Defining Christian Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

Christian Transformational Leadership is a major leadership theory whereby the Christian leader, most simply, seeks to influence (or transform) followers on the basis of his or her vision and character. However, definitions of the theory remain sketchy, and in their present form do not offer an adequate basis for research. This article details how a suitable body of Christian Transformational Leadership literature was selected and a definition extracted from the literature. It further suggests ways in which a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership may serve to advance research in the field.

1. Introduction

It is of the utmost importance that theories of Christian leadership should be defined. Without adequate definitions, it is not possible to distinguish one theory from another, it is not possible to determine who practices them, and it is not possible to research their efficacy.

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The purpose of this article is to define a Christian leadership theory which I here name *Christian Transformational Leadership*. This is a theory which bears many similarities to the well-known *secular* leadership theory, *Transformational (or Transforming) Leadership*.[2] It is *not* the purpose of this article to make any *assessment* of Christian Transformational Leadership, either from the point of view of theology or praxis.

Christian Transformational Leadership incorporates *several* Christian leadership theories. These include (in alphabetical order) connective leadership (Gibbs 2005:27), courageous leadership (Hybels 2002:12), relational leadership (Wright 2000:2), servant leadership (Hunter 2004:20), spiritual leadership (Sanders 1994:5), ternary leadership (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:96), and transforming leadership (Ford 1991:3). It may include other, similar theories which are not included in this research.[3]

As a group, these theories may represent the dominant Christian leadership theory today. It is endorsed by major theological seminaries, such as Fuller Theological Seminary (Gibbs 2005, Cover), Princeton Theological Seminary (Guder 1998, Cover), and Moody Bible Institute (Sanders 1994:ix), and by leading Christian organizations, such as

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[2] In the Southern African context, Transformational Leadership needs to be differentiated from the *transformational agenda*, which focuses on the promotion of 'a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society' (African National Congress 2010:1). Transformational Leadership tends to refer to a *method* of leadership rather than specific *goals*.

[3] Some theorists refer to Transformational Leadership *theories* (plural) (Kark, Shamir, and Chen 2003:2), thus suggesting that Transformational Leadership represents a *genus*. Yukl (1999:1) refers to 'versions of transformational leadership'. It will be seen in due course that all of these theories bear the same major characteristics.

Trinity Broadcasting Network (Munroe 2005, Cover), The Navigators (Stanley and Clinton 1992:6), and World Vision (Thomas 1999, Cover).

Having briefly introduced Christian Transformational Leadership, it first needs to be considered how one may build a *definition* of the same as a *point of departure*. That is, it needs to be considered where the theory finds its *roots*. With this in mind, the following section describes the search for such a 'starting point'.

2. Starting Point for the Definition

There is a strong body of Christian leadership literature which bears key characteristics of *secular* Transformational Leadership. Further, much of this literature records its *debt* to secular Transformational (or Transforming) Leadership. In fact, it records its debt to secular Transformational Leadership more often than it does to any other leadership theory (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:51; Barna 1997:21; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:17; Ford 1991:22; Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:253; Stanley and Clinton 1992:236; Wofford 1999:19; Wright 2000:2).

With this in mind, it seemed to stand to reason that I should search the Christian leadership literature for definitions of leadership which carried the labels 'transformational' or 'transforming'. In this way, a definition could be worked out on the basis of *existing* definitions of Transformational (or Transforming) Leadership.[4]

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[4] This has in fact been attempted by Barna (1997:24). However, Barna largely bases his synthesis on *secular* Transformational Leadership theory. This is not entirely the same as Christian Transformational Leadership theory, as will be seen.

This, however, did not turn out to be as simple as imagined. Few books on Christian leadership identify themselves as 'transformational' or 'transforming' (the few which do are Daman 2006; Everist and Nessan 2008; Ford 1991; Lewis 1996; Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt 2000; Jinkins 2002; Wofford 1999). Further, when two-thirds of the distinctly 'transformational' Christian books had been obtained (the exceptions being Daman and Lewis), none of these offered a concise *definition* of Christian Transformational Leadership. It was clear that a more satisfactory approach was required.

