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THE INDIVIDUAL-COMMUNITY TENSION
IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

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in Christian Leadership

It is one thing to discuss in general the Scripture teachings about stewardship and service that are applicable to the role of a leader. It is quite another thing to consider how faith is integrated in the work of a leader when the situation is complicated and sometimes ambiguous such as when the leader comes face to face with the reality that for each significant leadership principle, a plausible opposite and even *contradictory* principle for the same situation also exists and may be called for (Simon, 1946). Facing the complexities of organizational leadership[1] is the spade that turns up the soil of fundamental questions of what it means to integrate faith and learning. But if there is Truth to be found in the midst of the complexities of organizational leadership, we have an obligation to find it and honor it (Gaebelein, 1968, p. 23).

All organizations are founded on the complexity of paradoxical tensions (Clegg, Cunha & Cuhna, 2002; Peters, 1987). With the plethora of tensions that have been identified by scholars over the last fifty years one might even say that the world of organizational leadership is overfilled with enigmas that require careful if not constant attention. Organizational tensions require leaders and managers to make decisions in the context of ambiguity where every major organizational choice has the potential of sowing the seeds of destruction for the very thing that seems best at the time. Strangely enough each choice may seem equally correct (Clegg, Cunha & Cunha, 2002). This may be one reason why first-time leaders struggle to adjust to the complex nature of leadership work. Managers manage not just people but the relationships between people (Johnson, 1988, p. 16). It is in the context of these relationships that many of the paradoxical tension points exist. Non-managers have the luxury of passing the buck up the chain of command to those entrusted with more discretionary authority to work through these difficulties.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the Christian leader can view the management of a fundamental, universally experienced tension between caring for the needs of the *individual* and caring for the needs of the *organization*. We might metaphorically refer to this as one of the great polar opposites, the Arctic and Antarctic of organizations. Secondarily the purpose is to identify and explore selected Biblical teachings relevant to this tension that can be presented to undergraduate business students at colleges and universities.

To explore the fundamental tension between individual and community in the context of organizational leadership the following points will be discussed:
- Definitions of key terms
- Selected tension points of Christian belief
- Examples of organizational tensions
- The individual-community tension explored
- Relevant Biblical teachings

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[1] A distinction is made in this paper between leaders and managers. Reference will be made to both leaders and managers since the issues addressed here affect both.

- Secular approaches to managing paradoxes
- Discussion regarding the issues that Christian leaders face
- Implications for leadership education

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Paradox has been defined in various ways, but in terms of organizational life one of the most common definitions describes paradox as a situation where contradictory, mutually exclusive yet interdependent elements co-exist for which no permanent resolution is possible or desired (Clegg, 2002; Lewis & Dehler, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Cameron & Quinn, 1988). Paradoxical tensions are perceptual. They cause *cognitive* tension though not necessarily emotional tension. They "mask the simultaneity of conflicting truths." (Lewis, 2000, p. 761)

While paradox is the main focus of this paper two other terms deserve definition and distinction with paradox. Sometimes the word *dilemma* has been used in an informal way as a synonym of paradox (Aram, 1976; Benner & Tushman, 2003). To make a finer cut between the two ideas we might say that a dilemma is a situation that can require a choice between two mutually exclusive elements. We sometimes talk about a situation where a person is caught in a predicament having to choose between the lesser of two evils ("caught on the horns of a dilemma"). In this type of dilemma the person is required to give up one unfavorable alternative for another that is not quite so bad. In a paradoxical situation the person cannot choose *between* two opposing alternatives if a positive outcome is to be expected. Both opposing alternatives must be preserved in whatever choice is made.

Managers also face *tradeoffs* in their work, but not all tradeoffs are dilemmas or paradoxes. Tradeoff, as used here, is rooted in the economics of opportunity cost (Maital, 1994; Pindyck & Rubinfeld, 2001). When one managerial decision is made, this often requires the foregoing of other "next best" alternatives each of which offers anticipated or known benefits. Like the dilemma, in a tradeoff the manager is required to choose between two or more alternatives. With paradox the decision maker has the challenge of *not choosing* between best and next best alternatives but rather choosing in a way that fully embraces *both* opposing sets of benefits simultaneously.

TENSION POINTS IN CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

The idea of paradoxical tension is not new to Christians. For example, God's relationship with His creatures can be described in terms of a **Transcendence-Immanence paradox**. The **call to discipleship** is an invitation to die (to self) and to live (in Christ) (Bonhoeffer, 1963). The **paradox of the gospel** teaches us that we are more sinful than we can ever imagine. Sin is revealed when our lives are placed in stark contrast with the love of God as expressed in His law and in the person and work of Jesus. In other words, it is God's love that exposes us for what we truly are. Paradoxically, the very thing that exposes us for who we are is what heals us and sets us free from the burden it has revealed (Nash, 1994).

