



# PASSIONATE VISIONARY

*Leadership Lessons  
from the  
Apostle Paul*

RICHARD S. ASCOUGH  
*and*  
CHARLES A. COTTON

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*For Mary-Lynne  
and for Shelley,  
who support our friendship and  
collaboration in so many ways.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### Paul and Leadership

#### Paul's Leadership: Unexplored Terrain

Even a cursory look at a bookstore's business section reveals that leadership is a popular topic. Leadership development events are commonplace in corporations, churches and academic conferences. The business community is seeking to define and describe a quality leader. Many churches are focusing on the leadership skills of the pastor, and universities are reinventing themselves as producers of dynamic leaders for a global economy. In response to our rapidly changing world, many recognize that thinking about leadership is important. As Peter Senge has noted, leaders in the 21st century must see themselves as "designers, teachers and stewards" of organizations and groups, with the capacity to learn and adapt to new circumstances.<sup>1</sup> He points out that the leader's new work is to build organizations capable of adapting to new circumstances and generating new ideas on a continuous basis.

Senge's rigorous and thoughtful analysis of today's leadership challenges features the almost *de rigueur* references to current successful "celebrity CEOs" (chief executive officers) who have accomplished miracles in their sectors. This approach is a critical part of the current leadership wisdom paradigm. Without examples and case studies, an argument lacks credibility with an audience starved for leadership secrets.<sup>2</sup> The spectrum of examples Senge

and his colleagues use is wide; at times it seems that even obscure executives and generals are sharing their secrets, with or without ghostwriters. Celebrity CEOs such as Chrysler's Lee Iacocca, General Electric's Jack Welch, and Anita Roddick, the founder of Britain's The Body Shop, come to mind.<sup>3</sup> And these are just the living. There is also a rush to mine wisdom from historical and literary figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, George Patton, Sitting Bull, Attila the Hun, Winston Churchill, Winnie-the-Pooh, Goldilocks and, quite recently, Jesus and Moses.<sup>4</sup>

Yet amid all the clamour of publications, training events and testimonials, there is one curious omission: Paul, the passionate and driven apostle who some say founded Christianity as a religion.<sup>5</sup> At the very least, Paul led what we would now call the Initial Public Offering (IPO), taking a new and struggling faith "product" out into the tough marketplace of his times. By most conventional benchmarks of leadership, we would have to rate Paul near the top in long-run effectiveness.<sup>6</sup> He started with virtually nothing except faith and passion, yet he built and sustained a fragile network across the known world, one where he coached, cajoled and inspired hesitant followers. Almost two thousand years later, the heritage of the communities he founded continues in the faith communities of the Christian tradition.

Nevertheless, as a leader, Paul is invisible to the growing horde of leadership gurus. In our view, this is extraordinary; hence this book. We believe that Paul's leadership genius has experienced benign neglect from leadership scholars. At the same time, Paul's leadership skills do not seem to interest the scholars who devote their energy, time and intellect to interpreting Paul's letters. For the most part, Pauline scholars focus on Paul's words – what Paul meant by a particular phrase or metaphor.

Until recently, Paul was most often mined for doctrinal reasons. In such cases, debates would focus on how Paul's words imply one or another particular Christian doctrine. In fact, in a profound and enduring sense, Christian history – at times not very pretty nor Christian – seems to have been a war of words and swords over what Paul meant rather than what he did. Martin Luther took

one verse and used it as leverage and focus for one of history's great transformations – the Protestant Reformation. And the battles continue. The most heated debate of late has centred on Paul's view of Torah, or the law.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, in the past few decades we have seen a shift in Pauline studies towards an attempt to understand Paul's letters in their social contexts. Scholars have investigated the conditions under which Paul would have worked, the types of people he would have met, and the types of groups he would have encountered. Greater attention has been paid to the rhetorical strategies of his letters, comparing them both to philosophical tractates and to everyday correspondences.<sup>8</sup> Other investigations have looked at how social conventions such as honour and shame, or the ancients' view of human sexuality, affected Paul's words.<sup>9</sup>

All such studies have opened up the world within which Paul lived and worked. They have led to a better understanding of the communities that Paul founded and their relationship to their surrounding cultures.<sup>10</sup> Yet despite this positive trend in Pauline scholarship, very little interest has been expressed in understanding Paul's leadership within this wider context. There are a few exceptions, but these works tend not to consider the current literature on leadership when discussing Paul's leadership.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, for the most part, leadership studies of Paul tend towards the devotional. They reflect little understanding of the conditions under which he worked in the first century CE. (In keeping with current scholarly convention, we use CE for "Common Era" and BCE for "Before the Common Era." These correspond respectively to AD and BC.) While these studies can be helpful, in some cases, when applying leadership principles to current church situations, they too often simply read into the Pauline texts current North American cultural assumptions. In our view, this does a disservice both to Paul and to the modern church.

