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# Celebrating paradoxes in Christian leadership

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# CELEBRATING PARADOXES IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

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Studying organizations as dynamic, open systems has captured the interest of organizational scholars for several decades. Along with other influences this has led to progressively more sophisticated understanding of how leaders and followers interact and how their organizations interact with the external environment. In turn, as our understanding has improved, scholarly awareness of the complexity of leadership has increased. One might argue that this awareness correspondingly has produced a better understanding of the many tensions that derive from dilemmas and paradoxes that leaders face in their work.

During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, few scholars reflected on leadership tensions. Those who did so considered only a few issues (Church, 1914; Jones, 1914; Veblen, 2004). For example, Thorstein Veblen (2004), in his 1914 book *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts*, brings to light the concept of trained incapacity that he had developed in 1898. Training creates increased capacity for productivity while at the same time creating blind spots which can incapacitate.

While these scholars influenced later studies of leadership, as a group they tended not to view the complexities of leadership as later scholars have come to do so. Another generation would pass before scholars identified more elements of paradox that affect leaders (Drucker, 1959; March & Simon, 1958; Merton, 1957; Parsons, 1962; Selznick, 1948; Simon, 1946). Paradox in business became a specific subject of interest among business scholars when Herbert Simon's (1946, 53) article explored the proverbs of administration. In his article he writes:

For almost every principle one can find an equally plausible and acceptable contradictory principle. Although the two principles of the pair will lead to the exactly opposite organizational recommendations, there is nothing in the theory to indicate which is the proper one to apply. (p. 53)

In his 1935 work Kenneth Burke (1984) discussed the ancient roots of the *permanence and change* tension – an idea that has

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been reconsidered as it relates to nonprofit organization leadership (Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1995). Selznick (1948) restated the control-flexibility tension (first put forward by Veblen) in terms of control and consent. Leadership decision making carries a tension point when applied in any organization but especially in the entrepreneurial venture. Entrepreneurial decisions need to take future impact into account. But at the same time, “entrepreneurial decisions must be fundamentally expedient decisions” (Drucker, 1959, p. 246).

A few more voices contributed to a growing understanding of the paradoxical complexity of organizations during the 1960s and 1970s (Andrews, 1971; Blau & Schoenherr, 1971; Chandler, 1962; Fiedler, 1967; Kelley, 1966; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; O’Dea, 1961; Vancil, 1976; Weick, 1979). Most of these (O’Dea is the exception) wrote from the perspective of for-profit organizations and strategic decision making, but none attempted a systematic study of the issues until the 1980s when a few more contributed to the study (Harvey, 1988; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Quinn, 1988; Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Scott, 1987). In so doing these students of paradox spurred an explosion of conceptual and philosophical scholarship that occurred from the 1990s until the present. Handy (1994), Keidel (1995), Bouchikhi (1998), Lewis and Dehler (2000), and Clegg (2002) are a few examples of the scores of scholars recently who have commented on the issues of paradox that affect leaders. The gap in this stream of scholarly dialog appears to be that, with one exception (Malony, 1999), none of the students of organizational paradox have explored this phenomenon as it relates to Christian leadership. Malony’s contribution approaches the subject from the point of view of leaders of religious organizations.

The purpose of this study is to celebrate through exploration the complexity of Christian leadership in terms of selected clusters of paradoxes. In doing this I will provide an interdisciplinary backdrop for review by Christian leadership researchers.

## Thinking – Doing

A classic example of a fundamental leadership paradox is the one identified by Goethe (quoted in Edward Jones, 1914), who said, “Few have at once both thought and capacity for action. Thought expands, but lames; action animates, but narrows” (p.77). In this paradox we see illustrated how one dichotomous pole carries within it, if unchecked, the seeds of destruction of the other pole. Said another way, action, by its nature, ensures that tradeoffs are made

since one action means that other alternative actions potentially are foregone by the decision preventing the leader from gaining benefits from the alternatives. Thinking creates many alternatives for action but left to itself will result in inaction. Both thinking and doing each have positive inherent value and both are needed if leaders are to be effective. Peter Drucker (1992, p. 47), who emphasized the importance of *doing* in leadership, says in allusion to this paradox that the toughest balance the nonprofit leader has to handle is “between being too cautious and being rash.”