As a second approach, it seemed that one might seek an *archetypal model* of leadership to which Christian Transformational Leadership could trace its roots. If such an archetypal model existed, a definition could be worked out on the basis of a common origin. On the surface of it, secular Transformational (or Transforming) Leadership provided such a model. This was first described by Burns (1978), and further developed by Bass (1985), whose names are now synonymous with the theory.

However, on closer examination, this approach could not be sustained either. There were at least two books on Christian leadership (Engstrom 1976; Sanders 1969) which predated Burns and Bass, yet manifested every major characteristic of secular Transformational Leadership. This raised the possibility that secular Transformational Leadership was derived from Christian Transformational Leadership; alternatively, that both secular and Christian Transformational Leadership originated in a common source.

There was, however, no common source to be found. For example, the New Testament could not readily be considered a common source, since Burns (1978:517, 522) makes only four references to the

leadership of either Jesus or Paul, and Bass and Riggio (2006:275)[5] make none.

All things considered, *secular Transformational Leadership* is chosen as the point of departure for a definition of *Christian Transformational Leadership*, for two reasons. Firstly, secular Transformational leadership is a major leadership theory which offers a (mostly) clear definition which may serve as a point of departure for a Christian theory (Den Hartog et al. 1999; Leadership Theories, 2008; Van Wagner 2007:1), and secondly, again, secular Transformational Leadership is the one theory to which Christian Transformational Leadership most often records its debt.

A definition of Christian Transformational Leadership will therefore be worked out as follows: firstly, a definition of *secular* Transformational Leadership will be obtained; secondly, Christian leadership literature will be selected which reveals all the major characteristics of secular Transformational Leadership; and thirdly, a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership will be *extracted* from the selected Christian leadership literature.[6]

Having now chosen secular Transformational Leadership as the starting point for the selection of the Christian literature, I shall first provide a *definition* of secular Transformational Leadership.

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[5] This is the second edition of Bass' seminal work (Bass 1985). The first edition is now rare.

[6] The fact that the Christian Transformational Leadership shares major characteristics of secular Transformational (or Transforming) Leadership does not exclude the possibility that it may have further, unique characteristics which are essential to its core definition, and differentiate it from secular Transformational Leadership.

3. Features of Secular Transformational Leadership

Secular Transformational Leadership is of course *secular*. The term 'secular' is used here for the purpose of distinguishing such leadership from its distinctively *Christian* variant, Christian Transformational Leadership. In this article, secular Transformational Leadership will refer to Transformational Leadership which does not declare a Christian or biblical approach to leadership, and makes little if any reference to Biblical leadership or biblical texts (examples are Burns 1978:517, 522; Bass and Riggio 2006:275).

A core feature of secular Transformational Leadership is *influence* (Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:1; Transformational Leadership, 2007; Tucker and Russell 2004:1). This means that the leader is a person who influences followers, or (less frequently) is influenced *by* them (Burns 1978:20). Influence is the concept from which the terms 'transforming' and 'transformational' derive. Rather than merely having a 'transactional' relationship with followers, the leader seeks to '[engage] the full person of the follower' (Burns 1978:4). The leader seeks to exercise 'influence without authority' (Cohen and Bradford 1990, Cover).

Influence necessitates, above all, two *characteristics* in the transformational leader.

Firstly, he or she needs to have *'charisma'* (Bass and Riggio 2006:25; Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:2). This may be described more accurately as *persuasiveness*, and means that the leader will have the ability to

persuade people about where an organization needs to go (Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:1; Clark 2007:3).[7]

Secondly, the leader will be a competent *strategist* (Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:1; Murphy 2008:2). Such strategizing is both a science and an art, and looks for the best way in which a plan may be made to work.

The *purpose* of influence is to achieve long-term *goals* (Bass and Avolio 1993:19; Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:6). A leader promotes such goals, and mobilizes others to reach them (Barna 1997:21; Martocchio and Ferris 2003:371). These goals are therefore said to be *shared by* the leader and followers (Bass and Riggio 2006:53; Ciulla and Burns 2004:151).

Finally, while each of these features is important to the definition of secular Transformational Leadership, a single feature is seen to lie at the *root* of them all. This is *character* (Burns 1978:74; Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:2; Fairholm 2001:2; Hunter 2004:141).[8] Character may be described as the *core idea* of secular Transformational Leadership, and lays the *foundation* for influence (Burns 1978:43), persuasiveness (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:51), sound strategy (Burns 1978:74), and the formation of shared goals (Gilley, Callahan, and Bierema 2002:11).

