

Serenity, courage and wisdom: changing competencies for leadership

Tim Harle*

Introduction

'I'm called to be a priest, not a manager. Discuss.' A recent essay title for aspiring clerics suggests a dichotomy. A business leader facing an ethical dilemma may well retort, 'I'm called to be a manager, not a priest'. But is the implied dichotomy a false one? This trans-disciplinary examination explores the interplay between the worlds of business leadership and theology. Its purpose is to begin to discover what, if anything, the two disciplines can learn from each other. Using the framework of a widely cited prayer, it finds parallels between theological ethics and the contemporary language of change management. It suggests that traditional management competency frameworks might usefully be augmented by considering such attributes as serenity, courage and wisdom.

Such an examination cannot claim originality. Robert K. Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership* (Greenleaf 1977) achieved a 25th Anniversary Edition (Greenleaf & Spears 2002), attracting a Foreword by Stephen R. Covey and an Afterword by Peter M. Senge. From a European perspective, the writings of Charles Handy (e.g. Handy 1997) and John Adair (e.g. Adair 2001) have explored this theme. Spiritual approaches can find a place in business school libraries (Mitroff & Denton 1999, Zohar & Marshall 2000, Howard & Welbourn 2004), and religious concepts can be found in the

strategic management literature (Green & Cooper 1998).¹ Ken Blanchard, author of the (in)famous *One Minute Manager*, describes himself as the Chief Spiritual Officer (CSO) of The Ken Blanchard Companies (Blanchard & Johnson 1983: 110).

The traffic is not all in one direction; a number of faith-based initiatives exist to promote good practice in management and leadership. A British ecumenical charity was formed to help churches explore managerial and organisational issues (Nelson 1996, 1999, Adair & Nelson 2004). The business community cannot always expect sympathetic treatment; a generally helpful book on church leadership nevertheless includes a chapter entitled 'Following a False Trail: Secular Management Models for Ordained Ministry' (Croft 1999: 17–29). I inadvertently stumbled across the sensitivities in this area while discussing a change programme with a senior cleric. As the change would involve some re-organisation and loss of posts over a time-bound period, I suggested a project management approach. The cleric winced visibly and was prompted to say, 'Please don't use that word'. I apologised and explained why 'project' was an appropriate choice. The cleric interrupted, 'No. That's not the problem. It's "management"'.

Not all links are explicit. Religious considerations may – consciously or unconsciously – influence an approach. In this context, it is fascinating to study Rakesh Khurana's writings on CEOs. Both his book, *Searching for a*

*Consultant in leadership and change.

Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs (Khurana 2002a), and the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) article that summarises it, 'The Curse of the Superstar CEO' (Khurana 2002b), use religious language.²

Approach

The approach adopted here can be described as both trans-disciplinary, in the sense of transcending individual disciplines, and inter-disciplinary, in allowing disciplines to interact and inform one another. Two particular disciplines inform this approach – business leadership and theology.

Another key to the approach is that of reflective praxis. 'These days, what managers desperately need is to stop and think – to step back and reflect thoughtfully on their experiences' (Gosling Mintzberg 2003: 57).³ Since giving up full-time paid employment in 2003, I have been grateful for an extended opportunity to stop, think, step back and reflect on my experiences – as a senior executive, project manager and consultant in the private, public and non-profit sectors. I welcome the brief time I spent at INSEAD, but my main learning has come from years of working with people.

A word too about the starting point for the religious exploration. On the basis that our harshest critics with the greatest insights often come from our closest family, my observations come mainly, although not exclusively, from within the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

This is an exploration, noting encounters, joining conversations, suggesting enchanted avenues. With T.S. Eliot,⁴ we may not cease from exploration; hard conclusions are unlikely, but perhaps we can arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

A framework for exploration

Competency frameworks have a familiar ring. As I write this, the Competency Model of a European company's Employee Development Guide lies open on the desk. The firm has a proud history of being at the forefront of innovative employee

practice; it has consistently been voted as one of the Top 100 British companies to work for. The Competency Model has five dimensions, each with four or five attributes. Each of the 22 attributes can then be measured at one of six levels using up to five sets of evidence for each attribute. The section covers 13 pages. The attributes themselves are all worthy – customer focus, creativity and innovation, openness and trust, team working – and are designed to encourage the ability, attitudes and behaviours that contribute to high performance.

