Governance in the Cloister: Lessons from the *Rule of Benedict* for Sustainable Leadership in Communal Organizations

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This paper examines how governance and leadership in monastic organizations is conducive to sustainability. Organizational context plays a decisive role in leadership. The present analysis utilizes the monastic context to understand governance as an individual role and social course at the same time. The organizational structure necessary to produce such a balanced approach is articulated in the Rule of Benedict. In contrast to other organizations, monastic governance consists of three pillars: common value systems, democratic structures, and amalgamation of internal and external oversight. Monasteries remain successful enterprises with relatively few managerial problems as a consequence of the Rule of Benedict.

Religion provides a familiar motive and motif for communal living. In fact, religious ideologies have provided the basis for many of the most sustainable communal ventures. The Hutterites, Shakers, Bruderhof, Kibbutzim, and Catholic monastic groups are poignant examples of intentional communities based on religious ideas and values. While scores of articles and books have been written about many of these Christian communal organizations, few examine the communitarian aspects of Catholic groups such as monasteries (Wittberg, 1994).

Monasticism is among the most durable forms of communal life. The persistence and transmission of monastic tradition has traversed more than fifteen centuries. It cultivated remarkable achievements often during periods when it was difficult to realize them through typical means. These impressive contributions reflect the significance of religious collectivist organizations, especially monasteries. Despite the unparalleled history of monasticism, this rich tradition is often shrouded in cosseted ambiguity. What is often forgotten is that monasticism, while ancient, remains a dynamic presence in both the Christian church and the modern world (Bourque, 2010).

The quintessential motive for monastic life is manifest in the promise to act as prophetic witnesses to the monastic impulse (Capps, 1983; Wimbush, 1993). The monastic movement has historically been characterized by a certain retraction from conventional society. Yet, to perceive communal monastic life as an excuse to ignore the things of the world, to go through time suspended above the mundane, to wander from place to place in utter self-absorption, is fallacious. Being monastic has always had far more to do with a life of reflection, discernment, and worship than with chants, habits, abbeys or convents. Communities of monks and nuns are expected to live, work, and pray together in harmony (Chittister, 1997; Rausch, 1990; Taylor, 1989).

Although not unique to Christianity, monasticism became a distinctive part of the religious landscape in Europe during a period "in which a loss of world and alienation were quite common across many different cultural divisions" (Wimbush, 1993, p. 419). Monastic organizations exemplify resistance to

quotidian life; a regime strikingly different from the surrounding secular world (Ritchey, 2008). The abstemious life can be achieved in the midst of society; however, it typically migrates away from a dominant, secular society. Relatively strict cloister restrictions are usually embraced to prevent contamination of monastic ideals by outsiders.

The endurance of Christian monasticism in the West can be understood through comprehension of a well-regulated enterprise governed by the *Rule of Benedict*. The unremitting allegiance to the *Rule* written for monastics of another age has the beneficial effect of offsetting the immediacy of claims made by the present. The beliefs, values and practices widely accepted in contemporary time can thus be evaluated by reference to a previous era. Just as travelers often return from an encounter in another culture with a heightened appreciation of what is specific to their own, an attempt to appropriate the values of another epoch can offer an unobstructed outlook when appraising current trends (Casey, 2005). That so little is written about Christian monasticism as a form of collective existence is surprising given the insight such an opportunity affords for the study of organizational continuity (Goddijn, 1965; Hillery & Morrow, 1976).

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the governance and leadership in Catholic monastic endeavours is conducive to organizational sustainability. The balanced leadership approach predicated on the *RB* expands Turner's (1969) dialectic between structure (i.e., vertical relations) and communitas (i.e., horizontal relations) which provides a framework in which societies function. There is thus a perpetual oscillation in human society between structure and communitas although "…opposites constitute one another and are mutually indispensable" (p. 97). Further, Pearce, Conger, & Locke (2007) describe "leadership as a role performed by an individual with the view of leadership as a social process" (p. 285). The present analysis utilizes the monastic context to understand leadership as both an individual role (i.e., vertical axis) and an interpersonal or social course (i.e., horizontal axis) at the same time and in the same relationship. The organizational structure necessary to produce such a balanced approach is articulated in the *Rule of Benedict*.

ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM

Christian monasticism is the devotional practice of individuals who live in cloistered communal organizations. Those living the monastic life are known as monks (men) and nuns (women) or the gender-neutral term monastics. Christian monasticism has existed in one form or another for nearly two millennia. Strands of monasticism dating back to the time of the first Christian apostles emphasized asceticism, celibacy, poverty or moral perfection. After Christianity shifted from persecuted sect to the imperial religion, monasticism replaced martyrdom as the essence of devotion.

There are three basic types. The first type was characteristic of ardent first century Christians who rejected material possessions and renounced personal desires so they could live as eremites (Gk, *eremos,* meaning deserted place or desert). The radical independence of these solitary desert monastics (Gk, *monos,* meaning alone or solitary) often led to extreme individualism (Keating, 1976). The eremitical life entailed self-discipline to surmount sensual appetites via acts of asceticism (Gk, *askesis,* for athletic exercise) such as fasting, and penances. Stewart (2003) traced the origin of asceticism to the New Testament (see Luke 2:37).

Christians initially felt called to an eremitic or reclusive lifestyle in Syria and then Egypt. Anthony of the Desert (ca. 251-356 C.E.), a resident of Alexandria in Egypt, became well known through a biography written by Athanasius (ca. 297–373 C.E.), bishop of Alexandria. Eremitic monasticism continued to be common until the decline of Syriac Christianity in the late Middle Ages (de Dreuille, 1999). The need for some form of organized guidance eventually arose in the second type or anchoritic monasticism, in which monks and nuns pursued less secluded lives, spending modest amounts of time in joint activities. Pachomius of Egypt (ca. 290-346 C.E.), inspired by the Acts of the Apostles, espoused a third or cenobitic type. Cenobitic monasticism, involved a life in which monks or nuns gather on a regular basis for prayer and work (Knowles, 1969; Rausch, 1990). Pachomius developed a *Rule*, or set of precepts, that prescribed monastics work to produce their own food and clothing. In this way, they were not dependent

upon the charity for their sustenance as was often the case in the previous types. These reforms expanded the number of monasteries and thus monks and nuns in the East.

Basil carried Pachomius' reforms still further. The *Rule* Basil wrote in about 360 C.E. abandoned the idea of isolation and extreme asceticism characteristic of Anthony's approach. Under Basil's *Rule*, the monks lived and worked together, and were supposed to form a community based upon moderation and fellowship. While this transformation had been occurring in the East due to Pachomius' influence, attempts to spread the monastic ideal to the West had been largely unsuccessful even though Athanasius spent several years in exile in the West around the middle of the fourth century where he attempted to spread the ideals of Anthony. Perhaps the greatest follower of the monastic ideal during this time was Martin of Tours (316-397 C.E.).

Monasticism spread much faster in the British Isles, perhaps because it still had not struck a responsive chord on the continent. This inspiration awaited Benedict of Nursia (480- 543 C.E.). Benedict promoted cenobitic monasticism in communal organizations based on his *Rule* (hereafter *RB*) directing the kind of life expected of followers. Discernment, stewardship, prudence, discretion, mutual obedience, respect, and perseverance describe characteristics of virtuous monastics within the community (see *RB*, 64, 71, & 72).

Benedict (ca. 480–547 C.E.) was a particularly vital figure in Western monasticism. He was born in Nursia, a village high in the mountains northeast of Rome. In his youth, Benedict was sent to school in Rome. Very little is known about his time there except that he underwent a radical conversion during this period. Gregory the Great wrote about Benedict in his *Second Book of Dialogues*, but it cannot be regarded as biographical in the modern sense, rather his purpose was to edify and inspire, not just chronicle Benedict's daily life.

It is important to bear in mind that Benedict lived in turbulent times in which the Roman Empire was collapsing. Assorted barbarian tribes were dismembering an empire already weakened by misgovernment and oppressive taxation, and scourged by deprivation and disease. The monastic impulse he responded to offered a more intense, disciplined way of living in the midst of this chaos. Benedict left Rome to subsist as a hermit near Subiaco, southeast of Rome. Others soon sought his counsel and leadership. Even though, Benedict valued the solitary life, he considered communal life as offering more safeguards and guidance (Berg, 2012).

After establishing several monastic communities, Benedict realized a practical guide for organization and leadership was needed. In 529 C.E., he issued his *Rule* (or *Regula Benedicti* in Latin) which contains guidelines for organizing monastic life. The translation of regula to *rule* may be misleading. Henry, (2001) suggested that the term *framework* offered a better term because the flexibility and adaptability inherent in the *RB* presented an accommodating organizational structure from which to establish a communal life. The *RB* provided a radical alternative to the chaos that existed in society writ large. It offered spiritual and administrative guidance.

