Formational Leadership: Overcoming Toxic Leadership with Christian Spirituality

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the effects of toxic leadership in secular and Christian contexts. It will include the etiology of personality disorders with the focus on narcissism. This paper will provide a Christian leadership model that draws from Wesleyan theology and spirituality. This model incorporates a pure heart (Orthokardia), moral power motives (Orthodynamis), and ethical leadership practices (Orthopraxis). The final section of this paper includes practical steps to modify narcissistic personality traits based on principles from the spiritual formation tradition.

*Keywords*: Christian leadership, toxic leadership, personality disorders, Christian spirituality, Wesleyan theology
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Former Virginia governor Bob McDonald was found guilty of public corruption charges in September 2014 according to the Wall Street Journal (Bauerlein & Chase, 2014). McDonald is a Christian leader who committed a moral failure that has become public. He uttered the following statement as the former governor left the courthouse: “All I can say is my trust remains in the Lord” (p. A4). Christian leaders are not perfect and society should not judge Christian leaders more harshly than secular leaders. However, the question can be posed as to why do Christian leaders make moral mistakes, abuse their power, or harm their subordinates. Why do some Christian leaders do not follow the Bible and why do they fail to internalize Christian morality and ethics? This paper will answer this question by discussing the concept of personality disorders, especially narcissistic personality traits. Narcissistic personality disorder traits explain why even Christian leaders may be oblivious about what motivates them to pursue leadership and why they tend to compartmentalize, rationalize, and justify their unethical behaviors. This paper will also explore a Christian leadership model that can provide a blueprint for raising internal awareness, modifying immoral motives, and changing unethical behavior patterns based on Wesleyan theology and spirituality. The first section of this paper will discuss the effects of toxic leadership, often perpetrated by narcissistic and psychopathic leaders.

Toxic Leadership

Secular Contexts

The 20th century has witnessed a few destructive political leaders. Maladaptive narcissistic/psychopathic leaders, such as Hitler, Stalin, and Saddam Hussein can be counted among them and are well known for their cruelty and grandiosity (Post, 1993; Glad, 2002). Whether one reflects on the Holocaust, Stalin’s mass executions, or Saddam Hussein’s abuse and
oppression of the Kurds, many people are disgusted about their actions. However, narcissistic and psychopathic leaders can also be found in corporate settings, where their effects on the organization are just as destructive as the legacy of the political tyrants (Kernberg, 1984; Kets De Vries & Miller, 1997; Lubit, 2002). In the 21st century Western societies are threatened by religious terrorists whose leaders most likely possess narcissistic and/or psychopathic personality traits.

Toxic leadership is abusive leadership that harms followers and reduces leadership effectiveness. It has been recently associated with the Dark Triad, which refers to narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Narcissism and psychopathy are personality traits or disorders, whereas Machiavellianism is not technically a personality trait but “is considered an attitudinal, belief or stylistic variable” (Furnham, 2010, p. 90). All three share a lack of empathy for others (Goleman, 2006). According to Furnham (2010), the Dark Triad includes three interrelated personality features:

1. Arrogance, self-centeredness, self-enhancement
2. Duplicity, cynicism, manipulativeness
3. Emotionally cold, impulsive thrill-seeking and frequently engaged in illegal, dangerous, anti-social behaviour (pp.17-18).

Leaders who possess Dark Triad personality traits have high self-interest, are low in empathy, and are not interested in longer term relationships (Furnham, 2010). These traits render leadership less effective or even ineffective. Due to the low prevalence of psychopathy in the general population (1%) and its limited relevance for Christian leadership, this paper will focus on narcissistic leaders, which will be discussed next (Furnham, 2010).
Narcissism has been defined as a personality trait that is characterized by feelings of inferiority, emotional shallowness, excessive self-reference/centeredness, and by displaying arrogance, among others (Kernberg, 1998b). Various researchers have explicitly noted the presence of narcissists in organizational and political leadership (Kets De Vries & Miller, 1991; Kets De Vries & Miller, 1997; Kets De Vries, 2006; Kernberg, 1998b; Sankowsky, 1995; Downs, 1997; Schell, 1999; McFarlin & Sweeney, 2000; Lubit, 2002; Maccoby, 2000, 2003; Post, 1993; Deluga, 1997) and Kets De Vries (2006) asserts that “narcissism and leadership are intricately connected” (p. 83). Narcissistic leaders pose a paradox since narcissism, like any other personality trait, occurs on a continuum ranging from adaptive to maladaptive and abusive narcissism. On the one hand, maladaptive narcissism leads to lowered productivity, increased staff dissatisfaction, and has been linked to executive derailment. On the other hand, adaptive narcissism has been found to produce positive outcomes such as self-confidence, persuasiveness, assertiveness and charisma, which are important in effective leadership (Kets De Vries & Miller, 1997; Millon, 1998; Stone, 1998). Kets De Vries (2006) notes that “a considerable percentage of [leaders] are driven by reactive [maladaptive] narcissism” (p. 86). Reactive narcissism, unlike constructive (adaptive) narcissism, develops in individuals who have been wounded in the past and are “reparation seekers” by overcompensating their perceived sense of inferiority (p. 88). Thus, for secular and Christian leadership development, organizational leaders should be aware of how recognize when narcissism becomes maladaptive. In particular, it is beneficial to know how leader behaviors or leadership styles (e.g. transformational and transactional leadership) are affected by adaptive and maladaptive narcissism in organizational leaders.

Regarding effective leadership, such as transformational leadership, Kets De Vries and Miller (1997) assert that transformational leadership is utilized in leaders with adaptive and
maladaptive narcissistic traits. Bass (1998) and Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) would agree with Kets De Vries and Miller (1997) in asserting that leaders with maladaptive narcissistic traits display transformational leadership. Bass (1998) and Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) label those leaders, who are self-centered and demand unquestionable obedience from their staff (i.e. maladaptive narcissism), as inauthentic transformational leaders (i.e. pseudotransformational). Bass (1998) would therefore only agree with the assertion that transformational leaders have adaptive narcissistic traits. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) and Maccoby (2003) provide the strongest argument for the link between transformational leadership and narcissism. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) argue that transformational leaders “have a strong sense of self-confidence” as well as a high need for power, which are components of narcissism (p. 86). Maccoby (2003) associates productive (adaptive) narcissism with visionary leadership, which can be considered as synonymous with transformational leadership. The author asserts that adaptive narcissistic leaders have two strengths, among others, that characterize transformational leadership: the ability for visioning and charisma. Maccoby (2003) views the ability to develop a vision as the key aspect in adaptive narcissism. Thus, there is a strong link between effective leadership and narcissistic traits.

Stone (1998), in describing the “zone just beyond normal narcissism,” lists some traits of the “supernormal” narcissist, which are charisma, assertiveness and competitiveness (pp. 14-15). Charisma refers to an ability of individuals to make people feel loved and appreciated and is related to leadership. Charisma is a value neutral and can be negative (e.g. Hitler, etc.) or positive (e.g. Martin Luther King). However, charismatic leaders share the attributes of having a “tremendous self-confidence” and the “unshakable conviction of being right” (p. 15). According to Stone (1998), self-regard and self-confidence are important ingredients of effective leadership.
In addition to self-confidence, Stone (1998) comments on the obvious relationship between assertiveness and leadership (to take charge, speak his or her mind, etc.):

the ‘narcissism’ (here in quotation marks, because it is not maladaptive) of the ideal leader may extend to the outer edge of what we can still consider normal—in contrast to the clearly maladaptive narcissism of the arrogant, grandiose, or bullying leader (p. 16).