But, we may ask, is something being lost along the way? Competency frameworks have received a good deal of critical attention recently (see, *inter alia*, Grugulis 1997, Holman & Hall 1997, Salaman 2004). Having reviewed public, private and generic frameworks, Bolden (2004) notes that 'the importance of personal values and vision are absent in over one third of the competency frameworks analysed; trust, ethics, inspiration, adaptability, flexibility and resilience are absent in over two-thirds; and personal beliefs, moral courage, humility, emotional intelligence, coping with complexity, personal reflection and work-life balance are missing in over 80%'.

If we discard competency frameworks, we risk throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. So should we look elsewhere for a different perspective? What competencies might be relevant to those who aspire to business leadership and ethical integrity? Such competencies might augment, rather than wholly replace, traditional attributes.

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) was professor of ethics and the philosophy of religion at Union Theological Seminary, New York City from 1928 to 1960 (Walsh 2001: 918). His academic work was at the interface between religion and society, but his wider legacy comes in the form of a prayer, attributed to him, which has made the liturgical leap from seminary to fridge magnet:⁵

God,⁶ grant me the serenity to accept the things
I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.⁷

It forms the basis of this exploration.

Attitudes to change

The prayer sets out differing reactions to change. An Anglican Bishop recently asked me about my professional work. On being told it involved helping people and organisations through change, the bishop immediately responded, ‘Ah, change and decay!’ (The bishop is no reactionary: he finds his home towards the liberal end of the ecclesiastical spectrum.) In reacting in this way, he was reflecting a common word association. It derives from a Victorian hymn, *Abide with me*, written by H.F. Lyte (1793–1847). Often sung at funerals, but also traditionally sung at England’s annual football (soccer) FA cup final, the verse in question reads:

Change and decay
in all around I see:
O thou who changest not,
abide with me. (Bradley 1989: 9–11)

The bishop was in good company in his negative attitude. One of the biggest selling HBR reprints during the 1990s was entitled ‘Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail’ (Kotter 1995).

The hymn quoted above illustrates another reason why religions are often associated with a lack of change: the divinity is perceived as unchanging (‘O thou who changest not’) and the language of ‘eternal truths’ is often used. But a more subtle attitude may be at play. Liturgists are fond of quoting a law known as *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which broadly says that how one worships defines what one believes. In this context, it is salutary to consider the *Gloria Patri*, which some Christian traditions add to the end of Jewish Psalms. Since around the 6th century CE, it has included the following words:

As it was in the beginning
is now and shall be for ever.⁸

Although originally added as part of a christological debate (Jasper & Bradshaw 1986: 32f), one suspects that the average contemporary worshipper is unaware of this nicety. Constant repetition is hardly likely to encourage openness to change.

Some, although by no means all, commentators point approvingly to the constancy provided by the Roman Catholic church: ‘those characteristics

which are its greatest strength: its self-confidence, its internal order, its unchangeability’ (Johnson 1982: 124). Pope John XXIII introduced the Italian word *aggiornamento*, which means something like ‘bringing things up to date’, during his papacy (1958–1963) and it featured prominently during the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). It has been heard less often recently. The tradition of the Orthodox churches can be seen from two sides: ‘“Timelessness” is a word often used in relation to the Orthodox Church, either as a commendation of its sense of the holy and the continuing tradition of the church, or else as a condemnation of its failure to face up to political and social issues in a rapidly changing world’ (Baggley 1987: xi).

Unpacking the paradox

Such an attitude to change is, at the least, paradoxical – because many religions have change at their heart.⁹

Myths of (re)creation talk of bringing about new realities, whether order out of chaos (as in the Genesis account, where the earth was a formless void until the breath of God moved over the turbulent waters) or the Noble Path leading to final enlightenment, or *nirvana*. St Paul emphasised the radical nature of the transformation offered in the Christian world view: ‘if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!’¹⁰

The Christian tradition conceives of the breath, or Spirit, of God as animating, sustaining and renewing the whole of creation. There is talk of conversion. A multivalent word, its richness of meaning is diminished if it is applied in too narrow a context (e.g. in confining it to those opting to join specific faith communities, as in converts to Roman Catholicism or Judaism).

Exploring one of the Greek words it translates, *metanoia*, reveals an interplay between process, event and attitudinal change. Among concepts ‘conversion’ evokes are:

- It involves turning.
- It involves changing one’s mind (or God’s mind in the Hebrew Bible).

