

EDITORIAL

EMBRACING A PARADOX IN LEADERSHIP

I love to travel by airplane. It allows me to comfortably escape the tyranny of gravity and get to the other side of the world in about a day or so. Did I say comfortably? I just arrived in Europe. Now that I have recovered from being folded for hours into the most uncomfortable chairs, not designed for my long back, I realize that I really don't like this mind-numbing experience requiring you to sit still for hours wearing a seatbelt around your waist. But I have learned to live with this paradox surrounding modern travel: on the one hand, the unprecedented freedom and enrichment that comes from being able to work in different parts of the world; on the other hand, the inconvenience of adapting to carefully constructed confinement designed to keep me safely in the air. While I embrace that tension that allows me to travel, I have been hoping against hope for some creative solution that would allow me to sit more comfortably without having to pay business class prices.

Paradox is also part of the daily fare of Christian leaders. While we are responsible to the organizations and churches we lead, our ultimate accountability is to God himself. What happens when this sense of accountability to God presses Christian leaders to challenge long-held expectations? At what point is it acceptable to deviate from communal conventions to be true to one's conscience? Any leader who has agonized over such issues knows that the tension is sometimes unbearable. A similar tension arises when leaders have to decide how to navigate between caring for individuals and the needs of the community. For Michael Cafferky, this is one of the core tensions Christian leaders face, often causing conflicts and ethical dilemmas in the day of a Christian leader. In fact, Cafferky maintains that this intersection of the individual and communal dimensions of leadership is "sacred ground" upon

which Christian leaders stand.

The tension between the spiritual dimension of their leadership and the daily grind of solving countless human problems can sometimes become unbearable. Looking at the amazing story of Moses' failure to represent God's care to His people when he angrily stood in front of a whining group of Israelites, Don Livesay reminds us that Christian leadership is indeed a sacred calling that comes with an awesome responsibility. No matter how difficult, the ultimate purpose of Christian leadership is more than keeping people happy and well fed. Leaders are to engage a community of people in bringing glory to God.

If that is true, we cannot be content with churches that no longer seem to be able to effectively reach a spiritually hungry but skeptical generation. In this issue we are pleased to bring you an exclusive interview with Gary Hamel, the renowned business writer who a few weeks ago sat down with a group of leadership professors at Andrews University to discuss the question of how the church copes with the unrelenting change that has become such a sign of our time. Gary has done more than any other leader to help organizations rethink their relationship to change and innovation. In his latest book, *What Matters Now*, which Matthew Shallenberger reviews later in this issue, Hamel calls for a new kind of leaders who see themselves as stewards not only of the bottom line and organizational purpose but also of people with passions and creative gifts to be unleashed rather than exploited. But how do you do that in a world where the predominant management paradigm is still one of productivity through control? And what would a 21st-century organization that is fit for people to give their best look like?

Strangely enough, this is where the church comes in. Lacking the incentive structure of businesses, the church always thrives on intrinsic motivations. Somehow, Hamel contends, Jesus was able to literally create "the world's first viral organization." Even though threatened with violence, the church's enemies could not stop it. In contrast, today's churches seem to lose ground, immobilized by an environment of change that no longer respects yesterday's successes. But is the journey along the organizational lifecycle towards irrelevance and death inevitable? Yes, says Hamel, if the church is not willing to overcome its habit of blaming the culture instead of facing its own problem of inertia and denial. Instead, he calls for entrepreneurial churches that answer the spiritual hunger of our postmodern generation with a willingness to find new ways to be a spiritual community for and with them. The *Wall Street Journal* has called Hamel today's leading business strategist. (He

also happens to be a graduate of Andrews University.) But can that business-style thinking also benefit the church? We let you be the judge.

Many Christian leaders wonder what the place of secular leadership theory is in the practice of Christian leadership. Russell Huizing makes an important contribution to this issue by asking how we can develop a proper theology of leadership that is based on a solid understanding of the biblical principles without ignoring what we can learn from secular leadership theories. The author reviews some 23 recent articles that have wrestled with the same question and suggests four themes that need to be present in a theology of leadership. With this article, we hope to start a dialogue with concerned readers and leaders to wrestle with the question of how to bring Christ to the table of leadership. We invite responses to the article from leaders of different communities, because ultimately it is this dialogue that this journal is passionate about.

How a theological understanding of the world and humanity leads to revolutionary practices that have changed the world is the subject of Thom Wolf's intriguing treatment of two barely known historical leaders: Jan Comenius, the 17th-century Czech reformer who was nominated to be the first president of what today is known as Harvard University, and Savitribai Phule, the 19th-century follower of Christ who defied prejudice and thousands of years of discrimination by opening a school for girls in India. The tension between oppressive culture and God's calling to risk life to translate God's love into tangible realities marked the lives of both leaders. What do they have to say to 21st-century Christian leaders who are called to move a postmodern generation to transformation?

Today we hear many voices that call for more decisive leadership in a time of uncertainty and change. At the same time, divided nations testify to the fact that leading in a time of change is not a matter of easy answers that ignore the complex realities churches and organizations face every day. We hope that the reflections in this journal will enable you to live more fruitfully with the reality of paradox in Christian leadership.