplished for the highest good, making it complete, which is “chosen” for itself and “never on account of anything else”; “so happiness [eudaimonia] appears to be something complete and self-sufficient, and is, therefore, the end of actions” (Aristotle, 2002, p. 12). Aristotle further in Book II, paragraph 1106a, explains that virtue is not a feeling, a predisposition to feeling a certain way, but is instead,

... an active condition that makes one apt to choosing, consisting in a mean condition in relation to us, which is determined by a proportion and by the means which a person with practical judgment would determine it. And it is a mean condition between two vices, one resulting from excess and the other form deficiency, and is also a mean in the sense that the vices of the one sort fall short and those of the other sort go beyond what is appropriate both in feelings and in actions, while virtue both discovers and chooses the mean. (Aristotle, 2002, p. 29)

An important issue or difficulty this author has with Aristotle is whether or not it is possible that different cultures will see beauty and happiness different from one another? If what is beautiful and determines happiness is relative to the culture, then it provides it a difficult endeavor for understanding what is ultimately beautiful and what makes for happiness. For one needs to ascertain whether or not the Judean-Christian doctrine of original sin and corruption of the flesh and world through original sin can skew a person’s understanding of beauty and happiness. In other words, by which can we know that the ultimate or highest good, of what makes something complete, can be explained in Aristotle’s theory of virtue; or, does it necessitate a knowledge of God, particularly his moral image as seen through Christ having what Aristotle would call the example necessary to understand virtue? This will be hashed out more in the following section on Saint Thomas Aquinas advancement of Aristotelian thought. Having noted these concerns, it is to the topic of this paper that this paper turns to next...Aristotle’s perspective on temperance.
Temperance According to Aristotle

Keeping in mind that virtue in Aristotle’s thought is concerned with virtue that goes beyond appropriateness of feelings and actions, and discovers and chooses that mean (a balanced choice that precisely achieves its end [Aristotle, 2002, p. 208]), and occurs by way of discernment between the vices of excess and deficiency (Aristotle, p. 29). Temperance thus does the same thing. However, it goes above and beyond appropriate feelings in actions toward the excesses of pleasure, particularly bodily pleasures, and deficiencies (dissipated) of pleasure that rarely occurs (Aristotle, p. 57). Without going into Aristotle’s logic, he asserts that,

...the temperate person is so called for not being pained at the absence of or abstention from what is pleasant. So the dissipated person desires all things that are pleasant, or those that are most pleasant, and is led so much by desire as to choose these things in preference to all others; and this is why a dissipated person is pained both by missing out on pleasures and desiring them, since desire involves pain, though it seems absurd to be pained on account of pleasure”…”the temperate person is in a mean condition concerning these things, and is not pleased by the things that a dissipated person takes most pleasure in, but instead has disdain for them, and in general is not pleased by things one ought not to take pleasure in, and is not greatly pleased by anything of the sort, and feels neither pain nor desire when they are absent, or only moderately so, and not more than one ought or when ought not, or anything at all of that sort. (Aristotle, 2002, p. 57)

Sachs, however, asserts that temperance in Aristotle’s work “is not an effort of self-control, nor is it a natural condition of being born without strong desires; it is an active state of character acquired by good upbringing, that lets one see clearly, and feel comfortably, that one doesn’t really want to gorge oneself on bodily pleasures that one will regret later” (Aristotle, p. 57). Not missing from Aristotle’s perspective, however, is the role of right reason, a lack of desiring moderately and the way one ought to in attaining health and a good condition that is not contrary to “beauty” and beyond one’s resources (Aristotle). In other words, it is “the active condition by which one chooses bodily pleasures in the ways and to the extent that they enhance life, not by an effort of self-control but by harmony of desire with reason” according to Book III, 1119a, paragraphs 11-20 (Aristotle). According to Sachs, “moderation” is a contemporary translation; this word is “too broad and is inaccurate if it implies that desires must be given less than full satisfaction” (Aristotle, p. 211). For example, how often in the current day does one invoke the idea that too much or too little is not good, but everything in “moderation” is good? This contemporary statement contradicts Aristotle’s assertion that a temperate person “disdain” for what a person should not take pleasure in, as noted above. Thus, one must take caution not applying a current day understanding to Aristotle’s definition of temperance. Rediscovering what one should “disdain” against what pleasures a person should not take pleasure in requires a search for not what man thinks inherently is good for him or herself as Aristotle asserts (Atkinson, n.d.). Yet a person can be deceived in their own self and by those around his or her self, as inferred in 1 John 1:18 and James 1:26-27. Instead God’s Word reveals the ultimate good, pleasures, and vices that one ought to disdain, as one would find in Galatians 5. Rather than man’s determination and the standard bearer of what should be disdained not disdained, God’s standard would become the bases. Thus, moving to a higher order of understanding…not eliminating Aristotelian thinking however…. and moving away from Aristotle’s “intrinsic
morality” to “God’s morality” (Atkinson, n.d.) is Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages who carried on Aristotle’s legacy by seeking to syncretize Christianity to Aristotelian thought.