Thus, one can say that many leaders display adaptive narcissistic traits, which make him or her a more effective leader. Maccoby (2000) argues that a large number of adaptive narcissists function as corporate leaders. The author further claims that adaptive narcissistic traits make leaders effective.

Competitiveness is another trait that is shared with adaptive narcissism. Taking credit for something one has invented, written, etc. is still within the limits of adaptive narcissism (Stone, 1998). However, when individuals fail “to give others credit for their contributions” by plagiarizing or stealing the ideas of others, they go beyond the bounds of adaptive narcissism (p. 17). In these cases, competitiveness is a manifestation of maladaptive narcissism. Thus, charisma, assertiveness, and competitiveness are aspects of adaptive narcissism.

Conger (1998), in describing the dark side of leadership, refers to maladaptive narcissistic leadership when he comments on flawed visioning, communication, and general management practices and McFarlin and Sweeney (2000) make similar observations in describing narcissistic leaders. The vision of a narcissistic leader, which is often compelling and inspiring, reflects the leader’s selfish needs and often not the needs of the organization. In addition, maladaptive narcissistic leaders manipulate their followers by exaggerated impression management and by “gaining [followers’] commitment by restricting negative information and maximizing positive information” (p. 256). Finally, maladaptive narcissistic leaders display
flawed management practices by “poor management of people and networks” and by displaying “an informal/impulsive style that is disruptive and dysfunctional” (Conger, 1998, p. 258).

Moreover, these leaders tend to “alternat[e] between idealizing and devaluing others,” which, according to Kernberg (1998b), refers to the defense mechanism of splitting, and seem to fail “to manage details and effectively act as an administrator,” etc. (p. 258). Overall, maladaptive narcissistic leaders perform poorly as leaders and managers. In particular, two aspects of organizational leadership are the focus of the next few paragraphs: decision-making and corporate culture. Maladaptive narcissistic leadership negatively impacts these two areas.

Kets De Vries and Miller (1997) described decision-making by maladaptive narcissistic leader as “risk-laden” and impulsive, meaning that the leader consults no one and he or she “tends to do very little scanning and analysis” (p. 201, 208). Consequently, the decisions are often wrong, for which the leader tends to blame his or her subordinates. Kernberg (1998b) illustrates the circular process of the deteriorating performance of narcissistic leaders in terms of critical thinking and decision-making:

The danger is that the leader’s narcissistic tendency might be reinforced by adulation. Such adulation may bring about a circular process wherein artificially inflated self-esteem derived from idealization and admiration gradually diminishes the leader’s capacity for self-criticism and leads to a chronic narcissistic regression that may become unfitted to leadership. (p. 112).

Thus, followers reinforce the faulty decision-making, and other leadership responsibilities in general, which eventually renders the leader incompetent for the leadership task. A similar phenomenon can be seen in group dynamics. Brown (1997) compares denial, one of a defense mechanisms of narcissistic individuals, at the group level with Janis’ (1972) groupthink.
Groupthink refers to the symptom of uncritically accepting what the group has decided as a result of self-deceptions. The (maladaptive) narcissistic leader, based on his denial, is impaired in his or her critical thinking ability, and the group members who admire the leader, either uncritically conform or share the leader’s denial. The flawed decision-making is exacerbated by the fact that narcissistic leaders prefer to be totally in charge of the organization, which leads to over-centralization (Downs, 1997). Thus, a narcissistic leader does not tolerate participative decision-making and delegation of power (Downs, 1997; McFarlin & Sweeney, 2000). This means that the organization is doomed to eventually become a closed system (Downs 1997).

Regarding organizational culture, Kets De Vries and Miller (1991) hypothesized that the more maladaptive the personality traits of the leader are the more the culture is shaped by dysfunction. In a narcissistic/dramatic corporate culture, “everything seems to revolve around the leader” and leaders are “seen as infallible,” which abbreviates the tenure of “independent-minded managers” (p. 254). In those cultures, organizational stories focus on current or past ‘hero’ leaders (McFarlin & Sweeney, 2000). In addition, “an effective information system” is absent: downward communication seldom occurs (McFarlin & Sweeney, 2000; Kets De Vries & Miller, 1991, p. 255). Employees receive key information from media and/or grapevine. Finally, “narcissistic” companies are known for “audacity, risk taking, and diversification,” which represents their impulsive nature (Kets De Vries & Miller, 1991, p. 254). In short, the narcissistic corporate culture reflects the maladaptive traits of its leader. The next section will outline how toxic and narcissistic leadership is carried out Christian contexts.
Christian Contexts

I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who *loves to be the leader*, refuses to have anything to do with us (3 John 9-NLT-italics mine)

Diotrephes appears to have been a narcissistic leader in the early church. He does not submit to his spiritual authority and displays passive-aggressive and aggressive behaviors:

When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and *the evil accusations he is making against us*. Not only does he *refuse to welcome* the traveling teachers, he also *tells others not to help them*. And when they do help, *he puts them out of the church* (3 John 10-NLT-italics mine).

Another good example for a narcissistic leader in the Bible is King Solomon according to McIntosh and Rima (2007) who was “obsessed with his image” (p. 112). The authors hypothesize that Solomon was a narcissistic leader based on:

Solomon’s contrived route to the throne, his youthfulness and inexperience, the legendary success of his father, as well as his probable awareness of the circumstances of his own birth that followed the death of David and Bathsheba’s child born of adultery all combined to provide a sense of inferiority and a powerful drive within the young king to make a name for himself (p. 63).

In addition, Solomon’s focus on prestige, accomplishments, accumulation of wealth and status, as well as his excessive number of wives and concubines further point to his narcissistic personality. There are probably more biblical characters with narcissistic traits. The Bible does not portray perfect individuals and the Bible is very honest about sinful behavior patterns and how they impact the narcissistic individual and people close to them. King Solomon was said to
have left his faith in God at the end of his life as a result of his choices, which affected Israel and resulted in a divided kingdom. Narcissism is related to sin. Regarding sin and narcissism, the Lutheran theologian Ted Peters (1994) discusses the progression of the sin of pride, which stems from idolatry, which in this sense refers to trust in oneself as opposed to trust in God. The “illusion of independence” is the foundation of pride and results in narcissism (p. 94). Pride manifests in narcissism, in desire to have “power over” people, in “tribalism and group evil,” and “patriarchy” (pp. 95, 98, 101, and 105). In short, narcissistic behaviors stem from the sin of pride and can have destructive consequences for all parties involved. The next section will explore contemporary toxic leadership in Christian contexts.