Another tension comes from the idea that on the one hand mission must be accomplished in a way that maintains *cultural relevance*. Without this why would anyone listen? On the other hand, mission also must be accomplished while maintaining *cultural difference* (Stott, 1975; Bosch, 1991; Johnson & Chalfant, 1993; cf. Scott, 1987).

In the **paradox of covenant** we find several tensions. The covenants in Scripture are unified by several important patterns, yet diversity exists when comparing Old Testament covenants with the new covenant established by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. We find

amazing continuity of structure and themes as well as newness with each one. In the covenants we find both the internal, spiritual experience emphasized but also the external, material life taken into account. Finally, a point that is relevant in this paper is that the Biblical covenants were both *corporate* and *individualistic* (Robertson, 1980, p. 280 – 300).

ORGANIZATIONAL TENSIONS

Scores of tensions are co-present in organizations. Business tensions are difficult to manage when they are born of ambiguity where mutually exclusive, contradictory ways of acting in the market seem to be required. Consider the following examples of well-known paradoxes:

- **Differentiation** (dividing up the work) – **Integration** (coordinating the work). When we divide up the work to gain efficiencies, we also must integrate the work to accomplish the overall goals (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Benner & Tushman, 2003).
- **Centralization – Decentralization** of discretionary authority is another universal structural tension that managers face. If one is allowed to dominate, the organization is in jeopardy of being destroyed (Chamberlain, 1962; Thompson, 1967/2003; Handy, 1994; Hall & Tolbert, 2005).
- **Continuity – Change.** Managers must preserve the core of the organization (in order to accomplish its purpose) and at the same time change the organization so that it can successfully adapt to its environment (Burke, 1935/1984; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Weick, 1979; Peters, 1987; Abell, 1999; Collins, 2001; Hall & Tolbert, 2005).
- **Efficiency – Effectiveness.** Managers must work vigorously to be efficient with current resources while at the same time they must make decisions that keep the overall purpose of the organization in view. (Kreitner, 2001; Maital, 1994).
- **Exploitation** of existing economic opportunities – **Exploration** of new economic opportunities. Managers must work to obtain the economic rents available in a given opportunity. They also must explore for new opportunities. These two sets of activities require quite different patterns of organizational and managerial thinking (Wernerfelt, 1984; Markides, 1999; Benner & Tushman, 2003).
- **Short-term – Long-term.** To succeed in the short term, leaders need to think long term and vice versa (Abell, 1999; Senge, 1990; Simon, 1993; Wacker, Taylor & Means, 2000; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Vancil, 1976).
- **Paradox of Business Ethics.** One might say that ethical thinking in organizations "requires both an attention to context and the ability to appropriately transcend context by appeal to more general principles." (Nesteruk, 1996, p. 134; cf. Solomon, 1994; Warehane, 1994)

The tension between caring for the needs of the **individual** while also caring for the needs of the **community** or the social group illustrates the interesting nature of paradoxes (Rousseau, 1762/1913; Parsons & Shils, 1962; Aram, 1976; Smith & Berg, 1987; Langfred, 2000). This tension is an example of a *fundamental* tension that managers in all types of organizations face. It also is interesting since it offers a chance to consider how the Christian manager's religious beliefs might be applied.

It is believed that the poles of these tension points are *interdependent opposites*. Managerial actions that support one pole have a corresponding (and sometimes unintended) impact on the other pole since the two extremes are interrelated. What adds to the difficulty is that these opposites are actually *inverse functions*. One pole, if left to itself, sows the seeds of

destruction of the other. Many business paradoxes are *universal* tensions that have existed for hundreds of years and continue to exist in all organizations, regardless of culture. Another assumption is that many fundamental organizational paradoxes are *inescapable* and inherently *unresolvable* in favor of one pole or the other, and that attempting to do so would be destructive of both polar opposites and possibly the organization as a whole.

INDIVIDUAL – COMMUNITY TENSION

To give legs to this abstract concept of individual-community tension, consider a few examples.

In **Numbers 32: 1 - 32** we have an interesting narrative of Moses being faced with the need to care for the desires of two individual tribes (Reuben and Gad) as well as the needs of the whole nation. If these two tribes located on the east side like they wanted, they would have available some of the best grazing lands for their flocks and herds. They would gain this benefit at the expense of reducing the mutual support they could offer the rest of the nation. Being on the east side of Jordan would geographically cut them off from the other tribes and they would be less able to help or be helped by the other tribes in common defense. In the end, Moses' decision was that Reuben and Gad's request to settle on the east side of the Jordan River would be granted but only on the condition that these two tribes would assist the other ten tribes in securing their new homeland.

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul (**2 Thessalonians 3:6 – 15**) discusses the importance of individual responsibility to the community. Paul was a proponent of freedom in Christ (Rom 6:18; Gal 5:1). But freedom does not mean license to become a burden to the community.