I now draw these features together in a *definition:*

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[7] Charisma usually includes four *aspects* (Bass and Riggio 2006:228; Bass and Steidlmeier 1998:1). These are, however, often combined into one (Bass and Riggio 2006:25). The details are beyond the scope of this article, and are not important here.

[8] Burns prefers the term 'values'.

> Secular Transformational Leadership is leadership which is not distinctly Biblical or Christian. It holds that a leader's character, persuasiveness, and ability to strategize guarantee that he or she will be influential (or transformational) to achieve shared goals.[9]

Having now obtained a definition of secular Transformational Leadership, in the following section Christian leadership literature will be selected which reveals the major characteristics of such leadership. A definition of Christian Transformational Leadership will then be *extracted* from this literature.

4. Selection of the Christian Leadership Literature

On the basis of the definition of *secular* Transformational Leadership, a body of Christian leadership literature comprising twenty-three books, or forty-six authors, is now selected: Barna (1997), Banks and Ledbetter (2004), Blackaby and Blackaby (2001), Clinton (1988), Engstrom (1976), Everist and Nessan (2008), Ford (1993), Gibbs (2005), Guder (1998), Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt (2000), Hunter (2004), Hybels (2002), Jinkins (2002), Maxwell (1998), Munroe (2005), Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006), Sanders (1994), Stanley (2006), Stanley and Clinton (1992), Thomas (1999), Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath (1999), Wofford (1999), and Wright (2000).

For the purpose of this selection, I made a wide search of the Christian leadership literature, then narrowed it down to those books which, on the information available, appeared to exhibit secular Transformational Leadership characteristics. The search was concluded when it seemed to be exhausted through repetition.

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[9] The term 'transformational' is merely used for context here. The term 'influence' is preferred, because it is far more common in the literature.

Eleven of the twenty-three selected books were chosen on the basis that they were ranked among the Top 100 books in their category by Amazon Books.' The remainder were ranked in the top million either by Amazon Books or Barnes & Noble (in other words, they enjoyed modest popularity). Two exceptions were allowed, on the basis that these books were specifically labeled 'transforming' Christian leadership. These are Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt (2000) and Wofford (1999).[10] All of the selected books take, as their subject matter, Christian leadership or Christian ministry, with the exception of Stanley and Clinton (1992), who deal with a more specialised aspect of Christian leadership, namely *mentoring*.[11]

Each book was rated for its conformity to the five major features of secular Transformational Leadership, namely character, influence, persuasiveness, the ability to strategize, and shared goals. All of the selected books revealed all of the five major features of secular Transformational Leadership. However, eight of these books (35%) were thought to reveal one of these features in a weakened form, while five of these books (22%) revealed *two* of these features in weakened form.[12]

Now that the Christian Transformational Leadership books have been selected, a definition of Christian Transformational leadership may be

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[10] These two books fell below the top million Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble.

[11] Mentoring is a key characteristic of both secular and Christian Transformational Leadership (Wright 2000:44). It is one of the four aspects of 'charisma' referred to earlier.

[12] By 'weakened' form is meant compromised clarity. For example, with regard to character, Clinton (1988:74) states: 'Character is foundational if a leader is to influence people...' (a 'strong' form), while Thomas (1999:13) states: 'The Christian leader should be... continually building a substantive life' (a 'weakened' form). Thomas is almost certainly referring to character, yet his statement lacks some clarity.

extracted from these books. Firstly, however, definitions of Christian leadership which the books themselves provide will be discussed. This is the focus of the following section.

5. Definitions of Christian Transformational Leadership

Just over half of the twenty-three selected books offer a concise *definition* of Christian leadership. These definitions will first be listed, then examined both for commonalities and contradictions. Thirteen definitions follow.