One of the scholars of leadership nearly a century ago, Edward Jones (1914, p.78), considered the work of a leader as essentially “mental labor.” He said, “Great men of action have usually been strong thinkers. Their action has been known because it has been performed in public; their thinking has been in private.” More recently Carroll and Gillen (1987) agree. If they are correct, we should find that a complex web of paradoxical mental tensions result from the output of a leader’s activity.

The Christian leader who prizes high moral ground faces this thinking-doing paradox in situations containing any difficult decision but especially decisions containing complicated moral dilemmas. On the one hand, thinking about a moral issue is required to ferret out the nuances of potential conflict as well as the rights and values potentially at risk. But by itself, the danger is that thinking about the moral dilemma can become a superficial sanctuary of protection against the risks of having to take a controversial action in a complex situation.

On the other hand, leaders have the divinely appointed responsibility to come to difficult decisions and to take actions when necessary. Action inherently limits moral debate and action taken without serious forethought will quickly narrow the range of possibilities to a point that at least will limit leadership effectiveness and at most cause organizational chaos.

In terms of moral dilemmas that leaders face, this thinking-doing paradox is related to another dilemma: using power for action versus withholding power through inaction. On the one hand, there is a risk that leaders will over-use (abuse) their legitimate power by taking actions that harm. At the same time, the opposite problem is just as pernicious: moral inaction when action is called for. As Pfeffer (1992) says, passivity plagues organizations. Leaders have the responsibility to exercise their legitimate power to deal with moral dilemmas. Not doing so can be just as devastating to organizational mission as the opposite problem.

*“Leaders have the divinely appointed responsibility to come to difficult decisions and to take actions when necessary.”*

## Head – Heart

Most leadership paradoxes result in tension and risk. Nowhere is this better illustrated for the Christian leader than in the dichotomy between leading with your head and leading with your heart. One risk occurs when leading with your head dominates; it will produce leadership that is perceived to be cold-hearted. The opposite risk also is possible. Thus the Christian leader will face situations when both head and heart must be exercised in a delicate balance. Considered by Lowy and Hood (2004) to be one of the eight archetypal organizational dilemmas, the head-heart tension is slightly reminiscent of Parson's (1962) affectivity-affective neutrality dichotomy where in any given situation the social actor must decide whether to restrain or to release affective impulses. More recently, Pascale (1990) highlighted this paradox in the for-profit arena. Preoccupation with concrete, bottom-line results based on unambiguous goals will, if left unchecked, short-change the soft-hearted values that also are essential in carrying out the organizational mission.

Leaders face this paradox when confronted with resource allocation decisions. On the one hand, the Christian leader, responsible as a wise steward of entrusted resources, must make decisions in a context of scarcity. This will, at times, mean that limits are placed on requests for resources that when denied will constrain others who depend on such resources for carrying out the mission of the organization where they work. On the other hand, making decisions from the heart will provide more freedom for carrying out mission but, paradoxically, in so doing, will limit resources that might be used elsewhere for mission. When seen from this perspective, managing the head-heart paradox can come with an opportunity cost of benefits forgone when one decision is made instead of another.

Equally challenging for the Christian leader are situations that call for sensitive human resources decisions that can affect the livelihood of employees. Letting go of an employee who is not a good match for the organization is not easy especially in religious nonprofit organizations whose missions are closely aligned with redemptive actions. The Christian leader senses an obligation to be redemptive in all actions (leading with the heart) living with the hope that, given another opportunity through counseling and guidance, individual behaviors will be changed. When repeated attempts to change behaviors are unsuccessful, efforts of leading with the heart transform themselves from being redemptive action to enabling action of

dysfunctional behaviors. Such a result may end up doing both the individual and the organization more harm than good.

The head-heart dichotomy is interrelated with a related paradox of being responsible for serving the organization at the same time as serving the individual. This paradox is explored next.

## Serving the Organization – Serving the Individual

Like their counterparts in for-profit and government organizations, Christian leaders of religious nonprofit organizations have the responsibility of creating an environment that imposes upon the individuals aligned with the group (Cf. Weick, 1979). This interplay between the individual's needs and the group's needs is fundamental to the Christian leadership.

Several scholars have explored several facets of this tension. Malony (1999) discusses this in terms of running an efficient organization but ensuring that people feel recognized. Bouchikhi (1998), March (1991), and Keidel (1995) acknowledge the paradox of collectivism and individualism in organizations. Clegg, Cunha, and Cunha (2002) examined several interrelated paradoxes including the control-freedom paradox relevant in this discussion. Lewis and Dehler (2000) account for the need to foster autonomy at the same time as fostering interdependence in the organizations. Pascale (1990) highlights the collegiality-individuality tension.