THE RULE OF BENEDICT

The *Rule of Benedict* represents a 1500 year old tradition that has inspired social and personal transformation in monastic communities (Bekker, 2008; Fry, 1981). The *Rule of Benedict* includes a prologue and 73 chapters of about 9000 words.

The *RB* is not an entirely original document. Benedict wrote within and upon the tradition handed down to him. Combined with his personal experience of being a monk and leader of a monastic community, Benedict distilled these influences to compile his *Rule.* Accordingly, he was not the sole author of the *RB*, but adapted the scripts of his predecessors in an exceptional way. The rules and writings of Christian monasticism that existed from the fourth century to the time of its writing like those of Basil of Caesarea, Augustine of Hippo, and John Cassian are evident. The most important source was the *Rule of the Master*, an anonymous text, written a couple of decades before (Berg, 2012; Kardong, 2010; Rausch, 1990).

Notwithstanding these ideas and insights, Benedict's *Rule* revealed exceptional discernment. The most important acumen of the *RB* was the emphasis on a middle way between individual zeal and formulaic institutionalism. He knew the strengths, and particularly, the weaknesses of his peers; a unique spirit of balance, moderation and fairness does justice to the particular monk (Inauen, Frey, Rost, & Osterloh, 2012). The provision of a moderate path facilitated its growth in popularity.

Benedict's *Rule* eventually circulated widely throughout Western Europe. Accordingly, monasteries were established and flourished. They became important landowners, employers, and played an essential part in the local economy right up to the Protestant Reformation. In fact, the *RB* became the standard for monastic life since about the 7th century in the Western Church. The influence of the *RB* on the growth of the Catholic Church in particular and Western civilization in general was significant. The *RB* provided one of the principal models through which people engaged with the world of work. It has stood the test of time and many communities of women as well as men remain committed to it.

The essence of Western monasticism is evident in an essential promise integrated in the *RB*. This monastic promise is fixed on the components of *obedientia* (obedience), *conversatio morum* (i.e., an idiomatic Latin phrase intimating conversion or fidelity to monastic life), and *stabilitas* (stability). These components are frequently discussed as three vows, but Benedict simply viewed them as a singular promise that holds those in community accountable to one another, creating a common balanced and organized way of life (Kardong, 1996; see *RB* 58). Obedience, fidelity, and stability have proven imperative to simplicity, balance, and flexibility as useful guides for communal organizations. These monastic societies extend benefits encountered in the cloister as a model for effective governance and leadership in secular communes.

The primary postulate of the *RB--ora et labora et lege* (i.e. pray, work, and study)--can be regarded as its distinguishing feature. Each element of the day is carefully constructed to keep the community on task, for Benedict warned, "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, community members should have specified hours for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading (*RB* 48). Monastics are instructed on how to pursue spiritual enlightenment and live together in community. The primary vocation of cenobitic monastics is communal worship. Worship is addressed in 20 chapters that provide specific direction on communal as well as individual prayer (*RB* 8-20, 38, 42, 43, 45, 47, 49, & 52). The duties in the monastery are meant to provide for the successful handling of temporal affairs in the community so monastics can be unencumbered to worship without distraction.

It is the adaptability of the *Rule of Benedict* has made it relevant for centuries. The *RB* is a masterpiece of organizational development and leadership ethics. It furnishes operating principles and procedures, instructions and strategies for administration, management, organizational design and development for sustainable community life. Accordingly, a considerable part of the *Rule* is devoted to leadership issues such as moral values, cultivation of a consultative climate, encouraging the virtues of humility, obedience, justice, discretion, prudence and discernment (Chan et al., 2011). It reveals an understanding of how individuals can flourish and grow in community, and an intimate knowledge of human behavior and organizational structures. The *RB* paints a portrait of a community that is loyal first to God, then obedience to the *Rule*, and commitment to the common life in community, and the equality of monks and nuns despite differentiated roles.

MONASTIC COMMUNITY LIFE

Monasticism articulates a distinct and deliberate lifestyle. Benedict envisions a socially inclusive community (Tredget, 2002). Community life is difficult, at best, to sustain without an ideological foundation directing activities of daily living and effective coping with stresses that arise. Yet, monastic bonds and routines sustain social life in as extreme and pure a form as can be found (Ponzetti, 2014). Commitment to community is fostered by close-knit "moral networks" characterized by shared ideology, collaborative leaders, resilient group ties, and mutual financial support (Minturn, 1995).