Given this situation, it is time to bring Paul into the discussion of leadership in a serious manner. In doing so, we are not seeking to unearth a conspiracy to avoid the topic of Paul's leadership. Rather, we want to correct an obvious imbalance in the ledger books

of two quite distinct academic disciplines: leadership studies and Pauline studies. We want to add Paul's name to the pantheon of leadership icons. The time has come to give Paul his due and to examine his words and actions for the leadership insights his transformational genius reveals and to consider how these might be transferred to modern transformational leaders in both sacred and secular domains.

### **Our Approach**

This is a collaborative venture between two university professors, one a New Testament scholar and the other a leadership professor in a business school. Circumstances brought us together with adjacent offices at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. The idea for the book emerged slowly from conversations about our mutual interest in Paul's letters and the challenges that today's Christian communities face. Both of us were struck by the leadership genius of this passionate apostle, yet perplexed by the lack of serious commentary on Paul's leadership wisdom.

Fragments of conversation led to a brainstorming session about Paul's leadership style and philosophy. As often happens, new ideas emerged, and with them the framework of a book. From the start, we wanted this book to appeal to leaders everywhere, both inside and outside churches. Simply put, Paul's historical impact and the complexity of his thoughts on community building make him a resource to be shared with a wide audience.

From the outset, we wanted the book to be more than a commentary on Paul's leadership that simply links Paul's actions and ideas to the current buzzwords and frameworks of the leadership industry. We wanted the reader to have a deeper understanding of Paul in his context, based on the insights of modern biblical scholarship, before we considered the leadership implications for today. This explains the way we structured the book. Using excerpts from Paul's writings that illustrate his core ideas, we provide two commentaries. The first, by Richard, the New Testament scholar, helps us to understand the context of Paul's words in a particular passage. The second, by Sandy, the leadership professor, explores

the leadership lessons embedded in that same passage. To make sense of Paul and his leadership genius we need both viewpoints. We hope that this approach will allow both Christian and secular leaders to see Paul in a new light.

### **The Life and Times of the Apostle Paul**

Before turning to Paul's letters, let's briefly examine Paul's life, as far as it can be reconstructed from the ancient sources. There is little to go on. The Christian canon contains 13 letters that claim to be written by Paul. Scholars generally agree that Paul's authorship can be established for at least seven of the letters (given here in chronological order): 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans.<sup>12</sup> They are less sure about the other six (2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus). Some suggest that these letters were written by admirers of Paul some time after his death.<sup>13</sup>

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts) devotes about half of its story to Paul, particularly the details of Paul's ministry. While some traditions clearly coincide with what Paul tells us about himself in his letters, other traditions have no confirmation in the letters. This has caused great scholarly debate over the reliability of these traditions. Finally, certain non-canonical works tell us about Paul, such as the *Acts of Paul*, the letter to the Laodiceans, and 3 Corinthians. Most of this material is thought to be spurious. In our own investigations, to be on the safe side, we have tended to stick with those letters of Paul for which there is a general agreement over authenticity – that is, the seven letters of Paul that scholars have deemed authentic.

Paul was born to Jewish parents living in the city of Tarsus (in the southeastern part of what is now Turkey). His parents looked to their own heritage in naming him after the most famous ancestor of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin, King Saul. However, reflecting the larger Greco-Roman cultural milieu of the time, they also gave their son a Greek name – Paul. He had a formal Jewish and Hellenistic education,<sup>14</sup> which is reflected in his weaving of rabbinic methods of interpretation with Hellenistic philosophy and rhetorical strategies

in his letters. According to the evangelist Luke, who also wrote the Acts of the Apostles, he was educated at the feet of the Jewish rabbi Gamaliel (*circa* 20–50 CE) in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Along the way he learned a trade, making tents (Acts 18:3), a skill that he used to support himself even while he was founding new Christian communities (1 Cor 4:12, 9:6; 1 Thess 2:9).