Consider the situation as simple as **the company lunch room.** To take care of some of the individual needs of employees, all employees have the privilege of using the room with its equipment. At the same moment that any given *individual* exercises this freedom in using the room, that person is expected to fulfill a responsibility in keeping the room clean for *everyone* in the organization. At the heart of this tension is that at the same time individuals have freedoms and group responsibilities. Freedom constrains responsibility and responsibility constrains freedom. Managers of all organizations build a system of constraints in the form of company rules, policies and procedures. They also give employees a measure of freedom within the constraints.

An organization's **wage and benefit package** is one way to manage the tension between individual interests and organizational interests. Contributions to retirement plans and the compensation bring together the individual's financial interest and the organization's need for a stable workforce (Aram, 1976, p. 14).

There are times when leaders require of subordinates to perform work tasks that while moral are **unpleasant.** The leader can be courteous and caring in demeanor when delegating the tasks. Nevertheless the tasks need to be done. Employees may disagree and even wave the flag of "unfairness" at the leader in an attempt to avoid having the tasks given to them. Leaders are sometimes in an unenviable position of having to listen to the concerns of employees and in the end giving them the task assignment.

Every leader has been faced with the challenge of giving individual team members freedom and caring for their individual needs (Johnson, 1996, p. 56, 251). The more the leaders emphasize the individual needs, the individuals are likely to become isolated from the group, more focused on their personal goals and interests. More than that, the more individuals are the

dominant concern, the more likely the whole team will begin to lose its central focus or common direction. Team support will start to suffer. Individual self-interest can turn into individual selfishness. But the other extreme also is risky. Emphasizing team work structuring the team to promote cohesion, solidarity and team support will require increased sacrifices on the part of individual team members. The more connected the individuals become to the team the more isolated they become from their personal goals and interests. Leaders who give all for the sake of the team end up creating stability, as well as excessive conformity, staleness, loss of creativity and groupthink. Individual personal needs are neglected. Community self-interest can turn into group selfishness.

SCHOLARSHIP ON THIS PARADOX

The tension of individual freedom and responsibility to the common good has been at the foundation of political philosophy discussions during the last three hundred years (Locke, 1690/1823; Hobbes, 1660/1996; Rousseau, 1762/1913; Milne, 1968). But the individual-common good question applies to more than just the level of the state (Koslowski, 2005). Hofstede's (1984, 1993) research has raised our awareness regarding how different cultures view the individual-community tension (see also Kim et al., 1994). As such, this social **paradox of belonging** is a discussion relevant to organizational leaders and managers (Aram, 1976, p. 3; Lewis, 2000, p. 769; Smith & Berg, 1997; Amason, 1996; March, 1991; Keidel, 1995; Bouchikhi, 1998; Collins, 2001).

In the management literature the inseparable connection between managing individual needs while managing the organizational needs to get tasks accomplished has been recognized nearly one hundred years ago when Henri Fayol "drew attention to the fact that one of the greatest problems of management was to reconcile the general interest with that of individual and group interests." (Sheldrake, 2003, p. 49) As Fayol put it in 1916, "Two interests [general interest of the firm, personal interest of the individual] of a different order, but claiming equal respect, confront each other and means must be found to reconcile them. That represents one of the great difficulties of management." (Fayol, 1949, p. 26) Fayol believed that the natural human tendency is toward promoting their individual interests rather than promoting general interest of the organization. Thus, workers need constant supervision, firmness but fairness. This belief was echoed by other management thinkers, too.

The Scientific Management approach espoused by Frederick Taylor (1911) in handling this problem attempted to balance the strong need to constrain the autonomy of individual workers for the sake of the organizational goals. Using time and motion studies Taylor sought to find a way to divide up work tasks and then to coordinate them in such a way to produce the most efficient production. Taylor's desire, while well-intentioned, met with resistance by workers and managers alike.

Max Weber's celebrated approach to handling this problem was in the context of creating impersonal bureaucracies where policies and procedures guided individual behaviors toward achieving organizational goals (Weber, 1947). If individual workers believed that their personal needs were not being cared for, policies were in place directing the workers on how they should pursue a complaint.

Chester Barnard (1938) also recognized the distinction between organizational goals and individual goals. But his distinction had a utilitarian motive: take care of the individual workers and you end up taking care of business. If over time individuals come to feel that their individual needs are not being met, this will have a direct affect on their individual efficiency.

"Organizational efficiency therefore becomes the capacity of the organization to meet the goals of the individuals associated in it." (Sheldrake, 2003, p. 122)

Organizations are at the same time economic systems and social structures. (Selznick, 1948) In order for the organization to succeed, the contradictory dimensions of both organizational control and individual consent must be in place.

Later scholars developed the "contingency theory" as a means to consider a given situation and then apply one pole of the paradox or the other, which ever was needed at the time and circumstance, to resolve the tension (Clegg, 2002). Following the contingency theory approaches, early leadership/motivation researchers implicitly incorporated this individual-community tension into some of their research. The University of Michigan and Ohio State University studies are notable examples. Successful leaders, it was thought, are those who keep a healthy emphasis on both concern for production (the organization) and concern for people (individuals) (Stogdill & Coons, 1951; Fiedler, 1967).