Living under the *RB* is freely chosen. Benedict's mission statement set out to provide "a school for the Lord's service" intent "to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome" (*RB* Prologue). All the

aspects of common life are regulated in order to facilitate the community purpose. Characteristics or the disposition that all in the monastery should strive for is specified in the *RB* (Prologue, 4-7, 71-73). Community responsibilities are described in the following priorities: provision of physical needs (*RB* 22, 34, 55, 57), manual labor/vocational assignment (*RB* 31-32, 35, 48, 64-68), admitting people into the monastery (*RB* 58-63), discipline (*RB* 23-30, 69 -70), care for those in need (*RB* 36-37), and hospitality toward guests (*RB* 53).

Monks and nuns volitionally bind themselves through a solemn pledge of obedience, stability, and fidelity to communal life not only fulfill spiritual work through prayer and worship, but also earn their livelihood and ensure the long-term sustainability of the monastery by performing manual work (Kleymann & Malloch, 2010; Tredget, 2002). For this reason, monasteries usually operate several businesses (e.g. agricultural pursuits, educational endeavors, brewery or wine making activities to name a few) in addition to their spiritual, pastoral, and charitable activities. Consequently, monasticism is an arrangement targeting not only spiritual objectives but also pecuniary ones.

Cenobites are different than other monastics. Stewart (2003) stated "Every Christian prays, serves others, and has interpersonal relationships that demand accountability. Cenobites do all of these things within a community motivated by obedience to rule, abbot, and one another." (p. 279). This orientation to community is procured through life in a monastery, balanced leadership espoused in the *RB*, and stable, accountable relationships among individuals who have a vested interest in each other for life. Monasteries provide exemplary instances of organizations that offer a challenging context through which to practice and serve within community. The remarkable lives of those who adhere to monastic practices, although directed at fundamentally different goals from solely financial arrangements, afford lessons and implications that stretch beyond the confines of the monastery and apply to contemporary organizations (Feldbauer-Durstmueller, Sandberger, & Neulinger, 2012; Whatley, Popa, & Kliewer, 2012). Monastic organizations cultivate optimal environments in which social interaction facilitates gratification and life satisfaction, and thus provides motivation essential to sustainability (Janotik, 2012).

Before articulating the qualities of any position in the monastery, Benedict placed special emphasis on being a member of the community first, ahead of differentiating roles in the monastery. Accordingly, "In every instance, all are to follow the teaching of the rule, no one shall rashly deviate from it" (*RB* 3.7). Whatever title or rank one has in the community, all are equal in their obedience or earnest attention to one another. Humility, mutual obedience, and good zeal (*RB* 3, 7, & 72), the entire community is exhorted to do nothing out of selfish ambition and to look out for the interests of others. The leaders (*RB* 3, 62, & 65) are held to the same standards as every member in the community.

Perhaps the most fundamental dynamic of cenobitic life is the interplay of individual and community. Each individual has an assigned place in the monastery, but none is above the community. There was a clearly defined hierarchy in which everyone knows their place. Whatever position anyone holds in the community, they must obey the common *Rule* and each other (*RB* 73). Equality of personhood in the community is a value held by the *Rule* "because whether slave or free, we are all one in Christ and share alike in bearing arms in the service of the one Lord, for God shows no partiality among persons" (*RB* 2:20). All wore the same monastic garb as a simple explicit expression of this value.

Respect for persons is fundamental to organizational structure according to Benedict. The *RB* allows for accommodation in the arrangements of the Psalms for worship (*RB* 18), the amount of food and drink distributed to the community members (*RB* 39, 40), distribution of goods according to need (*RB* 34), and the assignment of work that fits the level and health of the worker (*RB* 48).

The *RB* is a corrective for errant behavior within the community. If someone chooses to follow his or her own desire, the *Rule* proscribes discipline (*RB* 23-30, 69-70). The purpose of this discipline is to encourage the community to focus on using their time constructively in prayer and work. For example, senior members of the community are selected to make rounds during the time of sacred reading: "Their duty is to see that no brother is so apathetic as to waste time or engage in idle talk to the neglect of his reading, and so not only harm himself but also distract others" (*RB* 48.18). Discipline is viewed as a vital tool to promote healthy communal life. Benedict desired that "this rule is to be read often in the community, so that none of the brothers can offer the excuse of ignorance" (*RB* 66.8).

