

THE EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

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THE CONCEPT of leadership has come into prominence in our day.¹ The term itself, though it has always been with us, is being used in a way that is becoming characteristic of our times, and symbolic of the cultural shift that we are experiencing. Not only has the use of the term changed, but its meaning and importance: which is why the notion is now being studied and analysed as never before.

Some will say that the attention that the idea is now commanding is due simply to the failure of leadership in nation, church and religious community: in fact, in all areas of public and communal life. But this 'failure of leadership' does not so much signify a present dearth of leaders of the kind acceptable in the recent past; it is rather that this kind of leadership is inadequate for the present cultural situation. This suggests that today there are different expectations of leadership on the part of followers, and that leadership and 'followership' are correlatives. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on these new expectations, and on some of the reasons behind them.

In some circles the term 'leader' brings with it echoes of *Der Fuehrer*, *Il Duce*, *El Caudillo*, *El Lider*. This may manifest some of the ambiguity of the contemporary need: for leadership, not for a leader. Here, 'leadership' no longer denotes the conventional authority-figure who commands and has power to enforce his commands; it describes, instead, a figure who calls, points out the way and invites others to follow in freedom.

The cultural shift from authority to leadership within catholicism was perhaps evident in the second Vatican Council: the Council was called to be *pastoral* rather than dogmatic. In accord with this spirit, the Council uses, as one of its recurring images, the biblical

¹ The theme of this issue of *The Way* is perhaps evidence for this. Also, the week after the first draft of this paper was written, *Time* magazine dedicated its cover article to leadership.

triad of prophet, priest, and king to describe the three 'ministries' of bishops and priests and of all members of the Church who share in these ministries according to their vocation: the ministry of the word, of prayer and sanctification, of ruling and building the community. In the third ministry, the language of 'king' is rarely used, for obvious reasons. More significant is the use of the images of shepherd and servant to portray the exercise of authority in the Church, and the language of guiding and leading to describe the functions of the officers of the Church.

Clearly, authority and leadership in contemporary usage have different meanings, though they are related and perhaps even overlap. It may be useful to attempt to clarify the meanings. 'Leadership' has a broad and a narrow usage. In its broad usage it is a wider term than authority and includes authority within it. It designates the function of the head, or of anyone who is in charge of any group of persons or any enterprise. Thus, the captain of a football team has a leadership function, as does a teacher in a classroom, or the manager of a department in a business. Consequently, all those who have authority in a group or a work are leaders in this general sense. But 'leadership' also designates persons who do not have authority. This points to another, narrower use of the term, signifying a quality of attracting others to follow, even where they have no obligation to do so and there is no authority on the part of the leader to command.

There are some who would separate the concept of leadership completely from the concept of authority, at least as embodied in the various institutions of manager, administrator, superior, president, etc. They suggest that it is not the function of the manager or superior to lead but rather to free his people for leadership and to provide the situation in which they themselves can lead. The administrator of a teaching institution, for example, has the function not so much of teaching, as of freeing his teachers for teaching. The superior of an apostolic religious community may be understood to have the function of freeing the members of his community to be apostles rather than performing the function himself. Here, too, 'leadership' is used in the narrow rather than the broad sense. The most that can be said is that all who have any official position with reference to persons or works must fulfil or share a leadership role; and there are those who play a leadership role, sometimes a very significant and important one, without holding any position of authority.

The nature and character of leadership was seriously investigated in the business world for some time before it became a topic of popular interest. The business community had engaged the services of behavioural scientists, psychologists and sociologists, in the hope of discovering the traits and qualities of leadership. It is easy to understand why the business world is interested in leadership, in particular, the role of the manager. The manager is important to the business enterprise, since it is he who co-ordinates the employees and the work of production. Business, at least in the american economy, is dedicated to growth and development. Products must be multiplied and diversified; profits must be increased. Change is thus at the heart of the business process; and managers must be found who will be agents of change. The manager is not simply one who ensures that all is in order and working properly; he must be creative and innovative, one who stimulates to greater achievement. As an agent of change he takes on some of the qualities of a leader. The language of the business world has also shifted to a language of leadership.

This language harmonizes with indigenous american philosophy, especially as expressed by John Dewey, and has permeated the whole of the american mentality. The notion that all the world is in process, not only in its wholeness but also in all its parts, is not something that is demonstrated. It is simply taken for granted. It is the task of any 'leader' in any sphere of activity to 'lead' into the new future situation which is not yet clear or formed. His office is to bring about change. The author of the newest version of process philosophy, Alfred North Whitehead, though an englishman, did not proclaim his philosophy of change until he came to Cambridge in New England.