Middle-Ages (St. Thomas Aquinas) Perspective

Happiness, synonymous with “well-being” or “flourishing” (Haybron, 2011), *eudaimonia*, discussed in Saint Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* part two summarizes those ethics or virtuous processes that a person must follow to attain this happiness. Aquinas closely adheres to an Aristotelian view of virtuousness, which entails repeating a good or virtuous action to pursue good ends, promoting the “purpose of God and his honor” (Delaney, 1912). According to Aquinas, this person finds doing so gladly and easily; but, Aquinas’ view only pertains to the intellectual and moral virtues, not the theological virtues that are instead imparted by God to man as a “disposition” (Delaney). Discussed later, but annotated here, is Galatian 5:23’s note of temperance or self-control as a fruit of the spirit, indicating that temperance is imparted by God into man through the Holy Spirit’s work. This author suggests that one would then question whether temperance is solely a cardinal virtue, or instead a sacred virtue…one under a person’s desire or reason rather than one infused by through God’s Spirit. Aquinas goes on to note, however, that temperance in essence comes by way through God’s grace. Grace (“gratis infusa or gratia create a habitus infuses”) is “a certain gift of disposition, something supernatural proceeding from God into man” (Schaff, n.d.). Thus, it appears that Aquinas asserts that grace, given or infused by God is the divine source, but it also then requires human will to bring it to fruition, into being a part of a person’s character. Is this where Aristotle’s practice of virtue bears imprint on Aquinas’ thoughts? But, again Galatians 5:23 indicates that temperance or self-control is the fruit, or quality of the Holy Spirit working in someone; it is the manifestation of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life. Aquinas further points out a crucial point, that the disposition of evil is the opposite alternative action, reflecting “deviation from the reason and the divine law”, which then necessitates God’s grace that further becomes the cause of meritorious works…e.g. the moving force behind good conduct (Delaney, 1912). Without engaging into depth over its origin (God) and means (human will), it is necessary to further understand in greater detail temperance and its relationship to its subordinate virtues.

Temperance further falls into three primary classes according to Delany (1912), to include: first, that associated with the preservation of a human; second, that which is perpetuates the human race; and third, that which aids the comfort and well-being of human life. Subordinate virtues associated with these three categories respectively include: 1) *abstinence* (relates to the partaking of drink and food, opposing vice of gluttony and drunkenness) to preserve human life; 2) *chastity* (concerned with regulation of sensual satisfaction, opposing vice of lust) to propagate human life; and 3) *modesty* (holds in reasonable leash the less violent passions, bringing into “service humility to set in order a man’s interior”, guarding against radical malice of pride and pusillanimity. By increasing a person’s self-knowledge it seeks to also bring into also a person’s exterior conformance to the demands of *honestas* (“decency and decorousness”) to make the person’s “whole outward tenor of conduct and method of life fall under its sway” (Delaney). This virtue, according to Aquinas, is a “cardinal virtue because the moderation required for every righteous habit has in the practice of temperance a specially trying arena” (Delaney).