The community is charged with selecting its leaders from members within their community. Leaders are selected by the community for their "goodness of life and wisdom in teaching …even if (they are) last in community rank" (*RB* 64:2). Character is paramount in selection. The abbot/abbess, who is first and foremost a member of the community, serves as the spiritual and temporal leader. The responsibility of the abbot/abbess as servant leader is to comfort and challenge the community in his actions as well as words (*RB* 2, 3, 27, 56, & 64). Benedict modified the almost exclusively vertical leadership style of the *Rule of the Master* by accentuating the relationships of the monastics to one another. The latter part of the RB contains material that speaks to the equality and mutual submission of all in the community and the rule, which lends support to the veracity of a balanced leadership model to communal continuity (Rivera, 2012).

GOVERNANCE AND MONASTIC LEADERSHIP

Governance is concerned with how communities and organisations are managed and directed. Importantly, this includes how they structure and otherwise order their affairs, exercise powers, and supervise relationships, and make decisions. Methods of governance contain commonalities and differences in the illumination of leadership concepts, principles and applications. These features are not developed in a vacuum; rather, they reflect underlying values, practices and other norms of governance enshrined in organizational structures.

Most leadership literature derived from the business or military sector. According to Bass (2008), "Empirical research on leadership in some segments of the population (students, military personnel, and business managers) was heavy, but sparse in other segments such as leaders of volunteer agencies, police officers, and health administrators." (p. 7). A dynamic understanding of leadership must consider a variety of perspectives that both shape and determine comprehension (Burns, 1978). Insight from communal religious organizations is typically discounted. This oversight is regrettable because the *RB* alludes to the integration of two--namely, transactional and transformational--distinct, but interrelated, types of leadership (Bass, 1997; Howell & Avolio, 1993). This functional combination of leadership types is often not found elsewhere. Its successful application in the monastic context makes it particularly illuminative for organizational effectiveness in general (Rivera, 2012).

Leaders' actions to influence followers constituted the focus of early leadership studies. In other words, scholarly discourse was dominated by vertical, top-down approaches to leadership that emphasized the central role of a leader with little concern for the contributions of followers to accomplish organizational goals (Northouse, 2010). Transactional models were formed, predicated on a hierarchal structure in control of the physical production of goods. Little attention was given in these models to traits, behaviors, and situations, involving the numerous transactions between the leader and followers (Bass, 2008). A rudimentary transactional approach underscores the significance of the followers' expectations and perception of the leader, whereas transformational leadership emphasizes the essential role of followers in a "more robust leadership system than mere reliance on centralized, vertical leadership" (Pearce & Manz, 2011, p. 566).

Transformational leaders go beyond mere transactional exchange by appreciating the reciprocal nature of ongoing interaction, and the contextual settings in which it occurs. This transformational approach views leadership from the perspective of the leaders' ability to mutually involve followers in the pursuit of a compelling vision. The central tenet of transformational leadership is that managing can only occur through engagement with those being led. It involves an influential process between leaders and followers in which leaders stimulate individualized consideration, empowerment and involvement within a communal context (Chaleff, 2003; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kelley, 1992; Rost, 1993). Leadership in a monastic context respects the contribution of all participants without diminishing the differences between leaders and followers (Galbraith & Galbraith, 2004; Inauen, Frey, Rost, & Osterloh, 2013; Skrabec, 2003). These collective bonds create communal rights and responsibilities, provide constructive discipline, and manage collective resources. Different terms are used to describe similar processes such as

collaborative (Kramer & Crespy, 2011), shared (Pearce & Conger, 2003) or servant leadership (Autry, 2004; Graham, 1991), and ethical governance (Brown & Trevino, 2006) to cite several.

Governance in the unique monastic structure Benedict foretold is directly responsible for its sustainability. Organizational context plays a decisive role in leadership style. Leadership is an essential element that defines communal culture and maintains organizational continuity. The *RB* offers a pragmatic time-tested model for governance (Tredget, 2002; Chan et al., 2011). It illustrates an approach to leadership that can coordinate vertical and horizontal leadership so that leaders are placed "among" and not "above" other members of the community (Druskat, 1994). Governance is viewed as a collaborative activity with no emphasis on the leader or followers as individual agents. It maintains explicit vertical relationships that do not negate the mutuality inherent in horizontal relationships between monks/nuns. Such a governance framework advances a conceptualization of leadership that according to Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport, and Bergman (2012) "…must expand from that involving only a single, vertical leader to one involving both formal, hierarchical leadership and leadership shared among team members" (p. 37).

