

MS 2XL3 CRITICAL ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

McMaster Divinity College

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Dates & Times: 4 Saturdays 9:00-4:00

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For specializations: Pastoral Studies (PS), Church and Culture (CC), Christian Worldview (CW).

Our souls may not belong to this world, but the world is our workplace. In a series of four day long seminars we will cover a broad range of topics and issues in becoming a Christian Leader: fulfilling God's call to step forward in leadership—a response to God's summons to contribute to the kingdom, both in the 'now' and the 'not yet.'

The call to leadership is daunting, but these four seminars will offer encouragement and suggestion for a pastoral response to this call.

Consider that in every pew at every church on every Sunday morning, someone is almost certainly struggling with the question that Darrell Cosden asks, "From within the Christian doctrine, what is our work and its place in God's economy, [and] thus, how should we be carrying out our work?"¹ Jurgen Moltmann makes the statement, "The coming lordship of the risen Christ cannot be merely hoped for and awaited."² We have work to do in the service of God and his kingdom; work that is more important than we might imagine.

In the movie adaptation of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy we observe the following exchange:

Frodo: "*I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.*"

Gandalf: "*So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.*"

While at first blush it may seem flippant to use this fictional exchange as an introduction to such a critical topic, I have done so because the imagery of this dialogue between the *Hobbit* Frodo and his guiding wizard Gandalf is such that it calls to mind, in all of us, a time when we are presented with a pivotal decision; the decision to step up or to step down, to take the easy road or in response to our Lord's instruction, to "Enter through the narrow gate."³

In stark contrast to the ascetic life chosen by the desert fathers and others, Moltmann continues, "The *vita Christiana*, the Christian life, no longer consists of fleeing the world and in spiritual

¹ Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, preface.

² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329.

³ Matt 6:13.

resignation from it, but is engaged in an attack upon the world and a calling in the world.”⁴ Moltmann is very specific as to the source of this call. He says, “From the call of God in the Gospel of Christ, and from the call of God of history...it is the call to join in working for the kingdom of God that is to come.”⁵ For us, this means leadership.

Christian Leadership is eschatological. In a profound apocalyptic vision, the angel that many scholars identify as Gabriel spoke to Daniel and said that he had “come to help you understand what will happen to your people at the end of days.”⁶ Daniel 10-12 draws us deeply into this contemplation. If the *eschaton* is the nexus between time and eternity, then, as Jackelen points out, “This would mean that every event carries an eschatological deep dimension of ultimate meaning.”⁷ Our everyday work as leaders, together with the ethics with which we carry out that work, is squarely within the *gravitas* of this perspective.

This series of seminars will enable the exploration, discussion and deepening of our understanding of God’s call to lead.

Course objectives

Knowing

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul states, “What-ever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive your inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ”⁸.

Matthew Fox writes of, “How our inner work can feed our outer work.”⁹ This inner work is our prayerful meditation on God’s work in strengthening our souls and shaping us for the proper execution of our outer work—the task of leadership and it takes time—a life time.

It is the gradual process of a lifetime of work in leadership in which we are to strive unceasingly to reflect the image of Christ and to seek personal sanctification. In other words, both the constant pursuit of holiness to the greatest extent we can achieve in this life, plus a hoped-for divine acknowledgment of our demonstration of accountability to Him in the stewardship of our gifts for the enrichment of His Kingdom.

This asserts the perspective that beyond the journey towards personal holiness there is a very significant eschatological purpose in our work; literally, the potential for a personal contribution to the new creation.

⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 331.

⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 332-3.

⁶ Dan 10:14.

⁷ Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 957.

⁸ Col 3:23-24.

⁹ Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, 297.

Being

Those who seek out our leadership are hungering for deeper purpose. Our call is assure them that they will find sanctification in their labours. As we learn, through humility, to invite the Holy Spirit to guide and develop our leadership and stewardship accountabilities, in a gradual and purposeful way, we come to reflect the image of Christ in the world.

This is critical for those preparing for and entering ministry. Pastors and emerging leaders of the church require a more robust understanding of the nature of the workplaces around them in their communities; the practical theology of work and the centrality and importance of work in the lives of their parishioners as they seek to bring glory to God in their vocations.

Doing

Our vocational response to the call for leadership is desired by God as a contribution to unfolding history: indeed, each of us can make a personal difference—each of us *will* make a personal difference. Canon Simon Phipps was the Industrial Chaplain in the Diocese of Coventry, England. His close contact with the challenges of labour and management in this industrial heartland of 1960s Britain gave him a view of life which he believed the church had largely missed. In *God on Monday*, he asserts, “The biblical outline of the world shows it as man’s [sic] means of freedom, God’s means of communication, and man’s [sic] means of response... and it all happens in the one secular world.”¹⁰ As those around us do their best, it is up to us to do our best to engage with them, where they are, and to strengthen them with God’s word. Christian leadership is a modelling of Christ’s leadership, both within the church and beyond it.

Required readings

Books:

Grenz, Stanley, J. and Olson, Roger E. *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1992.

Mudge, Lewis S. and Poling, James N. *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

Phipps, Simon. *God on Monday*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966.

Rolheiser, Ronald. *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

¹⁰ Phipps, *God on Monday*, 35.