What, then, of the relevance of studies made in the business world to the world of religion? It could be objected that there is nothing farther apart in ethos and spirit than the business community and the religious community; and there is some truth in this. At the same time, what the scientists have been investigating is the behaviour of human nature in group and work situations, and though adjustment has to be made for different situations, enough evidence has been gathered from activity in very contrasting areas, military, educational, political and religious, as well as business, to judge that it is the same human nature operating in each. There are also features of the religious, especially catholic, community which suggest similarity rather than difference with the business

world. The business community by and large is not a democratic community. Authority has a high place in its functioning, and, through hiring and firing, it possesses sanctions to enforce its will: sanctions whose effectiveness in the here and now may be comparable to the sanctions of religion.

The many studies over two decades of leadership and management have yielded three fairly clear results. The first is that if the test of success is narrowly limited to the product which is being manufactured and marketed, and to monetary profit, there is no one set of traits which will define the successful leader in all situations. It had been the hope of the business world, of course, that it would be able to identify the personality traits that made for success in management and leadership. It was found that persons with different and sometimes contrasting traits could be both successful and unsuccessful. Personality traits of themselves were not enough to define successful leadership.

The second result brought out the other dimension needed to understand leadership: that of the community and persons in which and among whom the leader functions. The leader, whether he rises from the community or comes in from outside, has many bonds of communication with the community: he functions successfully because of the way the community responds to him and he to the community. Anyone, it is alleged, can be a leader if he has the right situation and the right community: that is, a situation and community that responds to his capacities and personality. The contrary is more readily recognized as true, that a leader who is a success in one community and situation may be a failure in another. It is a commonplace that wartime leaders are not always as good in peacetime.

The third result does indicate a preference for one type of leader over others, but this depends upon how broadly the goal or purpose of the community or enterprise is conceived. If it includes not simply the product but also the well-being, morale, and personal growth of the persons involved, then leaders who use a participative model have been shown to be more successful than those who use only the authoritative model.

The participative model is not to be readily identified with democracy. Democracy in the strict sense signifies a common origin of authority and equality in decision-making, which is certainly a form of participation, and perhaps the most significant form, but not at all the only one. The business community helps to clarify

this point. The investigations showed that the business leader who makes use of a participative process when it fits the situation gets the best results; and, as was noted above, the business world is not a democratic world. In the business community there is generally no illusion about where authority lies. The issue is rather the extent to which the members of the community are involved in the actual performance of the common task. The crux is whether they are honestly invited to initiative and responsibility within the goals of the business. The responsibility of business, not only for the growth of its product but also for the human growth of its own community, and for the welfare of the total community and the total environment, has become more and more explicit in recent years.

A strictly impersonal goal in business is understandable even though reprehensible. In a religious community, the personal and spiritual growth of the members of the community should be recognized as a primary purpose of the community. It happens, however, even in a religious community, that the good of the members is subordinated to and even submerged in not only the good of others but even of the institutionalized work. This is not a one-sided situation. The merging of self into the 'apostolate' or 'the good of others' can become an ideal for the members of a community themselves; they can resist any leadership that explicitly attends to their own personal growth and development. The opposite can also be true: personal growth can in effect become the sole goal, and the work for others, whether institutionalized or not, can be neglected. However this issue is resolved, the studies referred to conclude that modes of leadership which tend to participation, involvement and personal growth are more successful than those that do not.

The relationship of community and leader is significant, and encourages further reflection. The historical situation of any social group would seem to have some influence on the kind of leadership it will call for and respond to. The personalities and state of development of the individuals who make up the group, and their interaction in the group, will likewise say something about their expectations of leadership. The remainder of this paper attempts in a preliminary way to explore some of the community and personality dimensions of leadership.

For convenience, a community can be defined as any group of persons having a perceptible unity of spirit and purpose, and some structure by which the group is organized. Though the term community will be used broadly in these pages, what is intended is not

so much a natural community like a family, but rather a contract or covenant community like a state or a religious order: a community which has come together or been brought together for a common purpose.

Historically, there are three situations of community. The first is the situation of its coming into existence; the second of its existence in peace and prosperity; the third of crisis, when its existence is threatened either from without or from within. The expectations of leadership are different in each situation.