We know little about Paul's early life. Luke refers to him as a "young man" in the early days of the formation of the church (Acts 7:58). Thus, Paul was probably in his early- to mid-20s. Paul tells us that he was trained as a Pharisee, and that he had a zeal for keeping Torah (Phil 3:5-6). So great was this zeal that he would persecute anyone he perceived as being opposed to it. However, one day, on his way to the city of Damascus, Paul had an encounter with the divine, an encounter that radically changed the purpose of his life. Jesus, whose followers he had been persecuting, appeared to Paul and called him to proclaim a different message. Yet while Paul's purpose in life was changed, his personality was not. The zeal with which he had pursued his study and application of Torah became a zeal for founding Christian communities across the Roman Empire.

In his pursuit of this new calling, Paul travelled widely throughout the eastern part of the empire. He worked with a group of trusted colleagues in establishing a network of new Christian communities where people would not only hear his message of salvation through Christ, but would also support one another in their daily lives. When he was busy in one area of the empire, Paul or his co-workers kept in touch with the various groups through letters and visits.

Paul began his work as a leader of Christian communities in the early part of the 30s CE. Tradition tells us that he was beheaded by the Emperor Nero in the early 60s. This leaves a span of about 30 years of work founding and maintaining Christian groups. During that time, Paul produced a number of letters, including those in the Bible. Others, unfortunately, were lost.<sup>15</sup> Yet even in the letters that remain, we can find evidence of Paul's leadership skills.

## Interpreting Paul's Letters

If we focus on what Paul meant in the surviving fragments of his correspondence with his seedling churches, we will not go far in understanding his leadership genius. Even the experts cannot agree on the precise meaning of his wild array of metaphors and strategies for encouraging his communities and co-workers. Paul's opus is a complex, mysterious and frustrating collection of occasional communications.<sup>16</sup> There is irony here; this passionate man with a transformational message, who tried to be all things to all people, remains opaque two thousand years later. In this book, we do not want to continue the grand – and sometimes shabby – tradition of fighting over Paul's words, of claiming that our interpretation of a particular text is the right one. Rather, we want to look at his actions and words through a leadership lens, and share with the reader what we find.

It may be that we will never understand what Paul really meant, and that what one finds in his words tells us more about the reader than the writer. As in Alice's Restaurant, you can find anything you want in Paul's epistles. As Oscar Pfister wrote some time ago,

There are texts in St. Paul to which the most valiant champion for the liberation of the Christian spirit might appeal, and there are others justifying the most obscurantist efforts to strangle Christian freedom with dogma and asceticism. St. Paul's Epistles, which throughout the history of dogma were consulted as final authorities much more frequently than the Gospels, were miniature Bibles in which everybody looked for and duly found the dogma which his own personal needs, fears and requirements, connected as they were with unconscious mental processes, demanded.<sup>17</sup>

In this way, the letters of Paul, as they have been handed down through history, reflect Paul's own missionary strategy in his day and age, captured in his saying, "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22). There is

clearly a dangerous side to all of this, one which Pfister again captures nicely when he says, "Tell me what you derive from reading St. Paul, and I will tell you the state of your disposition towards religious fear; in other words, the state of your Christian freedom."<sup>18</sup> Some years earlier, Albert Schweitzer had named the same danger when, after investigating all current attempts to write a life of Jesus, he had charged the writers with looking down a well, seeing their own reflection, and calling that reflection "Jesus."<sup>19</sup>

We are alert to this danger. Critics might charge us with looking at Paul's letters through the lens of current leadership studies and finding what we want to find. To the first part of the charge we plead guilty; to the latter part, we leave it to the reader to decide. We do indeed read Paul through the lens of current leadership studies, for, like anyone who reads a text, we bring to it a particular hermeneutic framework. However, we also read the text through the lens of modern biblical interpretation, which, we maintain, allows us a certain degree of checks and balances to prevent too far-fetched a reading of Paul's letters.

In what follows, we put the language of leadership studies into the framework of Pauline studies. In doing so, we do not suggest or assume that Paul would have named his own processes with the labels that we give them, or that he would even have understood leadership the way we frame it. However, we think that bringing together these two disciplines does justice to Paul's leadership style.

### **Structure of the Book**

Our discussion of Paul's leadership wisdom is organized into four parts. Each captures a key aspect of his approach to transforming the lives and outlooks of those who were formed into Christian community. Although the idea of a *transformational leader* is a recent concept in leadership studies, we believe it to be a very old practice and normative ideal. If this book has a thesis, it is that Paul essentially "wrote the book" on how transformational leaders should act. In fact, his "book" has been read continuously for almost two thousand years.