Wikipedia (n.d.) lists 20 religious leaders who committed violent crimes, which includes several Christian leaders who committed murder, rape, and molestation, and 9 religious leaders who committed non-violent crimes. Among them are Christian leaders, such as Jim Bakker who was convicted of fraud, Henry Lyons, former president of the National Baptist Convention, who was convicted of grand theft, Barry Minkow, former head pastor of a large church, who was convicted of fraud, and Kent Hovind (“Dr. Dino”), founder of the Creation Science Evangelism ministry, who was convicted of tax evasion. The former governor of Virginia could be included on that list, but his leadership was confined to a secular context.

How has toxic and narcissistic leadership been carried out in current Christian contexts? McIntosh and Rima (1997) discuss some indicators or signs of (maladaptive) narcissistic church leaders, which are being obsessed with whether a sermon was good, destroyed churches due to energetic and costly projects, the pastor’s comments that the church would be negatively impacted if he left, and the constant launching of new ministries in the absence of sufficient resources to staff them. Unfortunately, Christian churches “provide a fertile soil for budding”
narcissistic leaders because kingdom work is often used to justify “grandiose visions and risky ventures” (p. 117). Too often followers do not feel comfortable with challenging these leaders because the work is done for God (McIntosh & Rima, 1997). The authors view Jim Bakker as having narcissistic personality disorder because of his grandiose visions, his drive to achieve greatness for approval, and his resolve to do anything to obtain the “approval and recognition he craved” (p. 116). In addition, some Christian leaders have used their authority and power to act out sexually. Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart acted out sexually, which became public (Heggen, 1993).

Sheafer (2014) describes narcissistic ministers as:

having superficial charm (“seems to understand others…confidence and answers to big problems”), grandiose (“God talking or working directly through him”), attention and admiration seeking (“enjoys theatrics during church, and using over-dramatic speech”), power seeking (pressure “to commit to serve in several ministries, attend several services each week and put the desires of the pastor to grow the church above the needs of their families”), and exploitativeness (large range from minor to major abuse, but insensitivity to financial needs of church members: “will ask for money, even when it puts members at financial risk”) (pp. 162-163).

The author further notes that narcissistic pastors tend to use the Bible to manipulate and control their followers. These control tactics can range from being aggressive (demanding obedience by making threats) to passive-aggressive (ignoring church members who do not comply, telling members that they may experience spiritual consequences if they do not comply, etc.). Similar to McIntosh and Rima’s (1997) observation, Sheafer (2014) explains as to why church members fail to question the authority of the Christian leader: “Unfortunately, narcissists in a religious
setting tend to ‘get away with it’ for longer than in other settings because the religious community wants to give people the benefit of the doubt” (p. 173). It is important to differentiate between the biblical mandate to submit to authority and the warning to critically discern the motives of fellow Christians, which includes pastors and ministers. Church members may often feel uncomfortable about the leader’s actions, but may suppress their suspicions because they do not want to be perceived as rebellious or oppositional. The Christian leadership model discussed below will provide Christian leaders to discern their general motives (“heart”), their specific power motives, and will suggest leadership practices that glorify God. The next section will explore the origins of narcissism.

**Narcissism**

The term narcissism can be traced to Greek mythology. Narcissus adored his beauty so much that, while looking at his reflection in the waters of a spring, he fell into the water and drowned. People “whose personalities are organized around maintaining their self-esteem by getting affirmation from outside themselves” are considered narcissistic in psychoanalytic theory (McWilliams, 2011, p. 176). Narcissism can be mild and subtle as in some very successful people, as well as more severe (and maladaptive) as in the case political leaders, such as Hitler and Saddam Hussein. The DSM 5 describes narcissistic personality disorders which is the most maladaptive form of narcissism. It refers to a “pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy” and five or more of the following:

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements).

2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
3. Believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions).
4. Requires excessive admiration.
5. Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations.
6. Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends.
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others.
8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her.

The prevalence estimates range from 0% to 6.2% in community samples (APA, 2013). Individuals with this personality disorder are usually reluctant to seek treatment unless their romantic partners require that they (mostly males) accompany them to marital or couple therapy. Thus, it can be hypothesized that the actual prevalence rate is higher, especially among influential and famous people (Benjamin, 1996).

The following further describes the nature of narcissism. Narcissistic individuals experience two main emotions, shame and envy (McWilliams, 2011). Ronningstam (2009) adds anger to this list, which is generally considered as a secondary emotion following the perception of threat towards one’s self-esteem. For example, the narcissist feels ashamed and reacts with anger after being criticized, which increases feelings of shame. Shame is “the sense of being seen as bad or wrong” based on perceived inadequacies (McWilliams, 2011, p. 180). Feelings of envy are based on “an internal conviction that [one] is lacking in some way and that [one’s]
inadequacies are at constant risk of exposure” (p.180). This internal self-doubt makes one vulnerable to envy those who seem to have the qualities one lacks. In addition, envy may be the basis for critically judging oneself and others. Due to their perceived inferiority, narcissists develop certain defenses, which serve to protect their fragile egos. Narcissists utilize the following defenses: Idealization and devaluation (“when the self is idealized, others are devalued,” or in general, as seeing the world as either all good or all bad, which is called ‘splitting’), perfectionism (which means “holding [oneself] up to unrealistic ideals”), denial, and rationalization (McWilliams, 2011, pp. 180-181; Kets De Vries & Miller, 1997; Brown, 1997).

Regarding behavioral and cognitive tendencies, narcissists engage in the following: self-aggrandizement (overestimating one’s abilities), attributional egotism (attributing favorable results to oneself), and possessing a sense of entitlement (believing to have the right to exploit others) (Brown, 1997). Ronningstam (2009) discusses two types of narcissists: the arrogant and the shy type. The arrogant type displays “strong reactions to criticism, defeats, or other threats to the self-esteem” and anger reactions can range from “silent contempt to overt hostility and explosive rage outbursts” (p. 753, 754). The interpersonal pattern of the arrogant type is characterized by an “overtly arrogant and haughty attitude” (p. 754). Both overt aggressive and passive-aggressive behavior patterns can be observed. The shy type is “constricted interpersonally and vocationally” and he or she is “sensitive, inhibited, vulnerable, shame ridden, and socially withdrawn” (p. 754). Unlike the arrogant type, the shy narcissistic type regulates his or her self-esteem by shaming (Ronningstam, 2009). The shy narcissistic type is not easily recognizable due to the absence of arrogance and haughtiness. Especially in Christian contexts, he or she may be perceived as displaying Christian “humility” due to his or her frequent

When it comes to the subtypes and the etiology of narcissism, there are various hypotheses derived from personality and clinical theories, which will be discussed next. Theories of narcissism are mainly derived from psychoanalytic theories, such as Kernberg’s Object Relations, Kohut’s Self Psychology, and Benjamin’s Interpersonal theory, which can be considered as a combination of psychodynamic theory and social learning theory. These theories are the most popular in the field of personality and clinical theory and will be briefly reviewed.