- Banks and Ledbetter (2004:16): 'leadership involves a person, group, or organization who shows the way in an area of life—whether in the short- or the long-term—and in doing so both influences and empowers enough people to bring about change in that area'.
- Barna (1997:25): 'A leader is one who mobilizes; one whose focus is influencing people; a person who is goal driven; someone who has an orientation in common with those who rely upon him for leadership; and someone who has people willing to follow them'.
- Blackaby and Blackaby (2001:20): 'Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda'.
- Clinton (1988:14): 'Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God's people toward His purposes for the group'.
- Engstrom (1976:24): 'the concept of leader ... means one who guides activities of others and who himself acts and performs to bring those activities about. He is capable of performing acts which will guide a group in achieving objectives. He takes the capacities of vision and faith, has the ability to be concerned and to comprehend, exercises action through effective and personal

influence in the direction of an enterprise and the development of the potential into the practical and/or profitable means'.

- Everist and Nessan (2008:40): 'Leadership [is] the art of "mobilizing people to make progress on the hardest problems"'.
- Hunter (2004:32): '[Leadership is] the skills of influencing people to enthusiastically work toward goals identified as being for the common good, with character that inspires confidence'.
- Maxwell (1998:17): 'Leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less'.
- Munroe (2005:54): 'Leadership is the capacity to influence others through inspiration motivated by a passion, generated by a vision, produced by a conviction, ignited by a purpose'.
- Sanders (1994:27): 'Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead'.
- Stanley (2006:139): '[Leadership is] the ability to command the attention and influence the direction of others'.
- Stanley and Clinton (1992:38): 'Mentoring is a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources'.
- Wright (2000:2): 'leadership is a relationship—a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviours, beliefs or values of another person'.

All of the above definitions emphasize *influence*, or use *synonyms* for influence, including 'moving' others (Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:20) 'mobilizing' others (Everist and Nessan 2008:40), and 'empower[ing]' others (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:16; Stanley and Clinton 1992:38). Half of these definitions state unambiguously that leadership is exercised by an individual (Barna 1997:25; Clinton 1988:14; Engstrom 1976:24; Everist and Nessan 2008:56; Sanders 1994:27; Stanley and

Clinton 1992:38; Wright 2000:2), while others would seem to *imply* this (e.g. Hunter 2004:32; Stanley 2006:139).

Half of the definitions state that leadership has a *goal* (Barna 1997:25; Everist and Nessan 2008:63; Hunter 2004:32), or use words which are *suggestive* of a goal, including 'objectives' (Engstrom 1976:24), 'direction' (Stanley 2006:139), 'God's agenda' (Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:20), and 'God's purposes' (Clinton 1988:14).

Just two *conflicts* appear in these definitions. Banks and Ledbetter (2004:16) specifically state that leadership may be exercised by *groups or organizations*, and not by individuals alone, and this conflicts with definitions which specifically state that leadership is exercised by an individual. Maxwell (1998:17) reduces leadership to a single characteristic (influence), and others arguably do the same (e.g. Sanders 1994:27, and Stanley 2006:139). However, Barna (1997:22) contradicts this by stating that 'there are specific attributes which must be involved in leading', which go beyond merely 'mobilizing others' or 'a goal shared'.

Several of the definitions exhibit features which do not overlap with those of others. For example, Hunter (2004:32) includes *character* in his definition, while others do not. Engstrom (1976:24) includes *faith* in his definition, while others do not. Barna (1997:25) includes 'functional competencies' in his definition, while others do not.

This does not mean, however, that these authors disagree among themselves. Rather, their *definitions* emphasize different *aspects* of Christian Transformational Leadership. In fact, far more commonalities are to be found in the literature than the definitions suggest. For example, all of the selected authors refer to the ability to *strategize* in their books, while none of their definitions do; all of the authors refer to

the need for *character*, while only one of their definitions does; and all of them refer to the need for *vision*, while only two of their definitions do.

The following section serves to reveal the common characteristics of the Christian Transformational Leadership literature which, mostly, are missing in the 'pre-packaged' definitions.

6. Characteristics of Christian Transformational Leadership

The above definitions omit major features of Christian leadership which are found throughout the texts. When the texts are studied in detail, far more commonalities emerge between the various authors than is evident in the definitions. Therefore, in this section, each of the major commonalities is *extracted* from the literature, then combined in a definition.

6.1. Christian

It need hardly be noted that Christian Transformational Leadership is *Christian*. However, the meaning of 'Christian' in the context of this article needs to be clarified.