Aquinas seems to identify well the origin of temperance; however, as Francis Schaeffer would argue, the focus on particulars of “being” would have its own consequences for centuries to come. Schaeffer is more critical of Aquinas’ adoption of Aristotelian thought into Christianity
The Gap between Secular and Sacred Understanding of Temperance in Leadership

because of these consequences. He asserted that Aquinas’ adoption of Aristotelian particulars, primarily as it progressed through the Renaissance and afterward, the focus on particulars eventually lost meaning (Schaeffer, 1976, p. 55). His reasoning was based on the notion that humanism ever since this period, focusing on man alone, “found no way to arrive at universals or absolutes which give meaning to existence and morals” (Schaeffer). The authority of the church in the Middle Ages taking authority over the Bible begin teaching that “fallen man was considered able to return to God by meriting the merit of Christ”, thus opening “the way for people to think of themselves as autonomous and the center of all things” (Schaeffer, p. 56). It is not certain that Schaeffer fully identified with Aquinas’ view that virtue was infused by God’s grace, gratis infusa. It is further in the modern humanistic mindset one finds that man could solve all problems for himself (Schaeffer, p. 78) in and through Aristotle’s notation of “intrinsic morality” as Atkinson labels. And, in regard to the ability to develop temperance, he or she may very well believe they can be temperate or self-controlled without gratis infusa, infusion of grace by God as the primary mover and causal agent of temperance. In other words, the source of temperance or any other virtue for that matter was lost through the loss of acknowledgment of God, thus his grace.

Temperance without God’s grace as a causal force then would be expelled in belief that an individual could be intrinsically moral. Without God’s grace, the greatest evil…that of Satan…is played out in the heart and mind of these individuals, that of pride noted by Delaney as the opposite modesty that would distort a Godly disposition in aiding the comfort and well-being of human life (1912). Pride thus is the potential vice that ensues from the person who divorces God’s grace from his or her development of a disposition of temperance or self-control. The potential negative consequence for a person or a leader who desires a disposition of self-control, but does not draw upon God’s grace and His Holy Spirit to bring it to fruition may only result in greater pride and other vices. For example, the leader who appears to practice self-control may only deceive his or herself as noted earlier. For example, Adolph Hitler was known to have abstained from alcohol, smoking, eating meat of which some historians attribute to anxiety over his health due to not getting exercise or fresh air, constant insomnia, and stomach disorders would cause anxiety from fear of dying early before all of his schemes could be achieved (Green & McCarthy, 2001, p. 11). His disdain for these vices (as it pertains to drinking) was not motivated by disdain because it would ultimately lead to an ultimate good of taking care of one’s self for its own sake or because of Biblical moral code that creates good for a person by following. Instead it was due to his quest for power, and either his belief in no afterlife or subconsciously that death would bring hell for his stance against Jesus Christ. His own “intrinsic morality” was led astray by not God’s grace, but his lack of recognizing God’s grace. Hitler thus lived out his life as an extremely abusive, arrogant, and destructive leader, believing he was far greater than anyone else, thus contributing to his evil and narcissistic behavior. His own quest for self-control and moderation was formed out of fear, not love, thus producing destructive ends for not only himself, but others as well. His pseudo temperance (not under the influence of God who gives grade and help to those in need to bring them to a place of true happiness and well-being, but man) ultimately and paradoxically led to self-righteousness out of disdain not only for himself, but others.

The temptation for self-righteousness draws ever so close to the human heart. For even Jesus Christ, fully God and man, as noted in Matthew 4:1-10 defeats Satan’s temptations on four different occasions by drawing upon the Word of God given by God to man through His grace. But, how often does one boast of their own accomplishments without giving credit to God’s
grace for being able to do so? In the end, this form of pride only results in self-aggrandizement. And, because leadership, particularly authentic transformation leadership, contains the element of idealized influence, this influence may be very limited in persons who operate from such an understanding as this one. One might further consider the life of the Apostle Paul before and after his transformation. Before meeting Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul in his zeal was committed to Judaism and what he thought was God’s will. Yet, his zeal brought destruction to many Christians in the form of persecution, believing he was serving God by persecuting Christians (Acts 22:7); it revealed his pride towards God. After Paul’s visit from Christ his countenance and disposition changed to one of love, compassion, and true justness. All of his writings upon his transformation focused on God’s grace towards him, transforming the very nature of his soul and thus his behavior. He recognized his weaknesses, but realized those same weaknesses would give him strength as he relied on God’s grace (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Apostle Paul understood God’s grace having been saved from his prideful self that measured and acted upon self-control through the lens of his own strength and not the grace of God. In these examples, Christian leadership understands the role of God’s grace in character formation, transforming his or herself into the moral image, the Imago Dei of God (Park cited in Faulhaber, 2008, pp. 78-80).