Kernberg (1986, 1998a) views narcissism as being on a continuum ranging from normal (adaptive) narcissism to maladaptive narcissism. Normal (adaptive) narcissism, according to Kernberg (1998a), “is characterized by normal self-esteem regulation” and “stable object relations and value systems” (pp. 33-34). Based on Kernberg’s conceptualization there are different degrees of narcissism, depending on the degree of pathology in one’s self-structure. The etiology of maladaptive narcissism, according to Kernberg (1998a), can be traced to “parents who are cold and rejecting but admiring” (p. 41). In turn, based on specific types of childhood experiences, narcissistic individuals internalize the good attributes of significant others but devalue real objects by “project[ing] onto others all the negative aspects of themselves and others” (p. 41).

Kohut (1971) views normal (adaptive) narcissism as a positive attribute that makes one humorous, wise, and emphatic. He conceptualizes maladaptive narcissism as a disturbance of “[t]he equilibrium of primary narcissism…by the unavoidable shortcomings of maternal care,…the child replaces the previous perfection…by establishing a grandiose and exhibitionistic
image of the self…” (p. 25). Thus, the etiology of narcissism according to Kohut focuses on the failure of the mother to provide an emphatic environment.

Benjamin’s (1996) Interpersonal theory views maladaptive narcissism as “internalization of unrealistic adoration” (p.147). Interpersonal theory posits that one’s personality is shaped by interpersonal experiences with significant others which, in turn, are internalized. Thus, unlike Kernberg’s and Kohut’s conceptualizations, Benjamin’s approach views the etiology of narcissism as a consequence of parental adoration, which results in “the child become[ing] ‘hooked’ on false glory” (p. 145). Later in life, the narcissistic individual expects others to adore him or her. In addition, Benjamin argues that narcissism can be learned through interpersonal situations that foster narcissistic tendencies later in life, not just within the first five years of life as traditional psychoanalytic theorists argue. Famous and influential people are especially susceptible to developing narcissism:

…single episodes do not create the disorder, but many repetitions of such episodes can.

The public can and will deliver noncontingent adoration as well as deferential nurturance to the rich and famous. Given the right conditions, it is never too late to develop NPD [narcissistic personality disorder] (p. 147).

Thus, personality, according to Benjamin, is viewed as dynamic and changing depending on interpersonal feedback. Furthermore, implied in Benjamin’s theory is a dimensional view of personality disorders, meaning that the degree of severity of narcissism is on a continuum. Lubit (2002), a psychiatrist and executive coach, combines psychoanalytic and social learning theories by concluding, “[b]oth early childhood development experiences and the reinforcement of our behavior throughout life can lead to the behavior pattern we recognize as destructive narcissism” (p. 133). How can narcissistic Christian leaders modify their motives and harmful behavior? The
next section will explore a Christian model called formational leadership that can conceptualize the change processes.

**Formational Leadership**

Christian leadership is much needed in the 21st century. According to Barna (1997), the American church “is dying due to a lack of strong leadership” (p. 18). There are various definitions of Christian leadership and leaders. Kretzschmar (2002) defines leaders as “…people who have willing followers … have an impact on the lives and views of people, and on situations and structures …people who are able to inspire, encourage and guide others” (p. 46). The emphasis of this definition appears to be on inspiring and encouraging followers, which refers to visionary/charismatic leadership. Barna (1998) defines a Christian leader as “…someone who is called by God to lead and possess virtuous character and effectively motivates, mobilizes resources, and directs people toward the fulfillment of a jointly embraced vision from God” (p. 107). This definition connotes the “being” and “doing” of effective Christian leadership and points to embodied virtue ethics. Thus, Christian leadership is inherently value-based and needs to be informed by sound Christian spirituality.

Formational leadership emphasizes spiritual formation in the leader as a dynamic process. This proposed leadership model, called formational leadership, is based on Wesleyan theology and spirituality and includes three interrelated and mutually informing constructs: a pure heart (including godly character) of the leader (*orthokardia*) obtained from God (through God’s sanctifying grace and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit), which produces positive and “right” power motives (*orthodynamis*), which in turn influences effective and “right” leadership

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1 *Orthokardia* is a neologism Clapper (1990) created. *Orthokardia, orthopraxis* and *orthodoxy* are components that were used in Clapper’s (1985) dissertation as well as in Maddox writings (Clapper, 2010: 92). This paper utilizes a similar threefold pattern, but adds *orthodynamis* due to its relevance to Christian leadership.
practices and relationships with followers (*orthopraxis*). Further, right leadership practices reinforce a pure heart and motives (see Appendix A). It can be hypothesized that the more the Christian leader has achieved spiritual growth as evidenced by indicators of spiritual maturity the more effectively he or she practices godly leadership. This model assumes a circular causality, meaning a “right” or pure heart causes “right” power and influence processes in Christian leaders, which result in “right” and effective leadership practices. At the same time, “right” leadership practices affect the “heart” of the Christian leader including power and influence processes through feedback processes. As stated above, as the leader grows in sanctifying grace and increases his or her spiritual and emotional maturity, the leader increases his or her leadership effectiveness. Thus, this proposed leadership model is dynamic and constitutes an expansion of current Christian leadership models that are mostly static in nature. It is dynamic due to its mutually informing constructs and its linear growth projections. The more the leader grows in sanctifying grace the more he or she improves his or her leadership effectiveness (see Appendix B). This model is congruent with Wesleyan spirituality. The starting point of the model is having a pure or “right” heart (*orthokardia*). Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification and Christian perfection is one of the distinctions of Wesleyan spirituality, which is based on sanctifying grace (Kilian & Parker, 2003). Sanctification according to Wesley requires the circumcision and cleansing of the heart from impurities, which are sinful dispositions (Oden, 1994). This process produces pure intentions within the heart to avoid voluntary or conscious sin (Lindström, 1980). Next, this paper will outline each component of the model along with its theological background.
Orthokardia

*Orthokardia* (“right heart”) includes and presupposes Wesley’s concept of sanctification (Christian perfection). The heart is the “center of moral agency” according to Clapper (1985, p. 49). It is also the “seat of values, the home of the deep and abiding emotions” (p. 51). The heart has been affected by the Fall and is thus deceitful (Jer. 17:9), which requires correction from the outside (Clapper, 1985). The Holy Spirit is an outside force that can correct and change one’s heart, which is initiated by salvation that includes the process of sanctification. According to Maddox (1994), Wesley’s view of salvation has three dimensions that includes deliverance: “(1) immediately from the *penalty* of sin, (2) progressively from the *plague* of sin, and (3) eschatologically from the very *presence* of sin and its effects” (p. 143). Wesley’s soteriology views God’s grace operative in several ways toward several ends (Kilian & Parker, 2003).

According to Wesley, humans do not initiate salvation; they are given *prevenient grace*, which paves the way for *convicting grace*. This also means that humans are able to resist this grace. If convicting grace is accepted, it leads to *justifying grace*. Justifying grace provides the restoration to the favor of God including the elimination of guilt, which refers to the Western judicial emphasis. The Eastern therapeutic emphasis can be seen in Wesley’s view of *sanctifying grace*, which saves the believer “from the power and root of sin, and restore[s] to the image of God” (Oden, 1994, p. 247). Thus, *sanctifying grace* fosters actual change of the believer through a transformation into God’s image. The focus of Wesley’s soteriology is on sanctifying grace as a process. Christian perfection does not include absolute perfection, but it rather refers to purity of intention not to sin anymore. The term “perfection” in the Bible has also been translated as “maturation” or “completeness.” The static notion of “perfection” stems from a Western
interpretation of the text (cf. the Latin Vulgate, *perfectus*) rather than an Eastern understanding of the Greek original which implies a dynamic process towards holiness (Oden, 1994, p. 320).