An organization has requirements for its survival that are quite different from the needs of individuals. Individuals can find their individual needs met as the needs of the organization are being met. But sometimes the individual needs conflict with organizational needs (Aram, 1976). A degree of individual self interest is allowed. But when self-interested behaviors exceed organizational needs, the organizational leaders will attempt to place limits on self-interested behavior. Likewise if the other extreme occurs, i.e., the organization self-interest becomes too dominant, individuals will respond by attempting to limit the organization (e.g., terminate employment, form a collective bargaining unit, go on strike).

We can think of this cognitive tension being *self-imposed*. Every individual willingly joins an organization to work to fulfill vocational drives and for economic survival. In becoming an employee (or volunteer) the individual voluntarily gives up a measure of individuality in favor of pursuing the goals of the organization. The person is willing to submit to and cooperate with authority and as a result is willing to be organized according to the wishes of organizational leaders or negotiated among peers. Thus, on the one hand the organization "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)

As soon as an individual joins an organization an interesting independence – dependence relationship is established. To fully experience independence in the context of group life, one has to constantly be giving expression to one's dependencies. "For only as reliable dependencies are established does *inter*dependence emerge." (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 142) It is as individual members come to depend upon each other as individuals that the group as a whole becomes a dependable entity to serve society.

According to Mulhare (1999), the term administration, 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*.

In religious traditions where freedom of the will is valued, this tension can become especially acute as leaders attempt to honor the divine creation of humans with free will at the same time as pursuing the organizational goals. A manager is called to be a dispassionate official of the organization and a "passionate human associate." (Aram, 1976, p. 119) A related tension is the need for leaders to encourage debate where individuals represent their points of view while creating at the same time creating unity (Collins, 2001).

In order for an organization to develop a strong culture, its leaders must require conformity to the shared organizational values (Pascale, 1985). At the same time intellectually and culturally individuals are opposed to manipulation of individuals for organizational purposes. We want all new employees to become socialized into the organizational values such that they internalize these values into their being-thinking-doing patterns. Yet we also value new employees who bring us new ways of being-thinking-doing that, if we incorporated what they bring into the organization, we could become stronger. This challenge is important for the Christian manager who values human freedom – derived from the image of God at creation – but also values the stewardship responsibility of watching out for the interests of the organization and its goals.

This paradox is often coupled with a second fundamental tension namely the short-term vs. long-term perspective. A leader who is charged with the responsibility to care equally for the needs of an individual and for the needs of the group must do so in the context of both short-term and long-term impacts. Table 1.1 illustrates how these two sets of tensions sometimes come together in the life of a leader. What is best in the short term may be harmful in the long run and vice versa. Likewise, caring for the needs of just the individual will come at the expense of caring for the needs of the community.

Table 1.1 Individual-Community, Short-term – Long-term Matrix

	Short-term	**Long-term**
Care for the Individual	If this dominates, the short-term needs of the individual will be cared for at the expense of the community needs.	If this dominates, the long-term needs of the individual will be cared for potentially at the expense of the community unless the leader can help the community come to see the validity of caring for the individual needs over the long-term.
Care for the Community	If this dominates, the short-term needs of the community are cared for potentially at the expense of the needs of the individual. This has the potential for harming the individual unless the leader can help the individual come to see the value for the greater good of the community.	If this dominates, the long-term needs of the community are cared for at the expense of the individual needs.

The many ways in which this individual-community tension point influences organizational and leadership life is amazing. Wrapped in this paradox is a cluster of competing values each of which we highly prize. This may be one reason why Kidder (2006) says, "The drivers of our deepest dilemmas…lie in the tensions between our most cherished values." (p. 86)

RELEVANT BIBLICAL TEACHINGS

The tensions of organizational leadership is not a subject that is explored *per se* in Scripture. Nevertheless Scripture offers some insights that guide our thinking about this tension. Three biblical themes and several corollary passages and concepts need to be considered with respect to this tension point in leadership.

Creation Theology

Creation theology has an interesting perspective to offer. The Scripture message that "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18) indicates the importance of the individual's interdependent relationship with community. No one person is an island. We are all our brother's keepers (Gen 4:2 – 9). Just the same, Adam and Eve each were created as autonomous creatures with the freedom to make choices. In addition, we see early on through the conversation between Adam and Eve and then between the couple and God how important is the interrelationship between the individual and the community.

It is at creation that we first see the Biblical teaching on wholeness. Human beings are whole creatures as individuals. However, wholeness by nature is not complete until it is seen as both individual *and* communal. We were created free, autonomous beings that are responsible to the greater community and to God. It is at creation (before sin) that we see established the inseparability of the individual from community. Satan's lie, in part, was that humans would be able to survive as completely autonomous beings living apart from a temporal existence in the creation community. He implied that individual behavior has no affect on the social group.