Nutt, Backoff, and Hogan (2000) revealed that there are several major leadership issues that emerge from the connection between *equity* (human resource needs) and *productivity* (effective processes). This inseparable connection between issues of people and issues of tasks has been recognized by Fiedler (1967) and Solovy (2002) and is similar to that inferred by the Ohio State University studies and the University of Michigan studies on leadership (Kahn & Katz, 1960; Stogdill & Coons, 1951).

This tension point can be informed by three other paradoxes. Freedom of will of subjects who join organizations is by nature in conflict with the need for control and order of the will by the organization. "All organization is founded on paradox: on the one hand it contains free, creative, independent human subjects; on the other hand the relation between these subjects aspires to be one of organization, order and control" (Clegg, Cunha, & Cunha, 2002, p. 483). In religious traditions where freedom of the will is a central tenet of creation theology, this tension can become especially acute as leaders attempt to honor the divine creation of humans with free

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will at the same time as pursuing the organizational goals. Another related paradox is the tension that the leader faces in terms of trust and accountability. Trust is an essential part of any team; it allows for communication of ideas without fear of reprisal. However, when trust is total, it creates a void of accountability (adapted from Langfred, 2004). The third related paradox is the need for leaders to encourage debate where individuals represent their points of view while creating unity. According to Collins (2001), good-to-great management teams consist of people who debate vigorously in search of the best answers, yet who unify behind decisions, regardless of parochial interests.

In this discussion the distinction between leadership and administration, i.e., that the two are not identical though they overlap and that both are expected of leaders, is important (Bennis, 1989). Given the tension that all leaders face, perhaps we should not put too fine a cut on such a distinction. According to Mulhare (1999), the term administration, which she says comes from the Latin *administrare*, when translated means “to serve.” The Latin word *administratio* means, among other things, “giving of help,” which has a similar connotation as does “serving.” But the Latin root also includes the idea of directing.

The difficulty comes in that serving can be thought of both in terms of serving the organization and in terms of serving individuals. The never-ending tension between serving the organization and its needs versus serving individuals in the organization and their individual needs is an important one that, in my opinion, is at the root of some of the difficulties we encounter in practice and academically when studying the issues. Both foci of service are required, yet the two will at times come into conflict.

## Preservation – Change

According to Weathersby (1999, p. 5), Peter Drucker is quoted as adapting a statement by Alfred North Whitehead: “The art of leadership is to preserve order amid change and to change amid order.” Represented in this comment is another paradoxical leadership tension. Both must be pursued simultaneously. Allowing one to dominate can be as destructive as allowing the other to prevail. Knowing which to emphasize when is leadership wisdom.

Lowy and Hood (2004) identify stability and change as one of the eight archetypal dilemmas in all types of organizations. Leaders are at the focal point of this tension. In the for-profit

world this tension has been characterized by Markides (1999) as the constant pull of the firm to compete for its current position while also searching for new positions to achieve. Others (Clegg, Cunha, & Cunha, 2002; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Wendt, 1998) characterize this as the tension between exploiting current resources and current opportunities at the same time as exploring for new resources and new opportunities. Collins (2001) refers to the need to preserve the core ideology while stimulating progress and renewal of everything else. Somewhat akin to this paradox in leadership thinking is that described by Abell (1999) when he describes the differences between changing the business and running the business.

In the arena of nonprofit organizations, Edwards and Eadie (1994) consider this tension as "running the shop" while meeting the challenges of change. Another way of seeing this tension is in the concepts of transition (innovation and change) that conflict with the need for preservation of tradition (Nutt, Backoff, & Hogan, 2000). This is especially difficult for nonprofit organizations whose missions tend to be timeless while the environment they serve continues to change around them (Miller, 2002; Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1995). Rangan (2004) described this tension for nonprofits in terms of "mission stick" versus "market pull," i.e., staying loyal to the mission while adapting operating strategies to the changing market. In terms of this tension, the role of the nonprofit leader is that of a mediator between the forces of the environment and the needs of the operating units (cf. Mintzberg, 1978). That this tension exists at both the organizational level and the individual level is supported by Greenleaf's (1977, p. 104) portrayal of the servant leader who faces "the operational necessity to be both dogmatic and open to change."