Wesley differentiated between inbeing (original) sin and specific or personal sins. Original sin is an “innate corruption of the innermost nature of man [and] is compared to an evil root bearing like branches and like fruits” whereas specific sins “which proceed from original sin are compared to evil sprouts proceeding from the same evil root” (Lindström, 1980, p. 38). Personal sins are “actual transgressions” and consist of inward, outward, and “sins of omission (failure to do good),” which are “negative inward sins” (p. 38). Inward sins refer to “pride, wrath, and foolish desires,” whereas outward sins include actual sinful behaviors, which develop from inward sins. These inward sins are being removed during the process of sanctification according to Wesley (1952):

> Love has purified his heart from envy, malice, wrath, and unkind temper. It has cleansed him from pride, whereof only ‘cometh contention’; and he hath now ‘put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.’ And, indeed all possible ground for contention on his part is cut off (pp. 12-13).

It is important to note that Wesley saw personal sins as *intentional* and *voluntary* transgressions as opposed to *unintentional* transgressions of God’s law (Carter, 1992). Thus “human imperfections and unintentional offenses… do not fall into the category of sin,” which means for Wesley personal sin is based on evil motives and intentions (p. 271). It can be concluded that a pure heart based on the process of sanctification produces pure love, pure motives and intentions that reduce and potentially eliminate intentional personal sins in believers. Wesley’s (1952) own definition of Christian perfection is helpful here: “The loving God with all you heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none
contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love” (p. 42).

It is important to further discuss prevenient grace. Prevenient grace is universally given to all humans based on Christ’s atonement (Collins, 2007). This is similar to the Eastern Orthodox view that some measure of human freedom remained after the Fall for humans to turn to God (Maddox, 1990). In this view, similar to Eastern theology, Wesley believed that grace was given to all enabling human freedom. However, there are other benefits of prevenient grace, such as a basic knowledge of the attributes of God, re-inscription of the moral law, conscience, and the restraint of wickedness (Collins, 2007). Regarding a basic knowledge of the attributes of God, Wesley refers to general revelation derived from Romans 1:19, which “forms the basis for a natural theology” according to some theologians (p. 77). The second benefit (moral law being re-inscribed) is based on Wesley’s assertion that God would not leave humans in an utterly depraved state without giving them a glimpse of God’s moral law written upon their hearts. This aspect of prevenient grace also explains moral behavior in non-Christians, such as humanists, philanthropists, atheists, etc. Thus, moral behavior regardless of who performs it ultimately originates in God’s prevenient grace. The third benefit, conscience, is a supernatural gift based on God’s grace. It is important to note that, according to Wesley, the human conscience is not derived from nature (parents, biology, etc.), but from God based on grace. The fourth benefit, restraint of wickedness, is similar “to Luther’s orders of creation and preservation” and refers to God’s “restraining grace” to limit wickedness in society (Collins, 2007, p. 80). Prevenient grace provides non-Christian leaders with moral motives and values. For example, philanthropists donate large sums of money to alleviate suffering, provide educational facilities, etc. Examples of secular leaders who have made a difference are Oprah Winfrey and Bill Gates among many
others. However, as with many humanists, their motive is not glorify God, but to make a
difference in people’s lives, which separates secular moral leadership from Christian leadership.
The next component of the model is *orthodynamis*, which refers to having pure and moral power
motives, which will be discussed next.

*Orthodynamis*

*Orthodynamis* includes the Wesleyan concept of religious affections. Clapper (1985) discusses the importance of spiritual experiences in Christianity. He asserts that: “Theology must understand the causes, nature, and the importance of felt experience within the religious life” (p. 1). He outlines the religious affections according to Wesley and contrasts them with Jonathan Edward’s understanding of religious affections. For Wesley the affections “are not simply feelings ... they are indispensable motivating inclinations behind human action” which integrate “rational and emotional dimensions of human life into holistic inclinations toward action” (Maddox, 1998, p. 40). Further, they are not “self-causative,” but are triggered by one’s experience with God, meaning one has the liberty to “enact any particular inclination,” (Maddox, 1998, p. 40). This requires an active cooperation with God. Clapper (1985) observes that for Wesley, Christian affections “are not the random sensations which can come and go without our control but are voluntary, ordered, and reasonable” (p. 80). Thus, Christian affections are better described as “enduring dispositions” or “tempers” (Collins, 1998, p. 171; Maddox, 1998, p. 41). Land (1994) summarizes Christian affections as “objective, relational, and dispositional” (p. 134). They require that God is the object (objective), since “if God is not the object, they are not Christian affections” (Clapper, 1985, p. 109). They are relational because they are experienced in relationship with God and others, and Christian affections are dispositional because they become more like virtues or personality traits if perfected. The last aspect is very important for
the formation of Christian leaders. Christian leaders can develop ethical personality and character traits, such as being loving, compassionate, forgiving, etc. The focus is on others, since the telos of Christian affections is “outside of the self,” meaning “to love God and one’s neighbor, to take joy in the happiness of others, …all imply dispositions to behave in certain ways” (Clapper, 1985, p. 113). This separates the moral secular leader from the Christian leader who cooperates with God towards Christian perfection.

Three religious affections are especially relevant for Christian leadership: love, compassion, and the fear of God, which fosters humility. These three affections have a direct relationship to the use of prosocial power when it comes to Christian leadership, since power needs to be associated with mature Christian character (Kretzschmar, 2002). The moral emotion of compassion is especially relevant for leadership in general and Christian leadership in particular. Maddox (2003) asserts that “certain key virtues” need to be strengthened by “works of mercy” of which compassion is an example (p.122). Compassion encourages leaders to identify with the needs of others and resembles empathy. However, empathy (cognitive and emotional) is value neutral and it needs to develop further into the moral emotion of compassion in order to affect righteous outcomes.

This component of the model includes the concepts of power motive and power well known in the secular leadership literature (French and Raven, 1959; Raven, 1974; 1993; McClelland, 1975; 1985). Power and leadership are closely related depending on one’s definition of leadership. McClelland (1975) conceptualizes leadership as an influence relationship between a leader and his or her followers. Power can be defined as “the ability to change the behavior of others,” as opposed to the concept of authority, which is “the right to try to change or direct others” (Vecchio, 1997, p.71). Kets De Vries (1991) views power as being
“rooted in the heart of human nature and behavior, involving fundamental feelings about superiority and inferiority, autonomy and dependence, even love and hate” (p.123). Thus, power can be considered to be fundamental to the human condition. When it comes to morality and ethics, power is essentially value neutral and can therefore be used for both good and evil (Kets De Vries, 1991). Raven (1974) linked social power with influence and defined social influence as “a change in a person’s cognitions, attitude, or behavior which has its origin in another person or group” (p.173). Social power is therefore viewed as one’s potential influence. French and Raven (1959) presented five sources of social power: reward power (the “ability to reward”), coercive power (the “ability to manipulate the attainment of valences”), legitimate power (based on a “legitimate right to influence”), expert power (based on “the extent of knowledge” that is attributed to a leader), and referent power (based on “a feeling of oneness” with the leader) (pp. 156-163). Raven (1974) added informational power, which he defined as a potential influence “result[ing] [in] a basic change in cognitive elements…[based on] information communicated by the agent” (p. 173).