The monastic practice of leadership and governance supports a balanced style that embraces both vertical and horizontal processes. The purposive integration of these two processes facilitates flexibility and adaptability (Rivera, 2012). On an organizational level, the ability to adapt is essential to the sustainability of monastics communities. As the history of religious orders shows, on the one hand, this flexible system creates strongly diverging organizations with local, situational and temporal adaptations. On the other hand, it continues to rely on basic principles which are still viable after more than 1500 years. Benedict's integration of both traditions in the *RB* demonstrated recognition and respect among followers (i.e. horizontal courses) and between leaders and followers (i.e. vertical courses) for communal solidarity and sustainability. In contrast to the findings of Joannide (2012) and Jacobs and Walker (2004) from the Salvation Army and the Iona Community respectively, monastics do not rely on bureaucratic controls but rather on what Ouchi (1980) referred to as "clan controls", namely controls that rely on reciprocal trust and less on formalized reporting in numbers and figures, as is the case with bureaucratic controls (Payer-Langthaler, & Hiebl, 2013). Monasteries remain successful, stable communal enterprises with relatively few managerial problems as a consequence of the *Rule of Benedict* (Inauen et al., 2010; Rost, et al., 2010).

The sustainability of monasteries, in contrast to the transience of secular organizations, depends upon the selection and enculturation of its leaders (Winthrop, 1985). A significant part of the RB is devoted to leadership conducive to collaborative governance. The *RB* is relevant for leaders who cultivate an ethical environment (Chan, et al., 2010). It emphasizes the central role of the monastic leader alongside the pivotal role of the entire community in decision-making. The abbot or abbess is not in a leadership position to serve self but to serve and support the whole monastic community. For it is written that "they should be well aware that the shepherd will have to bear the blame wherever…the sheep have yielded no profit (*RB* 2:7)." Hence, monastic leadership aligns with notions of accountability, praise, and direction.

Monastic governance practices provide an example how shared leadership transforms. The *RB* articulates an organizational structure that can be leader-centered, follower-centered, and community-centered at the same time and in the same relationship. For instance, the abbot or abbess consults with others in the community when matters require attention. Consultative decision making is inexorable in monastic communities: "After hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder , and follow what he judges the wiser course (the superior should consider it carefully in private and only then make a judgment about what is the best decision (*RB* 3:2)." This reflection is marked by prudence, temperance, fidelity to the RB, respect and obedience (*RB* 3:9). The commitment of the entire community to a shared mission and concomitant governance structure to achieve it places the *Rule* (*RB* 3:7)*,* not abbot/abbess nor the monks/nuns, as the final authority within the monasteries.

Benedict focused substantial attention on humility and obedience in the *RB*. For example, he elaborates on Biblical passages which note that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humbled themselves will be exalted in chapter 7. The *RB* provided practical steps for cultivating humility. For example, a monk recommended for ordination should "guard against conceit or pride at all

costs" (*RB* 62:2) and not take on more responsibilities than those assigned. Humility is fostered through mutual respect that monks show one another, as noted in chapter 63. Furthermore, it is a belief that when power is distributed, there is less opportunity for envy, conflict, or rivalry (*RB* 65:7). In an effort to promote humility and obedience, individual members are encouraged to cultivate certain virtues. For instance, individuals need to exercise justice, discretion, prudence, and discernment in their dealings with one another. It further acknowledges mutual submission of all the members to one another as the community members "each try to be first to show respect to the other" (*RB* 72:4). Taken as a whole, these virtues represent tools that help individuals live an exemplary life.