It seemed to stand to reason that Christian Transformational Leadership, being *Christian*, might be *Christ-centred*. Therefore I first searched the literature for evidence that Jesus Christ might be regarded either as the *model* of leadership, or the Object of *faith*.[13]

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[13] This distinction is made, as am example, by Stortz (2008:5).

I first searched for indications that Jesus Christ might be presented in the literature as the *model* for Christian leadership. However, while I found that He was indeed presented as a model (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:111; Barna 1997:19; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001; Clinton 1988:195; Engstrom 1976:37; Ford 1993:11; Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt 2000:48; Jinkins 2002:xiii; Wofford 1999:16),[14] this was by no means a universal feature of Christian Transformational Leadership. In fact, much of the literature had no special emphasis on Jesus as model (Gibbs 2005; Guder 1998; Hunter 2004; Hybels 2002; Maxwell 1998; Munroe 2005; Roxburth and Romanuk 2006; Sanders 1994; Stanley 2003; Stanley and Clinton 1992; Thomas 1999; Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1999).

I continued by searching for indications that Jesus Christ might represent the Object of *faith* to the Christian leader. However, this search was less productive. While faith was sometimes portrayed as a welcome aspect of Christian leadership (Clinton 1988:117; Sanders 1994:51), and in a few cases was considered to be *foundational* to Christian leadership (Engstrom 1976:118; Banks and Ledbetter 2004:31; Wofford 1999:16), this, too, was by no means a universal feature of Christian Transformational Leadership.

However, all of the selected literature *declared* a Christian approach to leadership (Barna 1997, Cover; Banks and Ledbetter 2004, Cover; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:xi; Clinton 1988:2; Engstrom 1976:2; Ford 1993, Cover; Gibbs 2005, Cover; Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:4; Hunter 2004:Dust Cover; Hybels 2002:11; Sanders 1994, Cover; Wofford 1999, Cover), or was specifically directed to the Church (Everist and Nessan 2008, Cover; Guder 1998, Cover; Jinkins

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[14] Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt (2000:19) refer to God Himself as the model of Christian leadership.

2002, Cover; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:Dust Cover; Stanley 2006:ix), or, more generally, declared a Christian foundation (Thomas 1999:12; Stanley and Clinton 1992:2; Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1999:2) or a Biblical foundation (Maxwell 1998:iii; Wright 2000, Cover).

The only exception to the above was Munroe (2005). While Munroe declared no Biblical or Christian commitment, he included six pages of Scripture references in his book, most of which were gleaned from the New Testament (Munroe 2005:290). This was considered sufficient to regard him as a *Christian* author.

Therefore 'Christian' is defined here as those books which *declare* a Christian or Biblical foundation, or those which are specifically directed to the Church.

6.2. Influence

The concept of *influence* is of primary importance to Christian Transformational Leadership.

Maxwell (1998:17) states it most boldly: 'Leadership is influence— nothing more, nothing less.' The literature may also use *synonyms* for influence, such as moving people (Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:20), forming people (Everist and Nessan 2008:1; Guder 1998:183), or having 'an effect on outcomes' (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 1999:10). Most Christian Transformational Leadership authors in this study consider *influence* to be of central importance to Christian Transformational Leadership (Barna 1997:24; Clinton 1988:101; Engstrom 1976:24; Gibbs 2005:22; Hunter 2004:68; Hybels 2002:127; Munroe 2005:52; Sanders 1994:27; Stanley 2006:139; Thomas 1999:31; Wright 2000:31).

Most Christian Transformational Leadership authors emphasize the *one-way* influence of a leader on followers (Clinton 1988:178; Everist and Nessan 2008:55; Hunter 2004:31; Maxwell 1998:56; Sanders 1994:27; Stanley 2006:139; Thomas 1999:138; Wright 2000:13).[15] However, a few include the influence of followers on the leader (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:127; Gibbs 2005:22).