Raven (1993) argued that there are several motives that affect the choice of a particular power source: (1) attaining extrinsic goals (e.g. increase productivity), (2) satisfying internal needs (i.e., “power, status, security, self-esteem”), (3) role requirements/ higher authority, (4) motivation to benefit or harm, and (5) “desired status in the eyes of self, target, third party” (p. 240). Regarding satisfying an internal need (and maybe regarding desired status and power as well), Raven (1993) cited some evidence that influencing agents who lack self-confidence will more likely “use ‘harder’ forms of influence, such as coercion, even when information might be effective” (p. 239). These internal motives and needs resemble those of narcissistic leaders.
McClelland (1975, 1985) conceptualized the power need by outlining four different stages, which also correspond to the four stages of ego development following Freud and Erikson: Stage I (the intake modality) is characterized by obtaining strength from the outside (i.e., mother, etc.), stage II (the autonomy modality) refers to the need to control oneself, stage III (the assertion modality) involves the need to control and impact others, and stage IV (the mutuality modality) represents the need to use power for others. Stage IV can be said to be the most mature stage, since people who reach stage IV “are more responsible in organizations, less ego-involved, more willing to seek expert help when appropriate, more open with intimates,” yet “without feeling that [they are] ‘losing’ [themselves] in the process” (McClelland, 1975, pp. 23-24). However, a better conceptualization of maturity is being flexible “to use whatever mode is appropriate to the situation” (p. 24). Maturity also serves to differentiate between negative and positive sides of power. The negative and positive sides of power correspond to personalized and socialized forms of power. McClelland (1975) defines personalized power as being “characterized by the dominance-submission mode: If I win, you lose” (p. 263). Personalized (P) power is more primitive and “leads to simple and direct means of feeling powerful—drinking heavily, acquiring ‘prestige supplies,’ and being aggressive,” which is often associated with narcissism (p. 263). On the other hand, socialized (S) power is characterized by:

- a concern for group goals, for finding those goals that will move men, for helping the group to formulate them, for taking the initiative in providing means of achieving them, and for giving group members the feeling of competence they need to work hard for them. In fantasy it leads to a concern with exercising influence for others…(p.263).

Thus, S power is more mature than P power based on its emphasis on altruism. By applying S power in leadership, one has to wrestle with a paradox: In order to be an effective leader, he or
she “must turn all of his [or her] followers into leaders” (p. 262).

The relationship between sources of power and effective leadership, in particular transformational leadership, seems to depend on motives and values. As Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) assert, truly transformational leaders have altruistic values, as opposed to pseudo-transformational leaders, who are egotistical and self-centered. Thus, authentic transformational leaders behave morally, whereas pseudo-transformational leaders behave immorally. Regarding the power motive, transformational leaders can be said to use McClelland’s (1975) socialized power, whereas pseudo-transformational leaders use personalized power. In Collins’ (2001) Good to Great, “Level 5 Executive[s],” despite not being labeled as transformational leaders, can be said to display socialized power by “channel[ing] their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company” (p.21). These leaders were found to be humble and driven to make their organizations great.

Humility is a religious or Christian affection that is fostered in Christian leaders during active cooperation with the Holy Spirit, which would ensure a socialized power orientation. Love and compassion constitute essential ingredients for formational leadership. Wesley’s notion of loving God and loving others as one loves him or herself can reduce intentional harmful behaviors in Christian leaders. Compassion includes care and concern for others, which means Christian leaders who practice formational leadership display authentic care for their employees similar to the concept of being godly “shepherds.” According to large study, the majority of employees who participated in the study preferred a caring leader and viewed this as being more important than making more money (Goleman, 2006). Compassion and caring refers to social intelligence, which has important implications for formational leadership. The next section will discuss moral and “right” leadership behaviors that flow from orthokardia and orthodynamis.
Orthopraxis

Orthopraxis contains concepts from emotionally and socially intelligent leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, Goleman, 2006; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). According to Holt and Marques (2012), empathy is an essential ingredient for leadership in the 21st century. The authors argue that the notion that effective leaders need to be narcissistic, meaning displaying charisma, vision, assertiveness, etc., is outdated and leadership training programs need to include the development of empathy skills. Empathy skills are included in Primal Leadership theory, which was developed by Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2002). It includes the concept of emotional intelligence and consists of two major competency domains: personal competence and social competence. Personal competence includes self-awareness (emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence) and self-management (emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism) and social competence includes social awareness (empathy, organizational awareness, and service) and relationship management (inspirational leadership, influence, developing others, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration) (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). This model emerged from Goleman’s emotional intelligence concept (Goleman, 1995). Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) argue that when leaders fail to empathize with followers “they create dissonance, sending needlessly upsetting messages,” which distracts from the organizational mission thereby reducing leadership effectiveness (p. 19). In order to be empathic, the leader needs to be self-aware and be able to manage him- or herself. These foundational skills enable the leader to manage relationships, which refers to social competence according to the Primal Leadership model (PLM).
More recently Goleman (2006) developed a similar construct, called social intelligence, which can be said to be an extension of the social competence domain within the PLM. It includes two main domains: social awareness (primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy, and social cognition) and social facility (synchrony, self-presentation, influence, and concern). Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) combined PLM and social intelligence and included seven qualities: Empathy, attunement, organizational awareness, influence, developing others, inspiration, and teamwork (pp. 78-79). These qualities were included in the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory, which is a 360-degree evaluation instrument.

This model along with the PLM include skills that pertain to all three components of the formational leadership model. The personal competence and the first skill set of social competence (social awareness) of the PLM and the social awareness skill set of the social intelligence model are skills that can be included in the first two components – orthokardia and orthodynamis. Relationship management (of the PLM) and social facility (second domain of social intelligence) are leadership behaviors that belong to third component of formational leadership (orthopraxis). To discuss each leadership behavior goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, several relationship management leadership skills from the PLM and most of the social facility skills in the social intelligence model resembles transformational leadership skills. The most known transformational leadership (TL) model is Bass’ (1985) model, but there are other TL models, such as by Sashkin’s and Sashkin’s (2003) called Visionary Leadership Theory.

One of the leadership skills derived from social intelligence referred to as concern, is most relevant for formational leadership. As mentioned above, a caring boss was more important for employees than a high salary. Care is related to concern, which is the behavioral
manifestation of the moral emotion and religious affection, compassion. Empathy is a precondition for compassion and refers to “taking employees’ feelings into thoughtful consideration,” which fosters “resonance” between the leader and follower (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 2002, p. 50). However, empathy can remain merely on the cognitive level and therefore may often not include feeling the emotions of others. Compassion develops from empathy and is defined as “feeling personal distress at the suffering of another and wanting to ameliorate it” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 289). This motivates a leader to exercise concern, which is an essential leadership behavior for formational leadership. Concern includes ethical and moral behaviors that aim at eliminating organizational injustices, such prejudices towards women, elderly, minorities, etc. It creates healthy organizational cultures based on compassion and social justice.