Modern-Era Perspective

Greek civilization believed that “beauty was both a physical and moral matter”, that it according to Mosse, exemplified power but also self-control, revealing a union between body and soul (Wells, 1998, p. 90). In the Middle Ages, as noted earlier, the spawning of the humanistic mindset was developed, that man could achieve virtue and solve problems on his or her own without God’s intervention or help. Evolving from this era then into what we call the “Modern Era” souls melted away, and were replaced by “self” (Wells, 1998, p. 91). The consequence of the replacement of the soul by the self has resulted in a rise in narcissism that honors personality over character (Wells, p. 108). Researchers Twenge and Campbell in The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement (2009) articulates well the origin and trends of this phenomenon that has and will have a long lasting impact on American culture and governance, necessitating leaders to learn how to address and lead in, particularly in the public sphere. If unable to lead the culture to a godly understanding of the self, soul, and self-control, public leaders will continue to face a culture increasingly calling for greater entitlements from the government. Wells summarizes well the impact of humanism on today’s culture,

When these new preoccupations flow into the postmodern world, rife as it is with the antinomian individualism, self-consciousness becomes radically relativized. From the older stress on human nature, which is the same in everyone, we moved to self-consciousness, which is different in everyone. The vocabulary of the self, the words we use to understand its life, is quite different from that of nature. The language of the self is that of fulfillment, of choice, of autonomy, and of identity. The language of nature speaks to our relationships to God, to the creation as human beings, made in the image of God, who have commonalities with all human beings. It is, therefore, the language of the moral universe that arises from who God is. To speak of nature leads naturally into a consideration of virtue: civility, responsibility, self-control, self-denial, duty, service, generosity, fidelity, fortitude, and goodness.
By contrast, one’s self-consciousness is not the same as anyone else’s, for the life circumstances, personalities, and social location of others are all different. The consensus, therefore, is that the language of the self, rather than that of human nature, provides a far more productive way of thinking about ourselves, given the endless variations on what we can do, buy, and be. It is not human nature, which we all have in common, that best describes who we are, but rather our differences of consciousness. (pp. 108-109)

With this different standard of evaluating one’s self in relation to others or God for that matter, the picture is increasingly blurred in the eyes of one who has bought into this transition of thought of virtue, the self, and right and wrong. It makes it much easier to see why there is a growing population in America that sees no wrong or harm done in taking advantage of government programs rather than finding employment. Self-indulgence according to Peterson et al., (2004), appears to be the focus that the Twentieth Century turned in it rejection of self-denial in part due to changing economic and advertising realities (Peterson et al., p. 513). One is only aware of their physical image without noting the importance of the role of their human nature that would prompt them to toward virtue, having realized the deficiency of their spirit or soul. Temperance in the traditional sense places no position in one’s mind who believes that it is only the self within a physical world that matters. The goal of the collective of this philosophy seeks political power that will reinforce their self-conscious motivated beliefs rather than power that will limit power based on a proper understanding of human nature. It should be noted that the self-conscious perspective does not represent only one social-economic status only, but all social economic statuses. The views of the person or group promoting government social programs (advanced by liberal parties) is no different than the person or group advancing conservative agendas motivated by the maintenance of one’s power and status. For the latter are equally capable of falling victim to sustain a self-consciousness verses human nature worldview of life.