- It involves setting a new direction.
- It is best viewed as a process, rather than an event in time. St Paul's experience on the road to Damascus¹¹ may be the exception to prove the rule. More recently, John Finney has shown how many people come to faith through a long process (Finney 1992).
- It requires thorough-going continual change. Two books with similar titles express this from different perspectives. *Francis: A Call to Conversion* (Arnold & Fry 1990) looks at the life of St Francis and his message to the church and world today. Jim Wallis' *The Call to Conversion* (Wallis 1982) is a radical cry for society to be transformed. Conversion of life also forms a fundamental thread running through the Rule of St Benedict, and *conversation morum* is one of the three vows taken by a novice on entering the community (Parry & De Waal 1990: xxii).

A good indication of the breadth and depth of the meaning of the word is provided by the fact that articles on 'conversion' can be found in no less than four of the standard dictionaries to be found in theological college libraries: on ethics, theology, spirituality and pastoral studies (MacQuarrie 1967, Richardson 1969, Wakefield 1983, Carr 2002). The first of these dictionaries might have a particular resonance for readers of this journal.

And so, with the possibility of a more positive attitude to change, we can proceed to look at Niebuhr's threefold prayer.

Serenity

The first of Niebuhr's requests is for serenity. Religions are often accused of providing a cop-out from harsh realities through an other-worldly orientation.

Serenity finds a particular place in the Buddhist tradition. A Buddhist monk provides the departure point for a modern book (Komisar 2000) described by *The Times* as a 'self-help manual and business fable rolled into one'. Yet, one of the profound insights of the fable is the need to face up to the here-and-now: 'In the Deferred Life

Plan, by definition, you postpone risking what matters most to you; that happens later, if at all' (Komisar 2000: 149).

Jagdish Parikh, prompted in part by the disconnection he felt when thrown from his native India to the hurly-burly of a North American MBA programme, went on to write a book (Parikh 1991) that predates Goleman's better-known work on Emotional Intelligence (Goleman 1996). Parikh has a chapter on Managing Emotions and a whole section on Self-Management in Society. He uses the ancient Indian system that identifies seven energy centres, or *chakras* (Parikh 1991: 109–111); each *chakra* is associated with a certain state of mind or consciousness. Parikh cannot be accused of escapism: his book is subtitled Management by Detached Involvement.

This leads us to the Christian view. A prime way in which it parts company with its fellow Abrahamic monotheistic faiths, Judaism and Islam, is in the doctrine of the incarnation. Whatever one makes of the story of a stable,¹² if the Godhead became one with humanity, then little is beyond the divine reach.

A significant contribution to dealing serenely with change has come from the pastoral perspective on change as a grief journey. Building on the pioneering work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (Kübler-Ross 1970) on bereavement, others have noticed how reactions to business change evoke familiar emotions: denial, anger, guilt, depression (e.g. Conner 1998: 131–135). Just as clergy and counsellors encourage the bereaved to deal with such emotions and work from a passive to an active acceptance of the situation (Carr 2002: 31f), so change agents can encourage a positive approach. It should be emphasised that this does not involve denying the early reactions, but working through them. In Conner's scheme, this leads to a positive approach in which uninformed optimism (cf. blind faith) moves through uninformed pessimism (cf. fate) and on to completion (Conner 1998: 137).

Before moving on, it is pertinent to ask how well placed clergy are to deal with times of change, uncertainty and threat. Recent research on clergy personality types illustrates underlying

tensions for some (Francis & Robbins 2004). However, clergy are not alone in their perceived response to change. In recent months, I have facilitated two similar workshops for different groups embarking on change programmes. Both involved brainstorming two questions: 'What must we do to make sure this works?' and 'What could go wrong?' (roughly equating to critical success factors (CSFs) and risks). A group of public sector managers was fluent in identifying risks, but needed prompting on CSFs. A group of clergy spontaneously produced a list of CSFs three times as long as their list of risks!

Courage

Next, courage. 'What are your strategies for coping with change?' A question asked of ordinands reveals a defensive mindset. This is all the more surprising given the constant renewing change that is at the heart of the faith such ordinands espouse (see *Unpacking the Paradox* above).

What if the question had read, 'What are your strategies for embracing change?' Successful change normally involves a vision, a leader and companions on a journey (Hybels 2002). It may be uncomfortable for those outside their comfort zone, but it is often through such experiences that growth occurs. Embarking on a journey and leaving comfort zones can involve risk-taking at both a personal and corporate level.