Central to this tension is the dilemma of sticking with the tried-and-true methods to pursue the organization's mission while experimenting with novel methods. All organizations (but especially nonprofits) tend to be stability-oriented rather than change-oriented (Kaufman, 1971; Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1995). For a religious nonprofit, borrowing approaches to ministry from outside the safety of the organization's shared values is risky as it places in jeopardy these values. But with the scarcity of financial resources that the organization faces, only a bare minimum can be spent on experimenting with new methods that align well with the organization's values. Thus, Christian leaders of nonprofit organizations feel the tension of needing to innovate while needing to protect shared values and maintain current programs.

Christian leaders will recognize the theological and social



versions of this tension: preserving a nonnegotiable theology while satisfying the very real needs of individuals who want to understand the theology in meaningful contemporary terms (Bosch, 1991; Shawchuck, Kotler, Wrenn, & Rath, 1992). As a key boundary spanner for the organization, the leader of a religious nonprofit must constantly work to preserve the boundaries defined by the organization's teachings so that the organization preserves its distinctiveness. At the same time, leaders must tear down some of the boundaries that separate the organization from relevant entities that can help the organization fulfill its mission or that provide access to key stakeholders. Either extreme, removing all boundaries or erecting perfectly impermeable boundaries, will end in destruction of the organization and its mission. This is related to the tension between having an exclusive identity (to live a distinctive life defined in the faith community) and an inclusive identity (to live a life that is relevant to those) in the larger culture (Benson & Dorsett, 1971; Malony, 1999; cf. Demerath & Hammond, 1969). It also considers the tension between cultural isolation and cultural engagement (Smith, 1998). Inherent in this is a central, never-ending point of tension: "The gospel must be neither captive to the local culture nor alienated from it" (Scherer & Bevans, 1999, p. 12).

### **Top-Down Vision – Bottom-Up Participation**

Kilpatrick & Silverman (2005, p. 25) state that the need for vision in nonprofit organizations is more acute than in for-profits where economic feedback "concentrates the minds of executives on what is working." Visioning, an important leadership competency, though it includes the perspective of individuals in many places in the organization, traditionally has been thought of as essentially a top-down process. Appointed or elected leaders, acting on behalf of the organization's stakeholders, have the job of developing and communicating this vision to the organization. Such visioning provides needed direction to everyone. The problem occurs when top-down visioning makes it "difficult to focus on the empowerment and the 'bottom-up' dynamics needed to implement the vision" (Denison, Haaland, & Goelzer, 2004, p. 100). The opposite pole in this leadership tension presents a corresponding opposite set of risks. According to Denison et al., organizations "with strong participation often have difficulty establishing direction" (2004, p. 100). Leaders are challenged to accomplish both and in so doing live in the midst of this tension.

Scholars such as Wendt (1998), Abell (1999), and Parnell and Lester (2003) have highlighted this tension point. Leaders come into a peculiar vantage point in an organization that allows them the privilege to see a broader perspective. This point of view is vital as leaders make decisions for the future of the organization. At the same time, others at all levels in the organization who are not necessarily in leadership positions are becoming better educated, more sophisticated thinkers about how the organization can best fulfill its mission. Their understanding of the vision needs to receive voice. Without their voice being heard during the visioning process, a strict top-down approach may not yield the best results.

For Christian leaders this tension point takes on an additional shade of color in the bouquet of paradoxes being celebrated here. Coupled with the issues of deciding future actions to fulfill mission is the religious belief that, on the one hand, God works through providence to place leaders in positions to provide direction for His people. Through these leaders human efforts are guided to pursue divine initiatives. At the same time, each individual stakeholder in the organization has access to the same divine influence to guide and direct his or her own understanding of the organization's mission and how best to accomplish it.