Part I of our book explores Paul as an exemplar for leaders as *passionate visionaries*. One cannot read Paul without being struck, again and again, by the sheer passion in his style, words and actions. Everything he did, everything he wrote, was a testimony to that passionate style and to his urge to help others grasp and live its root ideas and ideal.

Part II examines how Paul can serve as a model for those who seek to *inspire others*. Inspirational leadership, which seems to be in short supply these days, is a popular topic in this age of anxiety. How do leaders build relationships and encourage followers through personal transparency and networking? And how do leaders do this in turbulent times across great distances? Although most observers today stress the unique challenges of the information age and global competition, we believe that in some dramatic ways, Paul's context was far more challenging and has much to teach us today.

Part III deals with Paul's wisdom in *nurturing communities*, especially fragile communities and groups in hostile contexts. He tenaciously stayed connected with groups, helping them through the natural stages of growth. Most of his letters deal with the challenges of building cohesive and viable communities – they give a sense of purpose, clear boundaries, and guidelines for behaviour. Paul would have been horrified by the consultants, facilitators and business gurus who spend brief moments with their clients, never to be seen or heard from again. He was in for the long haul and was willing to put his reputation and his life on the line to nurture community. In an age when “dialogue” has become the fashionable term for authentic communication, Paul's words remain as fresh as ever. He has much to teach modern leaders about tenacity in dialogue as a path towards community growth.

Part IV looks at Paul's continuing emphasis on *compassionate concern*, not only for one's followers, but also for oneself. In a world where trust is scarce and genuine concern for others is often an illusion, Paul's words and actions challenge us to identify our core values in leading others. He offers an enduring bottom line for anyone who accepts the challenge of leadership: love.

In the conclusion, we attempt to integrate our findings into an understanding of Paul as a “chaordic” leader – that is, a leader who creates within communities enough structure and enough space that they become self-organizing and productive. In an appendix, we suggest further reading, both in Pauline studies and in leadership studies. We also provide a list of modern maxims for leadership that we think resonate with the lessons learned through our discussion of Paul the leader.

Although the chapters of this book build on one another to create a better understanding of Paul as a leader, we have also attempted to write each chapter so that it stands on its own. While this means that there will be occasional overlap in content, mostly in describing the background of a particular passage, we feel that this is important for those who want to jump right into a particular passage or leadership aspect. To facilitate the reader’s exploration of Paul and leadership, we provide the primary text under discussion (taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible) at the start of each chapter. However, we often refer to other scripture texts, and we encourage readers to keep a Bible handy to read these texts when they want to explore our examples more thoroughly.

We have also included a set of “Questions for Reflection and Discussion” at the end of each chapter. This is a common practice in leadership books. We don’t claim to have all the keys to the mystical kingdom of Paul’s leadership, and in any event this book is intended to generate further dialogue and reflection. The questions can be explored individually or with a group of colleagues. If you are reading this book on your own, why not keep a journal of your responses and personal observations to our questions as you work through the chapters? A group, on the other hand, might usefully engage in dialogue about the questions, with each gathering devoted to at least one chapter. We suspect that Paul would be pleased by the conversations. Since this book is the product of collaborative conversations, so would we.

**A Note on Notes**

Where it seems appropriate, or a direct reference is involved, we provide a source from our respective literatures in the form of an endnote. But our intent is not to take the reader on a journey into the depths, complexities and controversies of our fields; rather, we want to make the essential Paul visible and accessible to the reader.

This book is about Paul and his enduring leadership wisdom. Our goal is to illuminate that neglected dimension of someone who deserves a place in history's first rank of transformational leaders.



## PART I

### The Passionate Visionary



## 1

## Paradigm Busting

*You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me. (Galatians 1:13-24)*

When Paul writes his letter to the churches in the region of Galatia (now in central Turkey), he is very upset with them. Although he had taught them that salvation comes through Christ alone, they are now persuaded that something is missing from his message. Representatives of the Jerusalem church who have arrived in the

area are telling Paul's non-Jewish converts that in addition to believing in Christ, the males must be circumcised and all must follow strict food laws in order to be saved.

In response, Paul tries to convince the Christians of Galatia that such practices are not necessary for those who follow Jesus. To accomplish this, he sets up a contrast between his former way of life and his present pursuits. He begins by noting his early achievements. He was a child prodigy – advanced beyond others his age in the ways of his religion. His zeal for the traditions surpassed that of all of his peers. So zealous was he, in fact, that he persecuted those who claimed to follow God but did not do so in the way that his own tradition dictated. This went beyond the requirements of following rules – this was full-fledged commitment.