In a widely read book, John P. Kotter nominates 'Establishing a Sense of Urgency' as the first of the eight stages in his process leading to successful change (Kotter 1996: 35). Although the phrase is not Kotter's, many programme managers refer to the need to establish 'burning platforms': the phrase appears to have entered the managerial vocabulary via Daryl R. Conner (Conner 1998: 92). He refers to an individual's decision to jump from the burning Piper Alpha oil platform in the North Sea following the catastrophic explosion of 1988. Contrast this with a radically different approach, derived from the insights of psychology and ethology. By looking at animal behaviour of attachment and exploration,

a new perspective is provided by seeing a manager's key task as providing a secure environment in which individuals can safely start to exercise their innate tendency to explore (Robertson 2005).

In this context, it is illuminating to look at the results of recent research on spiritual energy in management (Pettifer 2002). If managers were more ready to take risks, it was more likely that spiritual energy would be released.¹³ It would make a fascinating research project to study whether the converse is true: are managers with a spiritual orientation more likely to be risk takers? The hypothesis is attractive: those whose 'certainties' lie elsewhere, or have a serene approach to life, are more likely to take risks and embrace change. On the other hand, it would imply that religious institutions would be among our riskiest undertakings.¹⁴

Kotter recognises the importance of creating a 'guiding coalition', emphasising how a team will need to be involved and noting that 'No one individual, even a monarch-like CEO, is ever able to develop the right vision, communicate it to large numbers of people, eliminate all the key obstacles, generate short-term wins, lead and manage dozens of change projects, and anchor new approaches deep in the organization's culture' (Kotter 1996: 51f).

Not all have heeded Kotter's advice: 'more than the "vision" they sometimes provide, however, charismatic outsiders offer organizations in crisis the hope that they engender by their very status as outsiders. Although it can arise under other circumstances, belief in the salvific capacities of the charismatic outsider becomes particularly potent when coupled with a sustained period of declining performance' (Khurana 2002a: 168; note the religious language).

A subtle analysis of leadership is provided by Jim Collins (2001). In a section headed 'Not What We Expected', he writes, 'To use an analogy, the "Leadership is the answer to everything" perspective is the modern equivalent of the "God is the answer to everything" perspective that held back our scientific understanding of the physical world in the Dark Ages' (Collins 2001: 21). Backing up Khurana's thesis, his summary analysis of CEOs

and outsiders in good-to-great companies and their direct comparisons is stark (Collins 2001: 251).

What of the organisation beyond the CEO? In researching why bad projects are so hard to kill, Royer talks of the 'faith that wouldn't be shattered' (Royer 2003: 50). Recognising the 'seductive appeal of collective belief', she proposes a new role to complement the traditional Project Champion: the Exit Champion (Royer 2003: 53f). Primitive religions were familiar with the problem, and not afraid of invoking direct action.

The story of Noah's flood, found in the Jewish Books of Moses and incorporated into the Christian Old Testament, is but one of several examples from cultures around the world (Wenham 1987: 159–166). The Genesis account has many parallels with, *inter alia*, the Babylonian Epic of Atrahasis and Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh. A hero is chosen to prepare for a fresh start and subsequently survives a deluge with a select few companions. There are parallels between such fresh start narratives and recent critiques of the structure of Business Process Re-engineering rhetoric. Case (1999) refers to 'sacred motifs', 'absolution of the collective guilt' and 'attempts to acquire secular converts' (see also Grint & Case 2000).

The early exit champions, together with their successors (e.g. the Jewish prophets of the 8th century BCE and Babylonian exile), appear to have been no more successful in conveying their message than many of their followers – in religion and business – today.

Wisdom

And so to wisdom. Corporate knowledge management strategies refer to the hierarchy of data-information-knowledge. But how many proceed to the more elusive wisdom? The index to eight collected HBR papers on Knowledge Management (HBR 1998) has some 20 entries each under 'information' and 'knowledge', but none under 'wisdom'.

'Is it a knowledge only of facts? Obviously not, for we all know students and professors whose

learning is tremendous, but whom we should never judge to have wisdom. Wisdom, then, is different from learning, for an unschooled person may possess it, out of rich experience. On the other hand, there are people with rich experience to whom we would not attribute wisdom' (Sandmel 1972: 208). Out of such considerations, books came to be written or compiled, which found their way into the Hebrew Bible.