## **Abundance Mentality – Scarcity Awareness**

While nonprofit organizations do not operate in the same economic terms as do for-profit companies, all organizations operate in the context of scarcity (Edwards & Eadie, 1994; Phills, 2005). Decisions for resource allocation continually are made with this awareness. It makes budgeting in a nonprofit organization especially difficult. Cash can be in short supply in nonprofits compared with the desire for cash (Phills, 2005). The economic bottom line in nonprofit organizations is not profits but rather prosperity for pursuing mission. Thus, strong emphases need to be maintained on fund raising in order to carry out the mission of the organization (Wilson & Butler, 1986). Perhaps this is why Peter Drucker (1989) claims that nonprofits are more money conscious than are for-profits and why current nonprofit strategy scholars consider resource acquisition a key measure of organizational performance (Crittenden, Crittenden, Middleton Stone, & Robertson, 2004). The scarcity of resources for nonprofit organizations is one reason why organizations use volunteers extensively when compared with for-profits (Steinberg, 1987). Volunteers for nonprofit organizations "must be treated as

an extremely scarce resource which, as all resources, must be used productively to enhance the organization's service level and role in the community" (Hatten, 1982, p. 102). The risk on this side of the paradox is that focusing solely on the limited inputs can lead to an acute need to minimize expenses which, in turn, can destroy the quality of work as well as an entrepreneurial abundance mentality needed to grow the resources.

Leaders of nonprofit organizations must watch expenses. At the same time, in order to effectively communicate a vision, leaders will communicate hope and faith about a positive future with the potential of expanded resources. When volunteers raise concerns about the probability of achieving goals, the Christian leader often will attempt to reframe his or her concerns in terms of a God-will-supply abundance thinking. Such reframing is likely to have a positive impact on the level of commitment needed to achieve the vision.

An example of this paradox is that provided by Collins (2001). His description of the leader in the midst of the Stockdale paradox involves confronting brutal facts of a situation while never losing faith:

The Stockdale Paradox: You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and *at the same time* have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be. [emphasis in original] (p. 86)

## Long Range – Short Range

In his book on nonprofit leadership, Peter Drucker (1992) celebrates paradox in leadership by giving the following advice to nonprofit leaders:

One of the key tasks of the leader is to balance up the long range and the short range, the big picture and the pesky little details. You are always paddling a canoe with two outriggers – balancing – while managing a non-profit. (p. 23)

Drucker also makes reference to other paradoxes such as seeing the big picture but also not "forgetting the individual person" who is being served by the organization. Drucker considered that this paradox cuts across both types of organizations: for-profit and

nonprofit (Drucker, 1974). To rephrase Drucker (1974) in terms of the nonprofit mission and leadership, to achieve immediate gains in mission accomplishment by endangering the long-range success of the organization carries one risk. The opposite risk is when leaders irresponsibly put the organization on a path toward disaster in the short run for the sake of grandiose long-range plans. Knowing how to balance both interests is the point in celebrating this tension.

It has long been recognized in the field of business that, if left unchecked, the operational activities of today will crowd out the strategic activities that shape the organization for tomorrow. This is known as Gresham's Law (Andrews, 1971; March & Simon, 1958; Simon, 1993). If we can assume that this law applies equally well to the experience of Christian leaders, one might argue that the natural tendency is for the short-run to dominate a leader's thinking. The challenge this brings to the Christian leader is that *now* is the moment when God is working to extend his Kingdom and to fully participate in that process. We too must be fully in the present to be led by God in our individual efforts in concert with His. However, focusing primarily on the present can blind us to the potential of how God may work in the future. Without astute planning for the future (keeping in mind that flexibility may be needed when the future arrives), we will not have the key assets and structures in place that contribute to effective pursuit of mission. In a similar way the scope of day-to-day ministry opportunities is so broad that just about any ministry activity that meets short-run needs can be a valid expression of organizational mission. Pursuing solutions to these needs can easily pull an organization in so many directions that it finds it difficult to achieve its reason for being, difficult to focus support to obtain scarce resources, and difficult for stakeholders to determine to what degree the organization is being effective in achieving its mission. So broad are the needs that many nonprofit organizations find it far easier to add new programs than to remove incumbent programs. This stretches scarce resources farther and heightens the tensions related to resource allocation.

## Faith and Paradox

Just as an organization's structural dynamics answer questions about organizations that cannot be answered by the more technical, quantitative approaches, or by the behavioral sciences, so tensions born from the dialectic of paradox and dilemma account for many of the enigmatic challenges that Christian leaders face. Paradox is

not new to Christians. The Christian experience is rooted in the paradox of faith. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is never built on 100% certainty but rather on the foundation of lack of complete information (Smith & Berg, 1997).