Two points seem particularly relevant when considering creation theology. First, this tension may reveal *the aesthetic value* of the created world given by a loving God who values complex social relationships. When He had finished His creative work, He pronounced the whole created order as "very good." With this God gives leaders the privilege of continually standing in front of one of God's great works of art (the complexity of social relationships) and soak up the beauty with awe. At the moments when the individual-community tension is acute leaders may not at first see the aesthetic value of God's creation. As they become open to experiencing God at work in their life as a leader in the midst of these tensions, they will come to appreciate the inherent beauty of preserving both individual needs and community needs.

Second, the individual-community tension is an amazing opportunity for the Christian leader to exhibit the image of God when, like Moses and Solomon, using creative power to come up with solutions that meet the needs of both individual and community. As the leader in humility repeatedly helps a community work through this tension, the work of creation continues as humans participate as co-creators with God in providential behalf of all of God's creation. (cf. Stevens, 2006, p. 6 – 9, 22 – 25)

Covenant Theology

Another interesting perspective is Biblical covenant theology. "The Biblical idea of covenant is the template for all social relationships, especially those that become institutionalized. Its basic structure is an interactive relationship between God and humanity that is asymmetrically reciprocal. God and humanity collaborate in fulfilling God's purpose in creating the world; hence, the covenant is a structure of reciprocity. But God remains God as we remain His creatures, and the covenantal structure is asymmetrical insofar as our participation remains absolutely dependent upon God in a way that God is not dependent on us. Nevertheless the Bible insists that human institutions must embody covenantal norms; "they must imitate God's own way of dealing with a situation of asymmetrical reciprocity." (McCann, 1997, p. 12) The issue of asymmetry is important to the leader who has a disproportionate degree of power.

If the Biblical idea of covenant is used as a model for managing the tension explored here, it matters whether you view the covenant as first being between God and community or between God and individuals. (Novak, 2000, p. 78) If the covenant is viewed as primarily
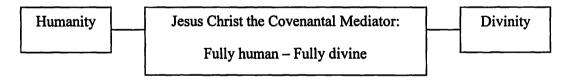
between God and the *community*, the Christian organizational leader will attempt to model this and will likely manage the individual-community tension in favor of the organization and its goals. But, if the locus of the covenant is with the *individual*, the leader may likely manage the tension in favor of individual interests. "Creation in the image of God means that every human being is capable of a direct relationship with God, and that relationship is the basis of the dignity of each and every human person, a dignity that any human society is obligated to respect and enhance." (Novak, 2000, p. 84) Covenantal loving-kindness (Micah 6:8) will be the guiding principle. According to Novak in the Jewish tradition the communal needs of humans take precedence over individual needs since "communal needs are greater." (Novak, 2000, p. 157)

If Christians are to use the covenant model in their leadership as suggested by McCann (1997), we find that the Biblical covenants were both *corporate* and *individualistic*. If either pole is left out of the picture, the entire experience as a covenanted child of God would be undermined.

Incarnation Theology

A third Biblical theme relevant in this discussion is incarnation theology. As Philippians 2 states, the incarnation is a model of human relationships, not the least of which is the relationship between leader and followers. It is in the incarnation that we see the person and work of Christ shown in a compelling manner. The person of Christ being fully human and at the same time fully divine is inseparable from the covenantal mediatorial work relationship He took on by coming to this earth. Here the covenantal Messiah engages humanity in a self-imposed humility as a servant toward both the divinity and humanity. Paradoxically, a fully-human, fully-divine person was needed for the covenant to be fulfilled. (See Figure 1.1)
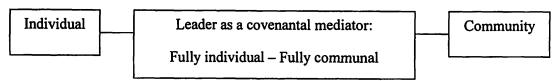
Figure 1.1 The Paradox of the Incarnation

Humanity	Jesus Christ the Covenantal Mediator: Fully human – Fully divine	Divinity

The Christian leader is part of the community like any other individual in the social group. As such the leader has personal interests as well as communal interests like any other member. However, in following Christ's model, the leader will completely identify with the individual follower who expresses a particular need at the same time as fully identifying with the community humbling himself/herself toward both the individual and the community as a servant.

Only in this broader context of covenant and incarnation is this true servant leadership. Here the leader's work is to encompass the mind, heart, and soul of the community as well as that of the individual. At times the leader must speak to and for the community as well as speaking to and for the individual. The leader is truly a covenantal mediator embracing both individuals and the social group being a servant not just to individuals (the most common understanding of servant leadership) as well as the group and its needs. (See Figure 1.2)

Figure 1.2 The Tension of Leadership Modeled after Creation, Covenant & the Incarnation

Individual		Leader as a covenantal mediator: Fully individual – Fully communal		Community

Corollary Teachings From the Old Testament

The opportunity to lead is a gift of God. (Proverbs 8:15, 16; Eccl 5:19) And the chief gift (and the greatest need) for these leaders is wisdom. Wisdom for all of life but especially the wisdom needed for successful leading is a gift from God received by hearing. It is one of the most highly prized of all virtues not only because it leads to material success but also because it leads to successful living all around. (Deut 8:17 – 18; Prov 2:7; Prov 3:21; Prov 4:5 – 8; Prov 16:16; Prov 19:8; Prov 29:26; Exod 31:3; Eccl 7:12; Eccl 9:10; Ezek 28:4; Job 28:18)