Despite the common assumption to the contrary, Paul nowhere expresses remorse over his violent persecution of the church of God – not here, not elsewhere in his letters, not in the Book of Acts. Richard often hears students say that Paul felt bad about his involvement in the death of Stephen and others, but this is reading Paul through the lens of the conscience of St. Augustine or Martin Luther, not Paul. Paul simply tells us that God called him. He also notes that God set him apart from birth. Paul believed that his genetic code, his upbringing and his training in his religion were all part of God's plan and were intended to lead up to the moment when God would call him to a specific task. And God did call. Paul does convert, but his conversion is from one mission to another. His personality does not change. Just as Paul said to the Galatians, "I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors" (1:14), he could later have claimed, "I advanced in Christianity beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my Saviour." Of course, he says no such thing, but he does imply it.

Immediately after noting his calling, Paul specifically says he conferred with no one about what he should do. No one taught him the traditions about Jesus. He himself was obviously not a

follower of the historical Jesus. So where did Paul learn about Jesus? All he tells us is that he went away to Arabia. All kinds of conjectures could be put forth about how he was trained and by whom, but Paul makes it clear that he relied upon no one. Paul's oath ("I swear to you, I do not lie," 1:20) suggests that others may have questioned this fact, and strengthens his insistence. We are left to assume that Paul learned all he knew about Jesus through divine revelation.

Paul underwent a transformation, but it was grounded in an experience of God. Paul's passionate commitment to his cause did not change – only the cause changed. Paul's passion remained constant. It was a passion for God, first directed towards the Torah, and then, after encountering the risen Christ, directed towards Jesus. It was, to use another metaphor, a paradigm shift. No longer could Paul view the world through his previous lens. No longer could he attempt to control those around him by enforcing the rules he had learned as a child. A new paradigm was at work, and Paul focused his efforts on helping others understand the full import of this new paradigm.

Under both paradigms Paul was a leader. However, under the old paradigm he sought to eliminate any who did not conform to his understanding of God. To do so he had to be strong, upright, aggressive, assertive and zealous. Once he experienced the new paradigm, he used those same personality traits to advocate for a completely new way of interacting with God. Paul's success in this effort was grounded in who he was rather than what he did. In this way, Paul was able to draw on his natural inclinations and abilities and marshal them in instituting what would become the organizational foundation of one of the largest religious movements the world has ever seen.

If corporate leaders have the time and inclination to go to church, they probably hear Paul's words most Sundays. But we suspect that few see the parallels between his life and the concepts, cases and leadership icons found in most Master of Business Administration (MBA) courses these days. That is unfortunate, because a great deal of Paul can be found in postmodern approaches to leadership: passion,

continuous dialogue with followers, a focus on the future rather than the past, a willingness to hang in when the going gets rough, and a search for new ways of seeing the world when it is obvious – at least to the leader – that the old ways need changing.

If there is one word at the centre of current leadership thinking, it is *change*.<sup>1</sup> Just about everyone is dealing with change these days, and it is no accident that we want our leaders to be gifted in the skills and wisdom that help individuals and organizations let go of old ways. Leadership literature uses the term *transformational leaders* to capture that essence. Typically, the term is contrasted with *transactional managers* – people in authority who have the power and influence to keep the status quo afloat into the future.<sup>2</sup> In times of change, we want transformational leaders rather than transactional managers.

In the passage from Paul's letter to the Galatians that appears at the start of this chapter, we hear about his own journey from transactional manager to transformational leader. It is interesting to note that the assertive energy, the passion, was always there in role performance. Paul was a zealous, aggressive defender of the old ways, but something happened on the road to Damascus that fundamentally changed his focus. He moved with urgency, skill and conviction from supporting the old paradigm to starting conversations about a new one. This is a journey that most people with responsibilities in modern organizations can understand.

It is not easy being caught up in a major transformational era. Anyone who has tried to change mindsets and organizational cultures, or make a merger work seamlessly, knows that. We get a sense of Paul's wisdom here, because he never tries to gloss over the messiness of change or give us a positive spin. He never pretends that the successful personal or community journey is simply a matter of knowing the right steps in the right sequence. Consultants offering long-term quick fixes would be wise to read about Paul's journey and to set their presentations and promises in contrast.