“Paradox is the environment in which religious leaders routinely work” (Malony, 1999, p. 2). But more than this, according to Malony it is the theological dimension of religious life from which spring most of the paradoxes that the Christian leader faces. The point of celebrating paradoxes of Christian leadership is not to say that leaders are simply stuck and can’t get out of the tensions they experience. Such a simplistic approach would not respect paradox for what it is nor would it call forth a joyous celebration worthy of the situation into which God places leaders. Once a person accepts the call into leadership, he or she will be asked to deal with these tensions produced by paradox – tensions that last a whole career. Understanding leadership in terms of paradox opens up a new window for viewing the concept of *calling*. The call to Christian leadership is the call to live a life in the midst of tensions while followers (who cannot experience these same tensions) sometimes wait and at other times urge the leader to action because the follower feels the tension. If the call to leadership is seen in these terms, one might say that the personal sense of purpose that a leader develops for himself/herself is, in part, related to these tensions that the leader experiences on behalf of the community of faith. With the support of other leaders and followers, leaders navigate their way through sometimes murky waters of organizational life. This is a faith community’s journey worthy of celebration and not merely an individual’s journey. In this journey, exploring the perspective of complex tensions can add to the mutual respect that experienced leaders have for each other and for the trials that new leaders go through on their journey. It requires an extra measure of patience in leaders who work with followers that have the luxury of not having to live with the paradoxes.

Exploring paradoxes of leadership can provide the student of leadership some protection against the temptation to uncritically accept (or reject) the latest overly-simplistic solutions to complex leadership problems that appear in the popular and trade press. For example, seeing leadership only through the eyes of personal relationships will result in under-representing the impact of other forces at work in the organization where leadership is expressed. The paradox of serving the organization while serving the individual illustrates how risky one point of view can be.

It can be argued that considering paradox in one's own life as a leader is an act of worship to a complex Creator. The moments in which a leader experiences tension struggling to maintain balance as a mediator serving two extremes are the moments of worship. Further, just as in the natural sciences the complexity of the universe testifies to the awesome power of our Creator, so in the world of human relationships, we see evidences of complex situations involving human interactions. Celebrating complexity welcomes meditation and reverent exploration that does not require either solution or resolution to the many tensions created by paradox. It simply allows for the possibility of acceptance of what is akin to the faith experience believing that God walks beside you in the midst of the tension.

Lewis and Dehler (2000, p. 711) say that "comprehending paradox begins with an understanding of contradictions. Unlike continua or either/or choices, contradictions denote opposing sides of the same coin. Yet, people naturally accentuate polarities, interpreting phenomena through simple, dichotomized frames of reference." They describe paradox as providing a learning space to examine "the ambivalence of mixed feelings, conflicting demands and uncertainty" (p. 723). This is not easily accomplished since we tend to resist living in the midst of a contradiction (Wacker, Taylor, & Means, 2000). Like other leaders, Christian administrators of for-profit and nonprofit organizations may be tempted to explain or resolve paradoxes. Paradoxically, we attempt to resolve that which cannot be resolved. This may be especially true of leaders who are more directive in their decision-making style. Such leaders have a low tolerance for ambiguity and are oriented toward task concerns and efficiency. On their surface paradoxes appear inefficient. But their efficiency may elude us since it may lie at a much deeper level.

A complexity viewpoint on leadership (one could hardly call it a theory) may lead us to understandings that help explain some leadership behaviors heretofore not understood. For example, a better understanding of how Christian leaders work their way through paradoxes may help us better understand the decision making.

## Final Questions

While many scholars have contributed to the dialog by offering conceptual analysis, few have attempted empirical study of leadership in terms of these tensions. Several opportunities exist for further research. The following are representative questions worth investigating:

- The literature on paradoxes suggests that these points of tension should be common to all leaders regardless of their religious experience or the setting in which they work. If so, is it true that the paradoxes that Christian leaders experience are the same as those experienced by non-Christians? And, are these tensions experienced in the same degree of intensity and do they have the same meanings?
- Could it be that Christian faith and experience may add an additional layer of tension that enriches the leadership experience? If this is true, at the same time, does this increase the level of ambiguity that the Christian leader must live with on a daily basis?
- Not much is known about how leaders manage these and other tensions. For example, what competencies are used in working through a difficult dilemma? How Christian leaders manage these and other paradoxes differently than do non-Christians is not known.
- Some paradoxical tension points may lie closer to the beliefs on which Christian leaders base their ministry. If so, which paradoxes are these and which beliefs are affected by these tensions?
- How do followers experience and interpret Christian leadership action in terms of these tensions? To what degree are followers aware of the intensity of the tensions experienced by their leaders?

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