With so much emphasis placed on authority and dominion over others, the Hebrew words for managing might give the impression that managers were expected to "lord it over" their subordinates. Here the Hebrew Scriptures present another tension point. On the one hand managers are expected to look out for the interests of the organization they serve. They have a job to do. They delegate tasks to subordinates and they expect subordinates to obediently follow their direction. If subordinates do not perform, their managers might punish them. (Prov 12:24; 14:35) On the other hand, managers are seen as having disproportionate amount of power compared with subordinates. Because of this managers must use this power responsibly. Managers must not forget that like their subordinates they were created in the image of God. Following God's character of loving kindness and faithfulness is the goal for managers as they exercise their authority just as God exercises his authority over the whole earth (Prov 20:28)

Managers should act with integrity and justice. (Deut 1:17; Prov 16:11 – 13; Prov 17:23; Prov 21:3; Prov 25:13; Eccl 7:7; Prov 24:28; Prov 23:24 – 25; Prov 28:16; Prov 29:4; 2 Samuel 23:4 – 4; Prov 11:1, 26; Prov 12:17 - 19; Prov 10:9 – 10). Managers will destroy their own soul if they are cruel to their subordinates. But if they are good, their soul will be nourished. (Eccl 8:9; Prov 11:17. See also Exod 21:20) The wise leader will not speak in anger but will control his or her emotions (Prov 12:16; Prov 14:29; Prov 16:15, 32; Prov 19:11, 19; Prov 29:11). When it is in the manager's power to do good to a worker who deserves it, the manager must not withhold this (Prov 3:27). In every thing that is done as a manager it is honor to God and obedience to Him that is paramount (Eccl 12:13, 14).

Corollary Teachings from the New Testament

New Testament teachings related to the work of a manager also offer some important insights regarding the individual-community tension. In the Golden Rule of Moral Conduct - **Do unto others** as you would have them do unto you (Matt 7:12; 22:39) - individual behavior is in the context of a social group. Who ever desires to be a great leader will **be a servant to others** (Matt 20:20 – 28; Matt 23:11; Mark 10:35 – 45; Mark 9:35 – 37; Luke 22:24 – 27; Luke 9:46 – 48). Human behavior is to be guided by two great commands: Love God supremely and **love others** unselfishly (Lev 19:18; Exodus 20: 1 – 17; Matt 22:36 – 40; Mark 12:29 – 31; John 15:12; Matt 5:17).

Some of Jesus' strongest criticisms of leaders of his day were directed toward injustice and lack of integrity. Followers of God have a responsibility to serve those in need, to correct

injustices and to serve with integrity (Matt 23:13 – 29; Luke 11:42 – 52; Matt 21:12 – 13; Matt 8:1 – 3; Mark 2:15 – 17).

Sire (1990; p. 25, 58 – 59, 64 – 67) sees in Paul's writings the individual and communal connections (See Eph 6:11; 1 Cor 12). Sire's (1990) comment is that the "Christian world view avoids the fatal traps of both individualism and collectivism. It declares from the outset that each of us is unique and in the image of God, but that the God in whose image we are made is communal." (p. 64)

Church leaders should serve willingly as gentle shepherds. They should avoid serving for the purpose of dishonest personal gain. Leadership is developed through humility. Subordinates are submissive to those in authority; those in authority are submissive to their subordinates. Leaders should be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:1 – 10; See also Gal 5:13 – 14). Leadership is shared among many people in the faith community. It is not only the elders and deacons who serve. Many others have been given gifts that are useful for the faith community. Each one with his or her spiritual gift will be used by the faith community in some leadership capacity (1 Cor 12).

Jesus once told a story (Matt 25:14 – 30) of the talents given to servants of a man who was going on a long journey. The primary lesson from the parable is related to how Christians are to prepare for the judgment. However, the fact that Jesus used this narrative suggests that the details of the parable would be easily understood by the listeners. In the story the owner of capital places a great deal of emphasis on the economic growth of the capital while he was away. The owner's agents (the servants) are expected to watch out for the interests of the owner (See also Luke 12:42). This is similar to the Wisdom literature (Proverbs 27: 23, 24) where the reader is told to pay attention to and care for capital assets since riches do not last forever. This wisdom is illustrated in the experience of David the shepherd prior to becoming king.

SECULAR APPROACHES TO MANAGING PARADOX

Various approaches to managing paradoxes have been considered by scholars. Johnson, (1996) and Smith and Berg (1997) portray the management challenge as one of facing the paradox head-on. Johnson recommends that the manager involve the members of the organization (or team) in dialog so that the discussion can become a learning process. Smith and Berg recommend confronting paradoxes since ignoring them or attempting to resolve them ultimately will fail.