It is again *influence* from which the term 'transformational' derives. Influence is seen to transform people's *motives* in the pursuit of a goal, rather than using other means to reach it, such as manipulation (Everist and Nessan 2008:207; Ford 1991:43; Hunter 2004:108,187; Munroe 2005:43; Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 1999:21), coercion (Everist and Nessan 2008:207; Hunter 2004:53), command (Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:219), or transaction (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:51). That is, 'influence' means that followers pursue a goal because something *within* them has changed. Christian Transformational leaders 'change attitudes' (Wofford 1999:17), they 'change what people talk about and dream of' (Ford 1991:15), and sometimes, they aim to bring about total transformation of the individual and community (Jinkins 2002:xii).

6.3. Persuasiveness

Christian Transformational Leadership routinely emphasizes that, in order for influence to *work*, a leader needs to have *persuasiveness*. This differs from *influence* in that it emphasizes the *capacity* of the leader to influence others (Gibbs 2005:21; Munroe 2005:76; Sanders 1994:27), while influence has a greater emphasis on the *method* of leadership, as contrasted, for example, with mere transaction or coercion. Such

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[15] In this respect, Christian Transformational Leadership mostly parts with Burns (1978:20).

persuasiveness usually has four *aspects*.[16] However, these are not of crucial importance here.

Persuasiveness refers to 'the capacity to guide others to places they... have never been before' (Gibbs 2005:21), the skill of being able to motivate followers (Thomas 1999:146), or 'the power to persuade' (Engstrom 1976:64). Sometimes it is referred to as '*charisma*' (Everist and Nessan 2008:56; Gibbs 2005:39; Wofford 1999:27). Every Christian Transformational Leadership author in this study, in one way or another, advances *persuasiveness* as a necessary trait of the Christian Transformational leader (Barna 1997:23; Banks and Ledbetter 2004:40; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:17; Clinton 1988:14; Engstrom 1976:64; Ford 1993:25; Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:51; Hunter 2004:185; Maxwell 1998:162; Sanders 1994:73; Stanley 2006:118; Stanley and Clinton 1992:145; Wright 2000:18).

6.4. Strategy

Influence further needs the support of sound *strategy*. Such strategy looks for the best ways in which a course of action could be made to work.

Maxwell (1998:203) considers that a leader needs the right action at the right time to guarantee success. Sanders (1994:113) states: 'The leader must... employ tactics that lead to success'. Thomas (1999:31) considers: 'Timing, creativity, and discipline are crucial skills'. Stanley (2003:79) states that every good coach (that is, leader) goes into the

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[16] In the secular Transformational Leadership literature, these are 'idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration' (Sosik 2006:18; Yukl 1999:2). They may be referred to together as 'charisma' (Bass and Riggio 2006:25).

game with a strategy. Most Christian Transformational Leadership authors have a strong emphasis on strategy (Barna 1997:25; Banks Ledbetter 2004:133; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:70; Clinton 1988:88; Everist and Nessan 2008:101; Ford 1993, Cover; Gibbs 2005:99; Guder 1998:201; Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:130; Hybels 2002:55; Munroe 2005:243; Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1999:181; Wofford 1999:89; Wright 2000:71).

6.5. Shared Goals

Influence, persuasiveness, and strategy all serve long-term *goals*. These are seen to be *shared* by the leader and followers.

Hunter (2004:31) states that the leader works towards goals for the common good. Sanders (1994:27) quotes Bernard Montgomery: 'Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose'. Blackaby and Blackaby (2001:17) state that leaders induce 'a group to pursue objectives'. Engstrom (1976:20) considers that 'individuals collaborate under a leader's stimulation and inspiration in striving toward a worthy common goal'. All of the selected Christian Transformational Leadership authors have an emphasis on a shared goal (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:18; Barna 1997:22; Engstrom 1976:20; Everist and Nessan 2008:160; Ford 1993:202; Gibbs 2005:109; Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt 2000:54; Hybels 2002:63; Munroe 2005:55; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:44; Thomas 1999:45; Wofford 1999:66; Wright 2000:14).

6.6. Character

Character is of crucial importance to Christian Transformational Leadership.

Hunter (2004:30) states: 'Leadership has everything to do with character'. Wofford (1999:107) considers that nothing is more important for a Church leader than character. Clinton (1988:74) maintains that integrity is the foundation of effective leadership. Gibbs (2005:114) summarizes Paul's requirements for leadership as 'character first and foremost'. Similarly, every Christian Transformational Leadership author, in one way or another, emphasizes the fundamental importance of character (Barna 1997:25; Banks and Ledbetter 2004:107; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:17; Engstrom 1976:190; Everist and Nessan 2008:133; Ford 1993::20; Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:19; Hybels 2002; Jinkins 2002:39; Maxwell 1998:58; Munroe 2005; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:126; Sanders 1994:41; Stanley 2006:xii; Stanley and Clinton 1992:158; Wright 2000:15).