Hebrew wisdom literature speaks across the centuries: 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' has passed into Anglo-Saxon culture (Oxford 1979: 54). Yet, it is based on a mistranslation of Proverbs chapter 29 verse 18 in the King James Bible (or Authorized Version) of 1611. The Hebrew verb means something like 'run wild, lose constraint'; a good paraphrase would be 'without a vision, the people run around and do their own thing'. McKane translates the verse, 'Where there is no vision people are undisciplined' (McKane 1970: 257). This could be the text for change managers everywhere.

Wisdom may sometimes be, in the present-day jargon, counter-intuitive. A UK FTSE100 company improved its cashflow by reducing the rate at which it sent out bills. 'Always change a winning team' may not sound like a recipe for success, but research in Holland and elsewhere shows its validity (Robertson 2005).

Wisdom literature stems from a community. The learning organisation has become such an oft-repeated mantra that the disciplines that Senge identified are sometimes forgotten: Building Shared Vision and Team Learning were at the apex of his model (Senge 1990: 205–269). The concept even got an airing in a Church of England report (Hind 2003). Unfortunately, the authors showed that they did not fully understand Senge in two ways; learning was essentially restricted to a few years either side of ordination and was focused on individuals not teams. There is no explicit reference to wisdom in Senge's model, but the parallels are suggestive.

So much for corporate wisdom. What of the individual? The third of six paths towards greater spiritual intelligence (SQ) offered in a recent book (Zohar & Marshall 2000: 244)¹⁵ is the Path of Knowledge: 'The natural progression towards

higher SQ leads from reflection, through understanding, to wisdom. The way to solve any problem, practical or intellectual, in a spiritually intelligent way is to place it in a wider perspective from which it can be seen more clearly. The deepest perspective of all comes from the centre, the ultimate meaning and value that drives the situation or problem’.

Critical reflection

Niebuhr addresses the divine, but his prayer – at least in its most commonly published form¹⁶ – reflects a Cartesian philosophy. Should it be dismissed as Western egocentricism: *cogito ergo sum?* African and other thinkers have for some time been pressing for an alternative perspective: ‘I am known, therefore I am’. Gosling & Mintzberg (2003: 62) draw attention to another helpful perspective, based on a Sanskrit dictum: ‘You Are Therefore I Am’ (Kumar 2002).

Charles Handy has addressed this question. ‘The idea that true individuality is necessarily social is one of the oldest propositions in philosophy. We find ourselves through what we do and through the long struggle of living with and for others. “I do therefore I am” is more real than “I think therefore I am”. . . . To be ourselves we need other people. What I term a “proper selfishness” builds on this fact that we are inevitably intertwined with others’ (Handy 1997: 86f). But, one could argue, the (properly selfish) I is still at the centre.

The importance of relationships is repeatedly emphasised in work on Emotional Intelligence: ‘The art of relationships is, in large part, skill in managing emotions in others’ (Goleman 1996: 43). ‘Relationship management’ is the last of the four key groupings of Goleman’s Leadership Competencies (Goleman *et al.* 2002: 255).

The theologians have a remarkably similar take on the issue. ‘[This essay] proposes Christian thought *in principle* as a profound, flexible and still-credible tradition which can secure the value of each individual person within the control of an equally secure relational and social vision. This vision has its origin in the nature of God and his

[sic] relatedness’ (White 1997: 159, italics in original). Thus can the Christian doctrine of the Trinity provide a model to explore relationships.

The concept of the Trinity has been used to create whole socio-political paradigms (Boff 1988). ‘Well did John Paul II say . . . “Our God, in his most intimate mystery, is not a solitude, but a family”. . . . We must see human societies, the social relationships among their members . . . as impulses poured forth into history by the most holy Trinity’ (Boff 1992: 69).

A glimpse into the same concept, but using a radically different language, is provided by the Orthodox tradition of iconography. ‘In approaching icons we are entering a world where a different language is used: the non-verbal language of visual semantics, the symbolic language of form and colour. To people accustomed to naturalistic art the learning of this different language of silence can be a hard task’ (Baggley 1987: 78). One of the most widely known is Andrei Rublev’s (c. 1360–1430) icon of the Old Testament Trinity.¹⁷

In Rublev’s icon, the three figures – ostensibly the angels visiting Abraham¹⁸ – point subtly to one another in their equality. They are gathered in a circle around the table. The space at the table is on the viewer’s side: through the device of inverse perspective (Baggley 1987: 80), we are invited to join the group, to complete the circle.