Clegg, Cunha & Cunha (2002) see three standard approaches to managing leadership tensions. The first approach is to attempt to *eliminate* the opposites. Here the leader chooses between the opposite poles. This is the simplicity approach that discounts the relationship between the two opposites. Besides the belief that eliminating the tension is impossible, attempting to eliminate the paradox removes one of the most important forces in the organization to keep all the members "in a continuous awareness." (p. 487) This can be destructive.

A second approach is to attempt to strike a *balance* through compromise between the opposite poles. This approach assumes that it is possible to create a mix from the two extremes. The problem with this approach is that opposites don't easily lend themselves to balancing since each polar opposite requires *full* emphasis. Partially emphasizing one pole is an attempt a compromise that ultimately undermine both poles and result in destruction of the organization.

The third, more popular approach takes into account an assumption that both polar opposites require equal emphasis. With this the leadership task is to *integrate* the opposites through synthesis of on-going dynamic tension. "Concertive control" is a possible synthesis

between individual autonomy and group control. (p. 488) Synthesis *emerges* in the specific situation (p. 498) when "both poles of a paradox are present simultaneously. It differs from a compromise because the latter results from forsaking part of each opposite whereas, in a synthesis, opposites are present in their full strength." (p. 494) This view of synthesis is similar to that described by Ming-Jer (2002) from the Asian perspective.

In the idea of synthesis may be an element of Truth supported by Scripture that guides the Christian leader. This will be considered in the discussion that follows.

DISCUSSION

One can conclude from the findings of management and leadership scholarship confirmed by the Biblical record that the fundamental individual-community tension exists. "Part of the Christian understanding of reality is that human beings are interdependent, and they have to rely on and serve one another." (Rossouw, 1994) Attempting to untangle this fundamental tension of leadership may lead to conflicts and group paralysis (Smith & Berg, 1997) while attempting to preserve and even celebrate it offers hope for conflict resolution and successful, dynamic group life. For groups to effectively work together, individual group members must immerse themselves *into* rather than attempting to *flee* from the opposing forces. In addition, leaders who attempt to over-simplify or eliminate this paradox may be creating a default choice that undermines true service to both people and the organization.

For some Christians there is an implicit belief that if a Christian trusts in God, he/she will be shown the way, not just any way, but God's plan for the One best way. Belief in an omniscient, all-powerful God who also personally interacts and intervenes in the affairs of His human creatures, requires for some the corresponding belief that God's will must be a singular direction or specific command for every situation. This traditional belief among some Protestant denominations is the foundation for an important tension that the Christian business professional (who understands how contingency theory works) faces on a day-to-day basis. In the extreme version of this belief, there is only one true contingency: God's all-powerful, unerring will. It is the Christian's responsibility to be open to receive the information contained in the revelation of God's will and then to follow it. This belief comes into tension in the life of the Christian manager who sees the complexity of a situation as he evaluates several alternatives of action any one of which might be morally and practically right.

Another issue of Truth should be considered. Applicable here may be Chris Blake's (2000) assertion that "the closer we get to truth, the closer we get to paradox." (p. 19) If a Christian manager expects to discern God's will in a specific situation, yet is unable to achieve this discernment in the midst of a particular situation, this leaves the Christian in a potentially precarious position of apparently either lacking faith or lacking the proper understanding of how to go about discerning God's will. But if we allow for the possibility that God reveals His will to us *through* Providential paradoxical situations in organizations, managing paradox as God would have the Christian to do might mean capturing the "enlightening potential" (Lewis, 2000, p. 763) of those paradoxes as they emerge. If the advice of organizational scholars can be relied upon, paradox management "entails exploring, rather than suppressing, tensions." (Lewis, 2000, p. 764) For the Christian this will be of interest. Believing in the midst of this paradox one can find God's Truth, the manager brings this cognitive tension into captivity to Christ only by preserving the integrity of both poles of the paradox (cf. 2 Cor 10:5).

Paradoxically God is both Immanent and Transcendent. He reveals Himself through Scripture and through the person and work of Christ. He also reveals himself through the nature

(Gaebelein, 1968, p. 29, 30) of this created social paradox. When a Christian leader feels "caught" in the crucible of this paradox not knowing immediately how to give due regard to both individual and organizational needs, it could be that both the Immanence and Transcendence of God is at work at that moment. On the one hand, the leader desires to know God's will but on the surface God may not reveal His specific will (Transcendence). But on the other hand, if the leader stays with the cognitive tension and includes the wisdom of others in the community, the situation itself may become a Providential leading to understand God's will (Immanence).

Leaders (and their followers) become obsessed with the product of a leadership decision or action. They cry out, "Decide and tell us your decision!" When faced with the individual-community cognitive tension, perhaps it is the community journey or *process* through the ambiguity that is just as important as the *product* of the decision. When the leader is given the opportunity from the organizational community to walk alone (yet in community) in dealing with the tension, the leader may find God in the paradoxical still small voice (of aloneness) and in the storm (of the competing voices in the organization) (cf. 1 Kings 19:12).