More than this, character is seen to lie at the *root* of every other characteristic of Christian Transformational Leadership. The Christian Transformational Leadership literature specifically links character with each of the features listed above (Clinton 1988:74; Wofford 1999:109; Maxwell 1998:58; Hunter 2004:32; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:141). Character may therefore be described as the *core idea* of Christian Transformational Leadership. It lays the *foundation* for influence, persuasiveness, sound strategy, and the formation of shared goals.

6.7. Vision

One more feature needs to be added to the above, which does not appear consistently in the *secular Transformational Leadership* literature. This is *vision*. While this does not mean that vision is not *important* to secular Transformational Leadership, it is, however, not always present there (e.g. Burns 1978:529).

Christian Transformational Leadership frequently describes the leader's *goals* in terms of *vision* (Banks and Ledbetter 2004:45; Everist and Nessan 2008:174; Ford 1993:54; Hybels 2002:27; Jinkins 2002:26; Maxwell 1998:56; Munroe 2005:280; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:125; Stanley 2006:81; Stanley and Clinton 1992:117). Not seldom, a leader's vision may be said to be *God-given* (Barna 1997:29; Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:75; Clinton 1988:117; Gangel 1997:48; Halcomb, Hamilton and Malmstadt 2000:185; Hybels 2002:36; Sanders 1994:55; Wright 2000:66). It may further be equated with a leader's *calling* (Gibbs 2005:191; Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt 2000:65; Hybels 2002:37).

The need for *vision* is present in all of the selected Christian literature. Three-quarters of the selected books refer specifically to 'vision', while the remainder refer to 'reality in terms of what can be' (Engstrom 1976:201), 'the requirement to see' (Thomas 1999:22), 'the eyes' to find one's destiny (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 1999:146), and 'building a fire within' (Hunter 2004:185). Therefore *vision* is included in the definition of Christian Transformational Leadership, where this does not appear in the definition of secular Transformational Leadership.

6.8. Definition

I now draw these features together in a *definition*. It differs in one major respect (namely *vision*) from secular Transformational Leadership.

> Christian Transformational Leadership is leadership which declares a Biblical or Christian foundation, or is specifically directed to the Church. It holds that a leader's vision, character, persuasiveness,

and ability to strategize guarantee that he or she will be influential (or transformational) to achieve shared goals.[17]

With a definition now in hand, it should be helpful, in conclusion, to sketch just why a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership should be important. That is, it would be in the interests of further research to sketch its possible *application*.

7. Application of the Definition

There are at least three major reasons why a *definition* of Christian Transformational Leadership should be important.

Firstly, in recent decades, *semantic* critique has grown in importance, not least through the popularity of the method of *deconstruction.* This may rely heavily on the definition of terms (Blackburn 2005:90), and provides a powerful means of analysis (Scarborough 2009:3). With this in mind, a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership would represent an important starting point for semantic critique.

Secondly, dropout from Christian *ministry* (which is an important *aspect* of Christian leadership) is very high—up to 95 percent.[18] The selected literature repeatedly points to a high dropout from Christian leadership in general (e.g. Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:19, 45, 230; Clinton 1989:328, 356; Gibbs 2005:19). Christian Transformational Leadership exists within this context, and its presence is not small, as

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[17] Again, the term 'transformational' is merely used for context here. The term 'influence' is preferred, because it is far more common in the literature.

[18] According to Chun (2007:2), dropout in the USA may be as high as ninety-five percent, while Gibbs (2005:79) gives a figure of fifty percent dropout from local-church ministry in the USA during the first ten years. If dropout should remain constant over the duration of ministry, Gibbs comes to within two percent of Chun.

has been noted. However, without an adequate definition of Christian Transformational Leadership, in order to differentiate it from Christian leadership in general, there is no reliable means of assessing whether Christian Transformational Leadership might contribute to the high dropout from Christian leadership. In fact, an expert in the field was unaware of any data relating to dropout among Christian Transformational leaders.[19]

Thirdly, a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership promises to resolve three further issues relating to *statistics*. There are three problems in particular.