The profound balance and moderation evident in the *RB* provides the foundation for an especially vital, communal lifestyle (de Waal, 1984; Fry, 1981). Interestingly, both Eastern and Western views of leadership converge in the *RB*. The Eastern tradition followed a top-down approach to leadership in which disciples turned to the leader as the source of direction whereas the Western tradition emphasized a bottom-up pattern. Keating (1976) observed that the Eastern tradition represents disciples who wish to link with a leader forming an ardent master–disciple relationship. Their interest is only in the vertical relationship with the master. Their relationship to each other is not the primary concern. The Western tradition represents disciples who come together for the express purpose of mutual relationship. The abbot emerges as a figure to facilitate their joint spiritual journey; the abbot serves as a spiritual guide and teacher in the Western tradition rather than the master as in the Eastern tradition. The integration of these traditions is recognized by Keating (1976) when he noted that "the horizontal relationships of fraternal charity are preserved and, at the same time, the spiritual fatherhood of the abbot is maintained" (p. 260) in the *RB*.

Monasteries are pioneers in organizational design. In contrast to most other organizations, monastic governance consists of three main pillars: common value systems, participative, democratic structures, and amalgamation of internal and external oversight (Chan et al., 2010; Galbraith & Galbraith, 2004; Inauen, Frey, Rost, & Osterloh, 2013; Kieser 1987; Moulin 1965).

First, it is imperative that monastics are embedded in common value systems. Values and norms are of tremendous import in monastic communities. While many other organizations establish control and supervisory practices in order to monitor performance, the inculcated shared value system requisite in monasteries articulates standards of appropriate behavior, and provides the basis for responsible, sustainable communal organization. The monastic value system is based on three pillars: the Bible, the *Rule of Benedict*, and the tradition of a particular monastery. In order to implement this value system, monastics developed careful selection and socialization customs, routines, and practices. These value systems help with discernment and decision-making in important business affairs (Whatley et al., 2012; Winthrop, 1985).

Second, monasteries developed democratic structures along with broad participation rights to their members. Monastic organizations are characterized by transparent structures and processes, comprehensible to all members. They are organized in a democratic manner that fosters a culture of co-determination. Discipline as well as such participation practices foster and protect members' internal investments in the monastic enterprise. It also promotes checks and balances to minimize conflict and resolve problems. Each nun or monk with a solemn profession has equal rights and may vote in elections. Monastics democratically elect their leaders and monitor their actions. The monastery evaluates whether members recommended for leadership roles are eligible. Monasteries complement participation processes with supplemental internal control processes.

Finally, monasteries create inimitable environments that promote intrinsic incentives to administer routine activity and achieve a shared mission. While not entirely abandoning external oversight, monastic organizations arrange it in a different way. External control is hierarchically organized within the global Church in comparison to internal control that is more idiosyncratic and particular to a specific (i.e. local) monastery. Monasteries recognized by the Catholic Church are governed by its laws. Thus, external control involves jurisdiction and periodic external evaluation that is directed by the confederation of which a monastic community affiliates and rarely by the authoritative Church in Rome.

CONCLUSION

Monasteries are decidedly robust institutions, which have persevered despite social and political unrest, invasion, colonization, and reform. Even misguided ecclesiastical pronouncements, and other mishaps or distractions have failed to suppress the monastic drive to bring to fruition a collectivistic, consensual life of total devotion, intense spiritual discipline, and communal worship. Monasteries have generally been able to persist for generations. Various monastic revivals have coincided with the recovery of the ideals fundamental to the *Rule* and paramount to the continuance of communal organizations (Knowles, 1969; Rausch, 1990). In other words, monasticism has demonstrated resilience.

The *Rule of Benedict* offers a set of precepts for communal life that remain in sync with contemporary ways. While preserving the zeal of the early monastics, the *Rule* is at the same time flexible and adaptable enough to be lived by a diverse collection of personalities in a variety of cultures and contexts. It establishes a framework that governs the community. This rule highlights the purpose of monastic life, which is the pursuit of holiness, wholeness and ultimately salvation (Bourque, 2010; Feiss, 2001; Fry, 1981). The lessons and rhythms of monastic life offer a vibrant and practical example of sustainable organizational functionality.

The *Rule of Benedict* offers guidance necessary to assure sustainability (de Dreuille, 2000; Dunn, 2003). It encourages monastics to set aside their desires in response to a monastic impulse seeking a veritable divinely-inspired lifestyle with others. The vigor of this impulse serves as glue to communal engagement in a monastic organization. Fundamentally, monastic life is punctuated by a promise to abide by a specific way of subsisting elaborated in the *Rule* (Childress, 2010; de Waal, 1984). Monasteries illustrate that internal incentives offer a promising substitute for external controls, and can be seen as a reasoned plea for a different direction beyond strict governance and organizational regulation.

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