Another fundamental issue we must address is whether or not the demands of contradictory leadership behaviors undermine, has no effect on, or support **integrity**. On the surface and to the person who lacks leadership experience or who is unable to see beyond personal self-interests, contradictory behaviors can appear to be a sign of lack of integrity. But at a deeper level, once the issues of the paradox are explored and once the person has the benefit of actual experience in dealing with the paradox, one might say that to simplify the situation ignoring the paradox will undermine integrity. To allow for simultaneous contradictory behaviors fosters integrity.

Organizing is, in effect, an effort to exert power and control over individuals and the work groups they are in for the good of the organizational goals. On the one hand the organization needs people who are capable of behaving autonomously, i.e., can think for themselves, but on the other hand, they need these autonomous people to give up a measure of that autonomy in order to serve the broader interests of the firm. Anything that appears like manipulation or coercion is flatly rejected. This, as Pascale (1985) has pointed out, sets up a difficult problem in terms of socialization of new organizational members. On the one hand Christian organizational leaders want to achieve conformity of individuals to pivotal organizational norms but on the other hand they want to reject manipulation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

Several implications derive from the review of this paradox. First, business, management and leadership students in higher education might receive benefit from being exposed to the idea of paradox – especially the fundamental individual-community tension. This exposure can be in the form of classroom lectures and discussions. However, personal experience in leadership at the same time as classroom learning might give the best opportunity for learning the issues. Thus, Christian business or leadership professors would do well to encourage (or require) students to take an active leadership role in an organization during the same semester as leadership concepts are learned in the classroom. Student leadership experiences that align with this and other paradoxes considered here can be explored in personal journals as well as during class discussions and personal mentoring. During these discussions the professor can ask the students to share their stories and to reflect on what this has taught them about leadership and about themselves. These discussions can then be used to reinforce the importance of listening to God, to individuals and to the community when making a decision.

Professors in leadership can remind students that the Christian leader who faces a paradoxical tension point is at an amazing point of *sacred leadership space* (cf. Holmes, 1985, p. 21; Sire, 1990, p. 17; Exodus 3:5 – 6) working *alone* on behalf of the community and paradoxically at the same time also working *with the community* through listening to the voices in the community. These moments are some of the "holy ground" locations, small Sabbath-like times when Christian leadership occurs.

Numbers 32 can be used as a Biblical **case study**. The professor can assign students to read just the first part of the story (Numbers 32: 1 – 15) and then discuss various options that Moses might use for resolving the situation. With each option evaluated students can consider both the long-term and the short-term impacts. At the end of the discussion students can be asked to read and evaluate the choice that Moses made (Numbers 32: 16 – 32).

Giving *voice* to the import of a paradoxical situation recognizing both the needs of the individual and the needs of the community helps community members continue to give their consent and support to the leader. Here is where *visioning* on a day-by-day basis is helpful to both the leader and the community. When we confine the discussion of visioning to the strategic planning process, we unintentionally leave out a major portion of the operational visioning work of the leader. Visioning is not just talking about the great things that will come in the future when a new strategic plan is implemented. Visioning also is about taking what is going on right now in the community in terms of the tension points and giving voice to both sets of needs. The professor can help students practice giving voice to the issues contained in this sacred space. Taking situations from the students' experiences and then showing the different ways in which the leader can talk about the situation to all involved. Students can role play and explore the advantages and disadvantages of creatively framing the vision in particular ways.

Paradoxes such as the one explored in this paper provide the professor an opportunity to teach Christ-centered leadership from a perspective students are unlikely to receive from religion classes (Cf. Gaebelein, 1968). This will give students an opportunity to see an adult Christian explore their own personal challenges within Scripture. As the professor discusses personal experiences where this paradox was prominent, it provides an additional opportunity to explore the question, "Where is God during ambiguity?" The emerging paradox revealing God's will in the context of providential events in organizational life of a community, provides the professor the opportunity to discuss creation theology, covenant theology, the incarnation, providence and related topics.

Professors also are classroom leaders. How lecturers care for both the individual needs of students in a course as well as the group needs models for students the leadership potential in this tension point. Preparation of the course syllabus, day-to-day course management, and classroom discipline all are opportunities for modeling these principles. When individual students come with requests, discussing the matter in terms of both individual needs and group needs with the student (or when appropriate, with the class), can help the student understand the point of tension that the professor is at and in so doing to walk in the shoes of the other class members.

Finally, this tension also offers an opportunity for the professor to explore the *calling* of the Christian leader with students. Each community needs a leader to whom the community gives or shares the power to make decisions on behalf of individuals and the common good. This sacred space of decision making illustrates an important element in the leader's *sacred* calling. When the community asks a leader to carry this community burden of decision-making in the midst of ambiguity one mile, the Christian leader will carry it two miles (cf. Matt 5:41).

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