**Lack of Self-Control and Temperance as it Relates to America**

Wells notes well the consequence of a lack of restraint and self-control in American society. He states, “Litigation and regulation must now do what civility, self-restraint, honesty, and charitable concern once did” (1998, p. 75). He goes on to note that the courts in such cases as *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* have essentially upheld the notion that one has a legal right to abortion for the former with the latter that acceptance of this “moral principle” is a matter of good citizenship. These cases indirectly advance the idea that one does not have to deal with the consequence of their lack of self-control. While at the same time, the Supreme Court striking down the Communications Decency Act of 1997 that would ban a child’s access to pornographic material on the internet reveals a sentiment for liberty without restraint by morality for the cause of freedom of speech. While the courts stated in this case that it should be up to the parents, school, etc. to monitor, the courts diverged from their making of social policy (rightly so), it still reveals that the courts have taken over the reins in determining what is moral or immoral. This continues to occur today because the basis of virtue, to include temperance, is not located within confines of God and His moral image, but instead within the boundary of man’s standard as a consequence of humanistic reasoning (Wells). Instead law, according to Wells, provides “a social defense that character once, without the law’s coercion, extended to others as a matter of duty or conscience” (Wells, p. 76). Yet, as Cole notes, government should not participate in the “morality of aspiration” (“the higher standard of morality” to which the church and individuals and “hope to conform and impart on their children”, which deals with the rules
associated with promoting virtue, what citizens “ought to aspire”), but is only responsible for the “morality of duty” (the “lower standard of morality” that society agrees of rules that must be enforced among those not restrained by what the rest of society wants, e.g. enforcing basic proscriptions against murder, theft, etc.)(Fuller as cited by Cole, 2008, p. 77). As a side note, Fuller’s ideas are very similar to contemporary understanding of Martin Luther’s “Two Kingdoms” theology; however, as MacKenzie notes, contemporary interpreters take Luther’s assertion out of his historical context whereby the state was approached frequently to protect the doctrines of Christianity (2007, p. 12). Rather than separating the state from the Church, Luther sought to separate the Church from the state. Also, noting however, that caution is still necessary in the interaction between Church and the state, for each has its proper role over the spiritual and temporal (MacKenzie). The contemporary understanding of Luther alone has not complicated the role of public leaders promoting virtue, but also has the understanding of temperance within a multicultural postmodern society by which there are multiple views of “lower standard of morality”, resulting laws developed promoting good as evil, and evil as good. This is also occurring within “higher standards of morality” as promoted by some in the church. In other words, self-indulgence rather than self-denial is the norm, and one may find little reason to believe that both the confused church as a whole and government can understand its role that continuously is redefined when considering its purpose and role in the development of a virtue crucial to mitigating the societal problems faced today.

Multiculturalism, once having a set of ideals, but now within a postmodern culture has degenerated into a search for group power, and according to Bernstein has become a “dictatorship of virtue” (as cited in Wells, 1998, p. 78). Those groups with the most power determine then what is virtuous or not, rather than allowing a Biblical perspective guide understanding of virtue that is constant and unchanging. The whim of man, based on self-defining and inconsistent understanding of virtue, sets the course for the day. Kreeft notes how virtue is now replaced by talk of values, which can be subjective and relative to the beholder. Kreeft notes C.S. Lewis’ words, “the poison of subjectivism”: the idea that morality is manmade, private, subjective, a matter of feeling, a subdivision of psychology. “I feel” replaces “I believe” (Kreeft, 1986, p. 26). “Values”, according to Kreeft, “are like thoughts, like ghosts, undulating blobs of psychic energy” (Kreeft, p.26). Temperance in the current day still reflects the notion of self-control, but it continuously is sold out not to against what is immoral in God’s eyes, but immoral based on a changing perspective of man. Just recently, the White House called upon restraint on all sides, non-Christians and Christians alike in their actions against the brutal murder of peaceful Coptic Christians protesting the burning of their church (Koffler, 2011).

What is temperance if it is not girded in God-given standards of moral evil? A moral vacuum according to Wells was created was a result of the breakdown of meaning in modern world that not only nourishes individualism, but enflames moral relativism (1998, p. 145). Thus, it should be no wonder why public leaders would not be able to call out abuses and take a firm stance against wrongs and injustices, advocating for restraint for the guilty party. Instead, the relativist sees fault according to the condition, situation, or event seeking to please both parties because the wrongs done were in accordance with the culturally accepted norms for that society or community. Thus, the inability to determine a moral stance is abdicated. This philosophy is very different to those moral stances taught in Scripture. Important then in this discussion on temperance from a public leadership perspective is the necessity of placing temperance back into its proper view, a God or Christ-centric perspective.
Judean-Christian Perspective