Based on the positive feedback from employees, Christian leaders feel empowered and experience reinforcement to continue the development of Christian virtues and ethical character, which further motivates a Christian leader to exercise pure power motives based on the continued development of Christian affections (love, compassion, and humility). The next section will provide some practical suggestions to develop Christian leaders who have displayed toxic leadership.

**Implications for Christian leadership development**

The Christian tradition has excellent resources for matters of the “heart.” Approaches from the spiritual formation tradition can be very helpful for correcting flawed personality traits. In the Wesleyan tradition:

The goal of spirituality…is to bring the converted believer into the experience of sanctifying grace whereby inner sin is cleansed, the image of God restored, and the heart
so filled with divine love that the believer can love God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength and the neighbor as one’s self (Tracy, 2004, p. 116).

This requires that Christian leaders in general and narcissistic leaders in particular are open to the discipline of guidance, which often includes spiritual direction (Foster, 1988). This can occur in individual and group formats, such as in the Wesleyan tradition which has included class meetings and bands (Foster, 1988). The role of the spiritual director, whether direction takes place in groups or in individual sessions, is “simply and clearly to lead us to the real Director” and the director is the “means of God to open the path to the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit” (p. 185). Since narcissistic leaders tend to be very individualistic, they often resist guidance and mentoring. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1954) addresses individualistic German evangelical Christians when he writes: “The Christian needs another Christian who speaks God’s Word to him [and] he needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth” (p. 23). This means Christians need to be interdependent and require mutual accountability to avoid being deceived. Narcissistic leaders are especially defensive and often rationalize and justify their actions.

A pragmatic and useful approach to working with narcissistic personalities who are very defensive is conceptualizing personality as consisting of different sub-personality parts or selves. By conveying to narcissistic leaders that there are “bad” parts and “good” parts within him or herself may make him or her more open to change. According to a treatment manual for sex offenders, who are often both defensive and narcissistic, there are different personality parts: victim, perpetrator/lawyer, and positive self among others (PPI, 2012). Applied to formational leadership, “perpetrator” can be renamed “aggressor self” and the “positive self” can be renamed “Imago Dei (image of God) self.” The “victim self” description is retained, which includes the
feeling of giving up, defeated, needy, and expecting to be treated poorly, etc. This part either takes no responsibility or takes all responsibility. The “aggressor self” includes one’s propensity to harm others, not caring about consequences, justifying or minimizing them, as well as using aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviors. This part often produces the following defensive processes: Denial, rationalization, acting out, help rejecting and complaining. Both personality parts are direct effects from the Fall and these parts can therefore be described as the sinful nature (“sarx”). The “Imago Dei self” is the most positive personality part and is present in both, Christians and non-Christians. It is the result of God’s prevenient grace and includes the following: Practicing goodness, being emotionally mature, being compassionate, and being assertive as opposed to being aggressive or passive-aggressive. Adaptive coping skills motivated by this personality part include altruism, anticipation, humor, and sublimation (re-directing aggressive and inappropriate sexual impulses to engage in alternative behaviors, i.e., artistic and prosocial behaviors). In addition, the “Imago Dei self” includes “reason muscles” or better described as interpersonal muscles that help to resolve conflict, which are awareness, humility, reliability, responsibility, and empathy (precondition for compassion) (Godwin, 2008, p. 65). They resemble emotional and social intelligence and serve as descriptive indicators for formational leadership in general and for orthokardia and orthodynamis in particular. After Christian conversion and the ongoing process of sanctification, this personality part most resembles the moral image of God and thus includes Wesley’s concept of Christian perfection. The next few paragraphs will provide suggestions for Christian leadership development based on psychotherapeutic approaches that inform the strategic application of the methods of spiritual formation.
Steps to strengthen *Orthokardia*

Christian coaches, therapists, or spiritual directors who assist Christian leaders would benefit from having indicators that serve as intervention targets. Godwin’s (2008) interpersonal “muscles” are good indicators for *orthokardia*, which include the following: Awareness (“ability to observe [or notice] actual personal wrongness [or shortcomings]”), humility, which is shared with *orthodynamis* (“ability to acknowledge potential personal wrongness”), and reliability (“ability to correct personal wrongness [or shortcomings]”) (Godwin, 2008, p. 83). These indicators can be developed in non-Christian leaders based on the Wesleyan concept of prevenient grace. However, in Christian leaders due to conversion and the process of sanctification these can be further strengthened because of cooperating with the Holy Spirit. Awareness can be fostered in asking about the narcissistic leader’s emotions, especially vulnerable feelings, such as anxiety, sadness, depression, and envy and shame, which are very common in narcissists. These feelings are associated with the “victim” self. “Victim” feelings often turn into frustration, anger, rage, etc., which are secondary emotions and are associated with the “aggressor” self. Once narcissistic leaders are taught how to be aware of “victim” feelings how they often trigger “aggressor” feelings, he or she can learn to manage them and utilize their “Imago Dei” self, which would ensure adequate coping and thereby avoiding sinful behavior pattern that evolve from “aggressor” feelings (anger, rage, etc.).

Humility is another indicator that could be developed in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. It involves being willing to admit that one is wrong, which paves the way for apologies. Narcissistic leaders are very defensive of “protective” and often use the following defenses: rationalization (including justification and minimization), devaluation/idealization, and perfectionism (see above). Therefore, the parts language is particularly promising for narcissistic
leaders to reduce defensiveness. It is easier to acknowledge that he or she has an “aggressor self” that is responsible for abusive behavior, impulse control problems, and moral failures. The Christian leader could be encouraged to strengthen his or her “*Imago Dei* self,” which includes humility.

The final indicator is reliability, which is defined as the “ability to correct personal wrongness” based on the interpersonal muscles concept (Godwin, 2008, p. 83). The Christian leader needs to develop awareness, humility, and reliability, which would ensure that the leader takes active steps to correct shortcomings. Correcting mistakes, shortcomings, etc. can be accomplished by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform the Christian leader, which often includes the practice of spiritual disciplines (Foster, 1988). Spiritual disciplines are a “means of receiving [God’s] grace” (p. 7). Disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, and service, etc. develop a spiritual habit that enables the Holy Spirit to transform the heart of the Christian leader.