Firstly, a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership is crucial to the *collection of data*. Currently, the only *quantitative* data relating to Christian leadership are *generic*. That is, the statistics refer only to Christian leadership *in general*, not to Christian Transformational Leadership in particular (examples of generic data are Chun 2006:1; Driscoll 2006:1; James 2007:2; MacDonald 2007:1; Morris and Blanton 1994:1; Price 2003:2; Willis 2007:4; Wood 2005:2). An expert in the field was unaware of any statistics which make a distinction between Christian leadership in general and Christian Transformational Leadership in particular (Burch 2008).[20] Such differentiation would be critical to a statistical critique of Christian Transformational Leadership.

Secondly, a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership may avert a problem that is often referred to as 'moving the goal posts', or

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[19] The Professor of Leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary wrote to me: 'I have no data on this' (Clinton 2005).

[20] 'I don't know of any studies reporting the data you seek' (Burch 2008). Burch is the Associate Dean of the Academy for Transformational Leadership, Atlanta, Georgia.

'begging the question' (Walton 1995:375). In effect, this means that secular Transformational Leadership authors change the definition of leadership to exclude the latest critique. The best known examples appear in a seminal paper by Bass and Steidlmeier (1998:17), in which they dismiss all critique as applying to 'pseudo-transformational' leadership, not 'authentic' transformational leadership.[21] This fallacy has been repeated, too, in more recent literature (e.g. Ciulla and Burns 2004:179; Price 2005:131; Sosik 2006:134; Van Knippenberg and Hogg 2004:178; Clegg et al. 2006:453), and there is a similar tendency in the Christian Transformational Leadership literature. For example, if vision fails, then such vision was not authentic (Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt 2000:80,182), or if a leader drops out, then one is not dealing with a true Christian Transformational leader (Halcomb, Hamilton, and Malmstadt 2000:187). Therefore, a *definition* of Christian Transformational Leadership might help to 'pin down' the core features of the theory, and to open them to more effective examination and critique.

Finally, a problem of a lack of *control data* is pervasive both in the secular and the Christian Transformational Leadership literature.[22] Most if not all of the secular literature surveyed omitted control data (e.g. Albritton 1995:191; Bass and Riggio 2006:143; Pearce and Conger 2002:166; Singh and Bhandarker 1990:17; Jablin and Putnam

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[21] As an example, secular Transformational Leadership had been criticized for being *manipulative*. Bass and Steidlmeier (1998:6) respond: 'But, in fact, it is pseudo-transformational leaders who are... manipulative.'

[22] The lack of control data may also be referred to as 'confirmation bias' (Confirmation Bias, 2008:1), or the fallacy of 'affirming the consequent' (Wilson 1995:273). In terms of the fallacy of affirming the consequent, one may reach invalid conclusions even if the premises are true (Mautner 2000:8). For instance, it may be true that most leaders who endure have mentors (Clinton 1991:1-1). However, it may also be true that most leaders who do *not* endure have mentors.

2004:406). Data on 'failed transformational leaders' is missing (Clegg et al. 2006:453), and this problem is repeated in the Christian Transformational Leadership literature (e.g. Clinton 1989:7; Wofford 1999:212). A definition of Christian Transformational Leadership, by clearly delineating what such leadership is, should make it better possible to assess *control data*.

8. Summary

It is of utmost importance that theories of Christian leadership should be *defined*. Without adequate definitions, it is not possible to distinguish one theory from another, it is not possible to determine who practices them, and it is not possible to research their efficacy.

The purpose of this article was to define a Christian leadership theory here named *Christian Transformational Leadership*. The chosen method of defining Christian Transformational Leadership was to begin with a definition of *secular* Transformational Leadership, then to select Christian Transformational Leadership literature which revealed the major characteristics of this definition, and finally to *extract* a definition of Christian Transformational Leadership from this literature.

It is hoped that, by providing a more rigorous definition than any which is available today, research in this field may be advanced, in particular as it relates to the *efficacy* of Christian Transformational Leadership theory.

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