Thompson, Judith and Thompson, Ross. *Mindful Ministry: Creative, Theological and Practical Perspectives*, Norwich UK: SCM Press, 2012.

Assignments and Evaluation

Book Review: Choose one of the books above. The Review must be 5-7 pages double-spaced 12pt font, excl. Title Page. Due: TBD. Worth 15%.

Case reflection: Develop a deep perspective based upon either, one of the specific class cases and dialogue, or a personal experience, reflected upon through the lens of this course material and discussion. Must be 10-12 pages double-spaced 12pt font, excluding title page & bibliography. 6-7 additional reference sources should be cited.

This paper should reflect your academic program specialization.

Pastoral Studies students should write from the perspective of actually leading a ministry-based strategic planning exercise.

Church and Culture and Christian Worldview students should write from the perspective of the challenges of leadership within a Christian church culture, may choose between urban and rural, large or small congregation, established church or church plant.

Due TBD. Worth 35%.

Personal Reflection Paper Based Upon Your Specialization (see further below): 5 pages double-spaced 12pt font, excl. Title Page. Due TBD. Worth 35%.

Pastoral Studies Students should reflect on your interaction with the course material and discussion from a vocational perspective. Discussion should include actual or anticipated experiences, together with the specific elements of the course work that impacts your thinking in this practical regard.

Church and Culture Students should reflect on your interaction with the course material and discussion in a way that integrates theological and contemporary perspectives.

Christian Worldview Students should reflect on your interaction with the course material and discussion in a way that compares such elements as creedal values and approaches, ethnic and cultural variations.

Course Participation: Worth 15%.

Please note that a penalty of 1% per calendar day will be assessed for late submission of assignments.

Class Schedule:

Day 1: Answering the question: *Have I really earned the right to lead others?*

With a focus on the personal dimensions of leadership, the first day includes a range of theological developments on the issue of vocation and the spirituality of leadership in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We will discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in our work. We will move to a discussion of argument that our work in leadership, our vocational calling, is of critical importance in the unfolding history of the world.

We will discuss the elements of the process of drawing closer to God in all that we do—in our transactions, our treatment of others, our leadership, our community-centredness (both church and secular), so that not only are our own eyes and ears are opened as we receive Christ in all His offices, but that others might see Christ reflected in us. In this way, not only is the fruit of our work economic in nature, but through our stewardship of God's assets in the eyes of others we might fulfill the call to discipleship in a meaningful way.

Day 2: Answering the question: *How do I influence others?*

When change is sought, conflict usually arises, and power dynamics are tested. We will explore the elements of a pastoral leadership, offering the opportunity for an enriching exchange between the church and the community. We will discuss bridging the dualism that separates our holy lives from our secular lives. We will learn how to seek better to understand our daily role as Christians as we go about our work as leaders in the Spirit—to become resilient in our task.

What also emerges is the potential for an enriching exchange. As the pastoral community contemplates the realities of the working lives of its flock, so too might the practices of good management more fully pervade the church. Pattison suggests that the time is right for this, arguing that “management is probably a necessary, useful, and inevitable part of the life of any contemporary organization, including the church.”¹¹

Day 3: Answering the question: *How do I lead my team to produce innovative results?*

Mentoring and equipping both the individual and the team must be steeped deeply in purpose. We will explore a teleological dimension and valuation of our work as leaders. Martin Lloyd-Jones says this:

The Christian man [sic] should remind himself every morning as he wakes up, ‘I am a child of God; I am a unique person; I am not like everybody else; I belong to the family of God. Christ has died for me and has translated me from the kingdom of darkness into His own Kingdom. I am going to heaven, I am destined for that. I am but passing through this world. I know its temptations and trials; I know the subtle insinuations of Satan. But I do not belong to him. I am a pilgrim and a stranger; I am one who is following Christ along the road.’¹²

¹¹ Woodward and Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 283

¹² Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in The Sermon On The Mount*, 489.

We will embed this dialogue in the reality of today. We live in an era where *networks* are proliferating—*facebook*, *linkedin*, and other ‘*www*’ services have memberships that, in size, challenge the populations of many countries. Yet, at the same time we also live in a time when we speak less often of *relationships*. Bauman says, “When the quality lets you down, you tend to seek redemption in quantity. If ‘commitments are meaningless’, while relationships cease to be trustworthy and are unlikely to last, you are inclined to swap partnerships for networks.”¹³

In a world where partnerships, *relationships*, diminish and *networks* increase, we will discuss how we might link arms with the communities we serve, as fellow travelers in search of the narrow gate.

Day 4: Answering the question: *How can I create exceptional focus through the organization?*

This will be a day of reflection—finding biblical comfort, inspiration and instruction on the critical topic of practical theology as it might permeate and make more relevant our leadership careers, particularly in the areas of creating vision, mission and strategy.

We will discuss our roles as players in the unfolding of history. We will ‘dive deeply’ into an expanded dialogue on the sacred value of everyday as a contribution to the kingdom and our role as Christian leaders in the enrichment of that life.

A. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College’s book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one’s academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

¹³ Bauman, *Liquid Love*, xiii.

C. Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

D. Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

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