The separation of faith and study of behavior, e.g. that virtuous character does not have its origin in the Triune God prompting the study of behavior without its source as character (good or bad), is as unnatural as thinking about the wagon without the horse, or the car without the engine. One cannot understand temperance without the study of faith as well. It is faith in Jesus Christ that gives a person the Holy Spirit, the source of self-control or temperance (Galatians 5:23). Humanism, however, as mentioned earlier promotes the ability of the individual...as the individual is deemed born and inherently good...as a primary mover of temperance. Christianity, however, asserts that man is born into sin and thus is not inherently or naturally good. However, the caveat is that the born again Christian filled with the Holy Spirit is able to temper his or her desires in a way that is consistent with a Biblical understanding of temperance. Rediscovering the role of God’s grace that Aquinas found was the foundation and even the well spring of temperance is needed. But, also this author suggests that it is not only by God’s grace that temperance is the causal force behind temperance, but also the means within which a person has the will and desire for it that comes full circle already in one’s character because in the moment of rebirth that child of God already then has this virtue. This is reaffirmed in passages such as Galatians 4:29, 1 Peter 4:23, 1 John 2:29, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 4:7, 1 John 5:18. In other words, the character of temperance is already evident in those who are reborn and in Christ. It is not a future unfolding and development, but a current reality. For the outward manifestation of temperance is revealed in a person living in the grace of God. And, it would be through the renewing of the mind; nooce in Greek, means having change in understanding in one’s mind that may be divine or human in nature (Romans 12:2; KJV Plus) that continuously reminds a person that they have been given the Holy Spirit which manifests itself as temperance, as Galatians 5:22-23 notes. One of the purposes of this reminder is to remind the Christian that they already “are” a child of God having temperance, not voicing that one “will have”. First John 5:4, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (KJV). Emphasized here are the words “is born”, gennaō in Greek, means brought forth, conceived, etc. (KJV Plus).

Having a temperate character, or egkrateia in Greek as described in Galatians 5:22-23, is in direct contrast to those vices listed in 5:19-21 as workings of the flesh and include: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murder, drunkenness, reveling and the like. These vices are of such serious consequence that a person having practiced or exhibiting these vices will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). Further, these vices are not culturally defined, do not only affect the body, but also the mind and spirit, and neither can they be rationalized by man. Instead they are the vices that lead to destruction of the human spirit, mind, and body; they do not lend well to enhancing human well-being or flourishing. John Wesley (1754-1765) asserts that temperance (as it pertains to 2 Peter 1:6) is the abstaining from all pleasure, inward and outward to include very thought and affection, that does not lead to God.

With this biblical view and understanding of temperance, it is asserted by this author that God’s grace is the causal agent as Aquinas asserts, but is also an infusion of God’s character (to include temperance) into that of his children that abide in Him. God’s grace cannot be separated from the imbuing of His character into His children. As a result, God’s children naturally disdain the things that God disdains and holds fast to what God deems good. It gives the ability of His children in seeing the good in even God’s commands, knowing that God knows what is good for
human flourishing and that which only leads to human destruction. In other words, it is only living in God’s grace that one finds the likeness of the moral image of God in man. God knows what ultimately leads to human happiness, well-being, and flourishing. For the Christian leader (of which should be attributed to all leaders, for all persons cannot attain true happiness and flourishing of the human soul and spirit without God) then the focus of his or her life is to live in God’s grace, believing that he or she already has the virtue of temperance because he or she is born again. He or she does not then allow worldly or fleshly temptations to undermine this God-given character so that he or she may inspire others to seek God’s grace and translate all leadership efforts (including the public leader). These efforts would include: how one behaves toward another, the formulation of a vision and policy, etc. in light of God’s grace and renewed mind and character towards ends that promote human happiness, well-being, and flourishing that ultimately both Aristotle and Aquinas sought, and of which every person this author believes seeks. This process aligns then a leader’s vision, character (thus behavior) with God’s grace, character, and vision for mankind. As evidenced by reality not just in America, but the world all over, there is a gap between temperance as seen in reality and that within the Judean-Christian perspective.

Conclusion

Explored within this paper was the evolution of the meaning and defining of temperance. From classical antiquity (Plato to Aristotle) to early Christianity (the Apostles Paul and Peter) to the middle ages (Aquinas) and into the modern era, one cannot dismiss the various differences in origin and definition temperance has taken. The pinnacle of explanation in terms of not only expressing the true character and form of temperance found in the Triune God, but also in logical consistency that only one unchangeable understanding of temperance as understood in the Imago Dei of God rather than the changing characterization defined by man, occurs when it is realized that it is God’s grace that supplies not only the cause of temperance, but the sustaining source of the temperate Christian leader. It is by God’s grace and his sustenance that the Christian leader inspires others to follow in the same manner. It is a means by which the public Christian leader can inspire others, to include its citizens, to solve its greatest societal problems. But, this course cannot separate the role of Faith from character and behavior. It ultimately will draw criticism from a postmodern and humanistic culture.

About the Author

Questions or comments about this paper may be directed to the author, Jacqueline A. Faulhaber, at JFAUL33@GMAIL.COM.

References