In the first situation, it is clear that the task of the leader is to rally the as yet unformed group into a unity, so that it comes into being as a community with its own form or identity, meaning or purpose. Even in this creative role, there are two different ways in which the community and its leader relate to each other. In one case, the leader himself has the impulse to lead, to unite and form community. He may see the people as 'sheep without a shepherd', and feel drawn to gather them together. In this situation he cannot command; he can only invite, exhort, cajole, call the people to follow. In the other case the group itself may feel the need of unification, and experience the unease of not being unified. The group in its felt distress may then turn to someone and ask him to lead them. In this situation the leader is actually responding to a call of the group. Their call carries with it a promise to follow. At this point, authority and obedience enter into the situation: the group gives the chosen leader authority over itself. An example of the first instance would be Ignatius Loyola in the early years of his new converted life, as he made several attempts to gather followers or companions around himself. St Ambrose of Milan might be an example of the second instance: he responded to the call of the people to be their bishop. In both instances, the people and the leader obviously inter-relate in the mutuality of forming the community and determining its goals and its structures.

There are two leadership needs in the founding situation: to bring the people into unity, and to develop the structures and processes by which the community will exist. The second task is different from the first, and requires different kinds of qualities. So communities sometimes have two founders, one who brings the community together, and the other who organizes its laws. And it also happens that the leader needed to create the community is sometimes superseded after the first task is performed.

This second task of the founder marks the transition to the second

situation of the community: its continuation and growth in relative peace and prosperity. Here, the structures and processes which express its identity have been established, its laws decreed and promulgated. The task of the leader now is different from that of the founder. The leader is now expected to preserve the community in its identity, to ensure that its laws are observed by its members, to foster its expansion and growth, and to work towards the fulfilment of its purposes. The leader now becomes a governor and ruler. He has authority, and the members of the community are expected to respond to him in obedience. He is not expected to be an agent of change except insofar as changes need to be made to solve problems and to foster growth and expansion. In popular jargon, the word 'boss' fits him better than the word 'leader'.

This task of the leader of an established community is well expressed by Ignatius Loyola in the Tenth Part of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. In the first nine parts Ignatius had treated the processes and structures of the Society. With that work finished, he turns to its continuation in existence. The task now is two-pronged. It looks to what has been done, what is instituted, and aims at its preservation, at the retention of its identity: in terms both of structures and of its spirit and its purposes. It also looks to the future, the increase and growth of the Society on both counts. Ignatius gives no indication that he has considered the problem of the continuation of a society in its identity through the vicissitudes and changes of history. Nor does he suggest that growth, especially in spirit, will lead to changes that might bring the task of preservation of identity into question. He does, however, set out the two tasks. How these tasks are to be accomplished is perhaps the problem for our times: a consideration which introduces the third situation.

This is the situation of a community in crisis. Any existing community that has been continuing in history for some time will find its existence threatened. This may come from an outside force, as happens in wars between nations, or from a competitor in business. It may come from the environment, which no longer supports the community: for example, environment no longer supports mendicant religious orders as it did in the early days of the dominicans and franciscans. The threat may also come from within, from an excess or absence of energy: that is, a revolt from interior forces, or a simple lack of response to the goals and ideals of the community. The danger may be overt and clearly recognizable, or invisible and unidentified, but subtly felt and experientially sensed.

In all these cases of a community in crisis the situation is similar to the time of the calling of the community into existence. Something new is needed, something as yet not visible. But there is a difference: the community already has an identity and form in society and history. The threat, or the call to change, may not actually be a threat to the external existence of the community, but rather more subtly to the continuance of its identity. Or external forces may be pressing the community to change itself, with the consequent fear that the changes demanded may be destructive in another sense: that is, they may so change the community that it is no longer what it was.

This ambivalence of the crisis situation accounts for the ambivalence in the need and call for leadership in a time of change. There is a need for leadership to respond to the threat whether of revolutionary energy or of apathy: to lead the community forth to battle against the enemy, or to lead the community out of the wilderness to the promised land. At the same time, there is the felt need within the community to remain what it was and retain its identity. It calls upon its leaders to keep it as it had been experienced before the threat appeared.

The problem of crisis is a problem of history: that is, how a social unity with a recognizable identity can continue through the process of history. At work in the desires or the fears which find expression in the call for leadership are different views of history, usually implicit and unrecognized by the community itself or by its members, though doubtless culturally induced or conditioned. The different expectations arise from different philosophies of history. It is not possible here to enter into this highly complex question except by outlining some basic *schemata* of different understandings of history. One *schema* gives us the familiar distinction between the cyclic, lineal, and spiral views of history. According to the cyclic view, history constantly repeats itself, and its patterns are always the same. All communities go through a cycle of birth, growth and decline; and then, possibly, rebirth and a renewal of the cycle. In the time of crisis, the call for renewal is the call to return to the beginning and to the same form that once flourished. The lineal view sees history as proceeding progressively through time, constantly improving, with only slight and insignificant variations. The spiral view sees the cyclic pattern linked with constant progress, in such a way that each time the renewal comes around it incorporates new elements and manifests new features.