As we saw above, Charles Handy has addressed Western individualism and suggested that ‘I do therefore I am’ is more real than ‘I think therefore I am’ (Handy 1997: 87). This raises the whole question of the relative importance of being and doing as leadership competencies. Niebuhr’s three requests do not stand in isolation. Serenity, courage and wisdom are not requested for their own sake. Each is associated with a purposive action: serenity to accept, courage to change, wisdom to know. This leads to the final stage of our exploring.

Implications

What are the implications of our exploration for competency frameworks? And could we devise learning programmes that are mutually beneficial for those aspiring to sacred or secular leadership

roles? The third edition of a widely used coaching manual includes new chapters covering coaching for purpose and meaning (Whitmore 2002: 115–126), dealing with Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence. In ongoing discussions about leadership and ethics, the business community can lay down a challenge to theological colleges and continuous professional development schemes for clergy. Business leaders may be surprised to discover how much they can learn in return.

Table 1 shows the main groupings of competency frameworks from two respected authors, together with the criteria used in selecting candidates for ordained ministry in the Church of England.¹⁹ Serenity, courage and wisdom do not feature explicitly, although aspects can be traced in all three frameworks. The Anglican selection criteria appear to cover Goleman’s four groupings and the first three of Mintzberg’s. What stands out from both the Goleman and Anglican lists is the absence of any sign of action. Here is the heart of the plea about leaders and managers: the action mind-set for managing change (Gosling & Mintzberg 2003: 60–63).

The selection criteria suggest a priest is called ‘to be’, not ‘to do’. When it does come to action, the Anglican priest is in for a shock. The nearest they have to a Job Description is The Ordinal.²⁰ In ‘The Declaration’, the bishop lists no fewer than fourteen activities that the priest is expected to do in just eleven lines of text (ASB 1980: 356). Thankfully, the Declaration also offers five

images (each derived from the Hebrew Bible) to provide more inspirational models:

- Servant
- Shepherd
- Messenger
- Watchman
- Steward

By a happy numerical coincidence, the up-to-date manager can offer five mind-sets (Gosling & Mintzberg 2003: 56):

- Reflective
- Analytical
- Worldly
- Collaborative
- Action

Conclusion

The implication of our examination for business leaders and managers is that they might have something to learn from religious approaches. The Buddhist monk in Komisar’s tale encouraged discovery as part of work (Komisar 2000). Managers and priests could begin to learn from one another, each offering their distinctive perspective, as they grapple with the challenge of leading ethically. All leaders can benefit from stepping back from the frantic pace of doing to

Table 1: Attributes for leading, managing and ministering

Leadership competencies	Managerial competencies	Criteria for selection for ministry
Self-awareness	Personal	Ministry within the Church of England
Self-management	Interpersonal	Vocation
Social awareness	Informational	Faith
Relationship management	Actional	Spirituality
		Personality and character
		Relationships
		Leadership and collaboration
		Quality of mind
Goleman <i>et al.</i> (2002: 253–256)	Mintzberg (2004: 260)	Kuhr (2001: 112–113)

reflect on being. For those who aspire to ethical leadership, being and doing belong together.

In conclusion, our exploration suggests that, in considering responses to change, Niebuhr's trio of 'competencies' can provide a useful basis to augment traditional leadership competency frameworks. Religious perspectives, reflecting on the changing and unchangeable, can help both individuals and organisations to develop a positive approach to change that is ethically consistent. Each requested 'competency' is linked with a purposive action: serenity to accept, courage to change, wisdom to know. Reflecting critically on Niebuhr's prayer highlights the importance of relationships – a key theme in both leadership and ethics discourses. Suggestive parallels between the language of change management and theology across almost three millennia of human experience point to the benefit of continuing the dialogue.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Major Graham Lawrence for the creative inter-disciplinary conversations that led to the emergence of the serenity–courage–wisdom framework. And many thanks are due to Julia Harle, Revd Malcolm Herbert and Keith Marr for their help with the references.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Dr Steve Tanner of the European Centre for Business Excellence for this reference.
2. Chris Sunderland of Agora (www.agoraspace.org) has pointed out the widespread prevalence (in both ancient cultures and contemporary politics and business) of a metanarrative involving an individual who is expected to restore hope to a group of disaffected people.
3. This refreshing article does for much recent leadership thinking what Hans Christian Andersen did for imperial tailoring.
4. In Little Gidding, one of the Four Quartets.
5. And beyond. A recent book, subtitled 'A Beginner's Guide to Changing the World' (Losada 2004), has a tri-partite structure based around the three lines of the prayer.
6. Many who, in common with Laplace, 'have no need of that hypothesis' (Barbour 1998: 35), are happy to use the prayer without its opening address.
7. This is the most widely quoted form of the prayer. A slightly different form can also be found:

O God, grant us the serenity to accept what cannot be changed. The courage to change what can be changed. And the wisdom to know the difference. (Batchelor 1992: 71)

The differences in individual/corporate and active/passive approaches should not be underestimated, but do not affect the main thrust of this exploration.
8. This is the internationally agreed form. The Church of England has, until recently, used an even more change-denying version:

As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
9. I am grateful to Canon Robert Warren for sharing his deep insights through a paper on Managing Change; it includes sections entitled 'Changing Culture' and, intriguingly, 'An Anglican Theology of Change'.
10. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17.
11. This incident is recorded in three separate places in the New Testament (Acts chapters 9, 22 and 26) – not, it has to be said, with absolute consistency.
12. Jesus' birth is recorded in this form in only one of the gospels. See Luke chapter 2.
13. I am grateful to Canon Bryan Pettifer for clarification on this point.
14. Which some are: see for example George Lings' Encounters on the Edge (www.encountersontheedge.org.uk).
15. The book's subtitle – The Ultimate Intelligence – suggests a pre-emptive strike on Goleman and his followers. One wonders whether leadership thinkers (not to mention the commercial demands of publishers) will be satisfied that we have, indeed, reached the last word on the subject.
16. See footnote 7 above.
17. The original is in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (www.tretyakovgallery.ru/english/about).
18. Recorded in Genesis chapter 18.

19. Strictly speaking, selection criteria may have a slightly different purpose. However, if they are not closely aligned to an organisation's competencies, we are entitled to ask: why not?
20. At the time of writing, the Church of England was in the process of revising its Ordinal (the draft text has been published as GS1535). In the meantime, the 1980 text is considered here.