The spiritual disciplines can also target specific sins that Christian leaders may struggle with (“signature sins”). For example, of the seven deadly sins (pride, lust, gluttony, greed, laziness, impatience or aggression, and envy), Christian leaders may struggle with pride, impatience/aggression, and envy. A Christian coach or spiritual director could guide the Christian leader to visualize and imagine the three corresponding virtues or religious affections, which are humility (pride), patience (impatience/aggression), and gratitude (envy), which also includes compassion. Visualization of virtues helps Christian leaders achieve them with the help of the Holy Spirit and motivates them to pursue and develop them. This is similar to leaders who

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Footnote 2: Formerly anger, but emotions are not sinful, since Jesus was angry as well.
aspire to pursue an organizational vision. To further develop these virtues, Christian leaders could practice the three disciplines to foster humility: Submission, service, and solitude, which “puts a stopper on all self-justification” and to allow “God to my justifier” (Foster, 1988, p. 101, 107). Thus, this discipline crucifies the Christian leader’s desire or perceived need to be important. To cultivate patience, the leader could practice the “discipline of slowing,” which involves “deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait” (slow check-out lines, slow lane on the interstate, etc.) (Ortberg, 2002, p. 83). Finally, gratitude can be strengthened by gratitude journaling and the disciplines of worship and simplicity. The following reflection questions can be asked of narcissistic leaders: Are you willing to change and willing to receive constructive feedback from others? Are you open to being transformed by the Holy Spirit? To what extent are you cooperating with the Holy Spirit in your formation experience? The next section will focus on ways to foster orthodynamis.

Steps to strengthen Orthodynamis

Orthodynamis is all about the power motive in Christian leaders, which emphasizes three religious affections: love, humility, and compassion. Related to these affections are the three interpersonal muscles that are relevant here: Responsibility, humility, and empathy, which should produce compassion. Humility applies to both orthokardia and orthodynamis as discussed above. Godwin (2008) defines responsibility as the “ability to be bothered by personal wrongness” and empathy as the “ability to be bothered if your personal wrongness hurts others,” which can develop the moral emotion and religious affection of compassion (p. 83). These can serve as indicators for orthodynamis. Love is assumed to be foundational and produced by a pure heart (see orthokardia). Humility is the precondition of responsibility, which in turn paves the way for empathy and compassion. The Christian leader needs to learn that his or her power
motive needs to include empathy and compassion and even love for God and for self. Christian narcissistic leaders are excellent at deceiving themselves (rationalizations) that their grandiose strivings and visions originate in God and belong to “Kingdom work.” Gently pointing out to them that their “fantasies of unlimited success” can potentially hurt followers, compromise kingdom values, and ultimately destroy churches and other Christian organizations will gradually open their eyes.

In addition, an assertive church board could gently confront him or her to work collaboratively with the board (democratic leadership style), which would slowly transform a personalized power orientation into a socialized power orientation with the focus on God’s kingdom (McClelland, 1975). Working with a board or under an administrative bishop would strengthen the narcissistic leader’s ability to submit and would encourage the discipline of submission, which presupposes self-denial. Self-denial does not entail the loss of the leader’s identity nor can self-denial be equated with self-contempt (Foster, 1988). However, it “declares that [the leader is] of infinite worth and shows [him or her] how to realize it (p. 114). “When we live outside of self-denial, we demand [“aggressor” self] that things go our way” and “when they do not, we revert to self-pity—‘Poor me’ [“victim” self]” (p. 114). This eloquently describes the internal struggle narcissistic leaders often experience, especially since narcissism is a disorder of self-esteem (Furnham, 2010). Romans 12:3b is helpful here to illustrate healthy self-esteem: “Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us (NLT-italics mine).” This means that Christians should hold a realistic view of themselves, not too high and not too low. The shy narcissistic type described above tends to shame him- or herself too much and often engages in self-contempt. He or she needs to notice the gifts and talents God has given him or her. The
arrogant narcissist overcompensates and projects an unrealistically “perfect” self-esteem and needs to learn to view him- or herself as God sees him or her with God-given talents being able to acknowledge flaws, which is humility as defined by Godwin (2008).

Narcissistic leaders benefit from knowing that nobody is perfect and appropriate self-disclosure of the spiritual director, coach, or Christian therapist about his or her fallibility along with the acceptance of it would help the narcissistic leader accept his or her own faults (Benjamin, 1996). This should occur within a trusting relationship between the leader and the coach/spiritual director, which is most “corrective” when the working relationship is long-term and close (Ronningstam, 2009, p. 764). Furthermore, the Christian leader benefits from “corrective disillusionment” experiences (constructive feedback from bishop, family illnesses, leave of absence for the purpose of rehabilitation, experiences of failure, etc.) that can correct his or her unrealistic self-evaluations, which entail challenging “the previous grandiose self-experience, bringing the view of self into greater congruence with actual talents, abilities, and status” (Ronningstam, 2009, p. 765). Finally, the leader’s fantasies can be explored after the leader trusts the coach, etc. to differentiate between personalized power motives and socialized, or in this context, kingdom power motives. The following reflective questions can be asked: What are your fantasies regarding your role as a Christian leader? Describe your calling as a Christian leader/pastor—how did you know God called you to be a leader? How do you differentiate between personalized and socialized power needs? What are your God-given strengths and talents and what are your weaknesses? The next section will outline how to strengthen orthopraxis.
**Steps to strengthen Orthopraxis**

Orthopraxis flows directly from the previous two components. Once the heart of the Christian leader is being transformed and once his or her power motives are pure and Christo-centric, the leadership behaviors will follow suit. However, the spiritual director, coach, or Christian therapist can provide ongoing accountability and encourage the establishment of a peer accountability structure (cf. band meetings with other leaders, assertive church board, etc.) to safeguard that leadership behaviors are ethical and moral. This is especially helpful for displaying concern and care for followers and the entire organizational system. The organizational culture needs to reflect Christian core values that are congruent with Christian affections, such as compassion, love, and humility, etc. Leaders need to encourage themselves and their followers to aspire these core values. Core values need to be clearly communicated to followers and modelled for culture building to occur (Schein, 1992). The following reflective questions could be asked: How have you modelled the core values of your organization? How have you addressed behavior in your organization that contradicts these core values? What steps can you take to improve the communication of these core values? Have you addressed injustices in your organization?

**Conclusion**

This paper discussed the effects of narcissistic leadership in secular and Christian contexts and answered the question as to why even Christian leaders commit moral failures and harm their followers. A discussion on the narcissism was provided to educate the reader on narcissistic emotions, defenses, behavior patterns, and on the etiology of narcissism. This paper proposed a Christian leadership model, called formational leadership, that provides a blueprint for transforming the leader’s heart (*orthokardia*), the leader’s power motives (*orthodynamis*),
and the leaders’ leadership skills and behaviors (*orthopraxis*). The final section of this paper provided practical steps for Christian leadership development informed by the spiritual formation tradition.

Narcissistic leaders tend to be reluctant to seek help and guidance as mentioned above. Therefore, strong church boards need to be established to hold narcissistic leaders accountable. The leader may initially be reluctant to engage in the process of guidance, but may gradually work collaboratively with the spiritual director or coach if he or she senses that the coach truly respects and cares about the leader. Thus, the working relationship between the leader and coach is crucial. Since narcissistic individuals tend to seek positions of power, they often occupy leadership positions in Christian organizations including churches. These narcissistic leaders need to be transformed by the Holy Spirit so that Christian organizations can be “Salt and Light” in secular societies. This will enable Christian organizations to fulfill Jesus’ mandate to make disciples of all nations.
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Appendix A

Orthokardia  Orthodynamis

Orthopraxis
Appendix B

Leadership

Effectiveness

Orthokardia → Orthodynamis

Orthopraxis

Spiritual Growth