In another *schema*, history is understood from either a classicist, historicist, or evolutionary point of view. The classicist sees society or a particular community, as the individual man, from the viewpoint of harmony and balance. As there is an ideal state of man, which is the full and harmonious development of all his powers, so there is an ideal state of society, in which order and balance is manifest, and man is seen as fulfilled in society in such a way that society is man 'writ large'. Whenever this ideal nature is fulfilled in history, we have a golden age, a classical period. Every other situation is either a falling away from or an approximation to this norm, and is therefore deficient.

In the historicist view, history is discontinuous. Relationships with the recent past and the immediate future are such that the present is partially explained by these parameters; but the present, and each generation, has its own identity. It is neither explicable nor totally determined by the past, nor does it expect necessarily to exist in the future, but only in the here and now. The evolutionary view, on the contrary, explains the present as a stage in a process which proceeds out of the past and into the future in such a way that the present is understood only in terms of the total process. Here the future is partially predictable and the past is assimilated in it.

One more *schema* is pertinent to our topic, because it has special reference to the christian community: the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth. Because the kingdom of heaven can be conceived as anterior to, outside of and above the kingdom of earth, and also as present in the world, it is possible to have three different views of the relation of the kingdom to history. The first is the incarnationalist view,² according to which the kingdom of heaven enters into different cultures or periods of history but does not become identified with them, as the divine nature does not become identified with the human nature. When a nation or a whole culture declines, as did that of the roman world in the time of Augustine, the kingdom of heaven, insofar as it is identified with the historical community of Christ, can continue to exist and enter into and even

² It is customary to use the term 'incarnationalist' in an undifferentiated way, to express the entrance of the divine into the human. In this usage the only contrasting term is 'eschatological'. I am using 'incarnationalist' here somewhat in terms of Augustine's theology of history to express the entrance of christianity into historical cultures, but in such a way that christianity endures even when the human culture declines. Many who speak of 'incarnationalism' probably intend what I have called 'immanentism'.

form other cultures. The second is the immanentist view, according to which the kingdom so enters into history that it becomes a part of it, shares in its sufferings and imparts to history its own hope for the future. The 'incarnation' is part of the single, total process of history. Perhaps the teilhardian vision is close to this. The third view is the eschatological, where the kingdom stands above history, never really enters into it, but provides an attracting and driving force for history as the ultimate and final stage of the process of creation.

It must be evident that the third historical situation of a community, the situation of crisis, best describes the situation of the catholic Church today, and also communities existing within the Church, such as religious orders. The Church, of course, has an identity as a community in history since its foundation by Jesus Christ. But the call of the Spirit in the second Vatican Council was a call to the Church to change itself in response to the changes in the environment (*aggiornamento*). This call brought about a situation of crisis (which many believe was already in the making), because it raised the problem of the preservation of the identity of the Church. Religious orders were asked, as cells or organs within the body of the Church, to undertake a sympathetic adjustment. As a result we hear two different calls for leadership within the catholic community: to preserve identity, and to change the community into its new form and way of being.

The preservation of identity harmonizes most readily with either the cyclic or the classicist view of history, and also with the eschatological. The immanentist and especially the historicist views are most congenial to innovative and change-oriented leadership. The spiral and evolutionary views tend to put the two together, as does the incarnationist: that is, they combine both the preservative and the innovative expectations. It can be surmised that Vatican II gives expression to varying positions in different texts, but at least in one instance it supports the double movement of change and continuity. In the decree on religious life (*Perfectae Caritatis*), the formula 'adaptive renewal' (*renovatio accommodata*) is used. It recommends putting together two movements in opposite directions: adaptation to the contemporary world and a return to origins. Leadership which tries to embody those two movements is mystifying and disappointing to people who think and feel exclusively, for instance, in either the classicist or the historicist mode.