References

- Adair, J. 2001. *The Leadership of Jesus*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Adair, J. and Nelson, J. Eds. 2004. *Creative Church Leadership*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Arnold, D.W.H. and Fry, C.G. 1990. *Francis: A Call to Conversion*. London: SPCK.
- ASB. 1980. *The Alternative Services Book 1980*. Various Publishers.
- Baggley, J. 1987. *Doors of Perception: Icons and their Spiritual Significance*. Oxford: Mowbray.
- Barbour, I.G. 1998. *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. London: SCM Press.
- Batchelor, M. Ed. 1992. *Prayer Collection*. Oxford: Lion Publishing.
- Blanchard, K. and Johnson, S. 1983. *The One Minute Manager*. London: HarperCollins.
- Boff, L. 1988. *The Trinity and Society*. Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates.
- Boff, L. 1992. *Good News for the Poor*. Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates.
- Bolden, R. 2004. 'The map is not the terrain: the future of leadership competencies'. Paper prepared for 3rd International Workshop on Studying Leadership, University of Exeter Centre for Leadership Studies, 15–16 December 2004.
- Bradley, I. Ed. 1989. *The Penguin Book of Hymns*. London: Viking Penguin.
- Carr, W. Ed. 2002. *The New Dictionary of Pastoral Studies*. London: SPCK.
- Case, P. 1999. 'Remember reengineering: the rhetorical appeal of a managerial salvation device'. *Journal of Management Studies*, 36:4, 419–441.
- Collins, J. 2001. *Good to Great*. London: Random House.
- Conner, D.R. 1998. *Managing at the Speed of Change*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Croft, S. 1999. *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church*. London: DLT.
- Finney, J. 1992. *Finding Faith Today*. Swindon: Bible Society.
- Francis, L.J. and Robbins, M. 2004. *Personality and the Practice of Ministry*. Cambridge: Grove Books.
- Goleman, D. 1996. *Emotional Intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. and McKee, A. 2002. *The New Leaders*. London: Little, Brown.
- Gosling, J. and Mintzberg, H. 2003. 'The five minds of a manager'. *Harvard Business Review*, 73:6, 54–63.
- Green, S. and Cooper, P. 1998. 'Sage, visionary, prophet and priest: leadership styles of knowledge management and wisdom'. In Hamel, G., Prahalad, C.K., Thomas, H. and O'Neal, D. (Eds.), *Strategic Flexibility: Managing in a Turbulent Environment*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Greenleaf, R.K. 1977. *Servant Leadership*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R.K. and Spears, L.C. Eds. 2002. *Servant Leadership*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Grint, K. and Case, P. 2000. 'Now where were we? BPR lotus-eaters and corporate amnesia'. In Knights, D. and Willmott, H. (Eds.), *The Reengineering Revolution*. London: Routledge.
- Grugulis, I. 1997. 'The consequences of competence: a critical assessment of the management NVQ'. *Personnel Review*, 26:6, 428–444.
- Handy, C. 1997. *The Hungry Spirit*. London: Hutchinson.
- HBR. 1998. *Harvard Business Review on Knowledge Management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hind, J. (Chair). 2003. *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church (The Hind Report)*. London: CHP.
- Holman, D. and Hall, L. 1997. 'Competence in management development: rites and wrongs'. *British Journal of Management*, 7:2, 191–202.
- Howard, S. and Welbourn, D. 2004. *The Spirit at Work Phenomenon*. London: Azure.
- Hybels, B. 2002. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Jasper, R.C.D. and Bradshaw, P.F. 1986. *A Companion to the Alternative Services Book 1980*. London: SPCK.
- Johnson, P. 1982. *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Restoration*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.
- Khurana, R. 2002a. *Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Khurana, R. 2002b. 'The curse of the superstar CEO'. *Harvard Business Review*, 80:9, 60–66.
- Komisar, R. 2000. *The Monk and the Riddle*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kotter, J.P. 1995. 'Leading change: why transformation efforts fail'. *Harvard Business Review*, 73:2, 59–67.
- Kotter, J.P. 1996. *Leading Change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kübler-Ross, E. 1970. *On Death and Dying*. London: Tavistock.
- Kuhr, G.W. Ed. 2001. *Ministry Issues for the Church of England*. London: CHP.
- Kumar, S. 2002. *You Are Therefore I Am: A Declaration of Dependence*. Dartington: Green Books.
- Losada, I. 2004. *For Tibet With Love: A Beginners Guide to Changing the World*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- MacQuarrie, J. Ed. 1967. *A Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. London: SCM Press.
- McKane, W. 1970. *Proverbs (Old Testament Library)*. London: SCM Press.
- Mintzberg, H. 2004. *Managers not MBAs*. Harlow: FT Prentice Hall.
- Mitroff, I.I. and Denton, E. 1999. *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Wiley.
- Nelson, J. Ed. 1996. *Management and Ministry*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Nelson, J. Ed. 1999. *Leading, Managing, Ministering*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Oxford. 1979. *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parikh, J. 1991. *Managing Your Self: Management by Detached Involvement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Parry, A. and De Waal, E. 1990. *The Rule of St Benedict*. Leominster: Gracewing.
- Pettifer, B.G.E. Ed. 2002. *Management and Spiritual Energy*. London: MODEM.
- Richardson, A. (Ed.) 1969. *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*. London: SCM Press.
- Robertson, P. 2005. *Always Change a Winning Team*. London: Marshall Cavendish Business.
- Royer, I. 2003. 'Why bad projects are so hard to kill'. *Harvard Business Review*, 81:2, 48–56.
- Salaman, G. 2004. 'Competences of managers, competences of leaders'. In Storey, J. (Ed.), *Leadership in Organizations: Current Issues and Key Trends*. London: Routledge.
- Sandmel, S. 1972. *The Enjoyment of Scripture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Senge, P.M. 1990. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. London: Random House.
- Wakefield, G.S. (Ed.) 1983. *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. London: SCM Press.
- Wallis, J. 1982. *The Call to Conversion*. Tring: Lion Publishing.
- Walsh, M. Ed. 2001. *Dictionary of Christian Biography*. London: Continuum.
- Wenham, G.J. 1987. *Genesis 1–15 (Word Biblical Commentary)*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- White, V. 1997. *Paying Attention to People*. London: SPCK.
- Whitmore, J. 2002. *Coaching for Performance*, 3rd edition. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Zohar, D. and Marshall, I. 2000. *SQ – Spiritual Intelligence the Ultimate Intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.