These days, it matters more where you are going than where you have been. But it is important to speak as clearly and honestly about both past and future. Too many people jump on the transformational

bandwagon as a career strategy, thinking it is mostly about knowing new words or facilitating meetings in interesting new ways. Paul lets us know that such a shift is deeper and more complex than superficial semantics and styles; it is a complete and dramatic change of outlook and meaning. Almost two thousand years later, Peter Senge and his associates, who have developed the concept of a “learning organization,” continue to make the same point.<sup>3</sup> Paradigm busting calls for passion, skill and endurance.

Paul’s journey from *enforcer* of the old ways of doing and being towards *encourager* of new ways of acting in the world has innumerable modern parallels among managers and leaders. We all know of individuals who have taken steps in Paul’s path. Perhaps the most notable for us is Jack Welch, one of the best-known leaders in this age of celebrity CEOs (chief executive officers). Certainly he is the most admired, most quoted, and most studied corporate leader of our times. As General Electric’s CEO, Welch accomplished an amazing transformation in the company’s performance and culture. In the early 1980s, he was hailed as a hero for his toughness, which was at times demanding and demeaning. People within General Electric understood that their personal survival was directly linked to following his rules.

As one perceptive writer observed, Jack Welch experienced a transformation in thought, outlook and style during the 1980s, letting go of his top-down, industrial approach to change. His story even includes a direct reference to Paul’s own journey:

Then in the mid 1980s, something unexpected happened: Like Saul on the road to Damascus, Welch became a sudden convert to a different – some would say opposing – school of leadership to the one he had so recently espoused. He went from a general to being...almost a good shepherd. Seemingly overnight, there was a “new” Jack Welch, a CEO who now spoke as passionately in favor of a humanistic style of management as he had recently done in defense of command and control. In books, articles, and videos, he was seen treating Americans to the thoughts of the new

Welch, especially the necessity that leadership be built on integrity and trust. He spoke eloquently about the need for employee voice, involvement, participation, inclusion, and, yes, even a dollop of the California-style empowerment he had so recently ridiculed.<sup>4</sup>

Who knows whether Jack Welch's words and writings will prove as enduring as Paul's, or whether Welch's conversion will stick through time. But the parallels are obvious. In both instances, individuals moved from an enforcement approach aimed at controlling superficial behaviour towards an encouraging approach that struggled to achieve deeper transformations. Compliance concerns were transformed into commitment concerns. And new conversations began to emerge.

For years, Sandy has been using an iceberg metaphor as a tool in leadership teaching and organizational consulting. The image of an iceberg offers a wonderful framework for understanding people, teams and organizations. We only see the tip of the iceberg. The most important – and biggest – part is out of sight below the waterline. The things we *can* see and touch – policies, facilities, files, charts, chairs, etc. – turn out to be only the surface aspects of reality. The things we *cannot* see and touch – values, fears, tensions, attitudes, mindsets, assumptions, memories, meanings, etc. – are just as real and, in the long run, more critical.

It is comparatively easy to change the tip of any iceberg, and many managers and superficial consultants do it all the time. But real change, deep transformation, requires leaders who have the courage and stamina to begin and sustain conversations about the things in the bottom nine tenths of the iceberg. At one point, Paul aggressively controlled – or at least patrolled – the tip of the iceberg of his own religious commitments, an enforcer of the observable features of the old paradigm. Only after he began his program of forming Christian groups did he engage the bottom-of-the-iceberg aspects of community building.

In some ways, clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour give us a kind of comfort zone. Tight job descriptions, firm lines of authority,

and knowledge of the rules make life predictable at least. That is the key to managing and maintaining the status quo at any point in history. But that is not leadership – especially leadership that challenges us to grow and transform ourselves and our world. Paul’s enduring wisdom is not for people interested only in the tip of the iceberg. He challenges us to look at life and leadership in new, exciting, *and*, at times, frustrating and ambiguous ways. That is his journey, and we can learn from his experiences. While the jury is still out on Jack Welch, Paul’s efforts seem to have stood the test of time.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. How do you understand your role as a leader? Which part of Paul’s life as a leader captures the essence of what you are trying to accomplish in your leadership activities?
2. Have you experienced a “Damascus Road” event? How did it transform your perceptions of the core task of leadership? Has any personal life experience changed the way you approach your leadership responsibilities?
3. Think about your community or organization and the adaptation challenges it faces. Is there a need for paradigm-busting leadership? Why or why not? What are the blocks to transformational change? What needs to be done to make real change possible? Despite all the rhetoric about change and transformation in society, why do most people prefer the status quo?