The *schemata* on the kingdom of heaven and earth also affect the

call for leadership. The Church as the expression of the kingdom of heaven on earth can be conceived or imaged in different ways. Avery Dulles has distinguished five ways in which the Church is being understood in our day: as Institution, as Mystical Communion, as Sacrament, as Herald and as Servant.³ The conception of the role and function of leadership in the Church will differ according to the use of these models for one's understanding of the Church. For example, the authoritarian and preservative model of leadership harmonizes easily with the Church as Institution, but not so readily with the Church as Mystical Communion.

The various directions of the call for leadership in a community in crisis is verified whenever such a community uses the participative process to choose its leaders. One religious community, for instance, asked its membership what kind of leader was called for by the times. There was no coherence in the replies; and it finally dawned on those studying the data that three different kinds of leader were being asked for: the ruler, who commands and expects to be obeyed, who preserves the institution; the change-agent, who gradually leads the community into a new affirmation of itself with new forms and processes; the charismatic leader who breaks all bonds and rouses the community to follow him. These three descriptions were then returned to the total community for its judgment on which type was needed. The response showed that one-third of the community preferred each of the three types of leader. The same response was obtained when a select but elected group was put the same option. What this said to some was that whoever became the head of the community would fulfil the expectations of one-third, but two-thirds would be disappointed, unless someone could be found who united in himself all three traits. To others it stated that what was being called for was not one person but a triumvirate.

These analyses and results leave unanswered the question why such difference of mentality exists among men in the same community. Certainly cultural influences, the particular education and environment of each one, and the occupations in which they are engaged, have a great deal to do with the attitudes that determine the expectations of leadership. However, people with very much the same education and personal history can yet differ violently from each other in political and social matters; which suggests that

³ *Models of the Church* (New York, 1974).

temperament or personality is a significant factor.

A study made by the american bishops of the american priesthood and published in 1971 shows the importance of personality development.⁴ In the psychological section of the study, a developmental grid was used which located personality growth in four stages. The first category is the 'maldeveloped'. These are persons with serious and long-standing emotional problems. Happily they are few in number, for the expectation of cure is not high. The best that can be hoped for is that such people will be able to live and work with their difficulties. The second category is the underdeveloped. These are generally passive and dependent persons who, though adult in physical and chronological age, retain the reactions and defences of adolescents. This includes adolescent attitudes towards authority and law, both needing it and resenting it. Not much by way of development can be expected of this category. However, within their limitations people in this category can live and work successfully.

The third category included the developing. In some ways the people are similar to those in the second category, with the difference that they are able to recognize and respond to their situation. They were interested in filling out the gaps in their development and in taking risks. This sometimes resulted in a change of career and life, but also in a measure of maturity. It was the category of risk and hope. The obvious fourth category is that of the developed. These are not necessarily people without problems, but they face them with honesty and easy courage. They respond to situations out of strength and a sense of being complete and whole, and not out of fear or defensiveness.

The response of all four categories to leadership, particularly of the second and fourth, will understandably be different. The underdeveloped will need leadership more than the developed. They will expect leadership to supply some of their own incapacity for responsible decision. At the same time they will tend to consider that leadership is needed only because the persons led are deficient in some way. They will not recognize the leader as responding to a need for unity in a community of mature persons. Consequently, though they need the leader, they will also resent him and their dependence on him. Those in process of development will look upon

⁴ Cf *Study on Priestly Life and Ministry*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, D.C., 1971).

the leader as needed only when individuals are incapable of making responsible decisions. Consequently, when they are emerging from their dependency into personal growth, they will tend to break away from leadership and authority, and reject obedience as infantile and not proper to mature persons.

Mature persons on the other hand will respond to leadership and authority as a principle of unity among equals. With ease and confidence in themselves, they accept the competences and roles of others in community as good order in a rational society with no implications of inferiority for anyone. Though fully capable of making their own decisions, they will as a matter of fact be more obedient and more faithful in following the leaders of the community than those who are not so able. Furthermore, they will accept the role of sharing in the leadership and participating in the common processes of the community with freedom and a sense of responsibility. In this, perhaps ideal, situation, fellowship and 'followship' are almost synonymous.

An interesting phenomenon of 'followship' is the uncritical acceptance of some persons as the prophets for our times. Counterpositions or probing questions are treated like the attack of an unreasonable enemy, or like the intrusion of someone from outer space. It is interesting to note the number of prophets during these recent years of crises in the Church who had extensive and adoring followers, but who now are outside either the catholic community or the leadership community within the Church.

It would take another paper to study the differences of followship. Not everyone who has an official position of leadership or who attempts to lead is followed. Some get no response. Others are enthusiastically followed. The difference does not seem to reside solely in the leader. The mood of the group, what Ortega y Gasset calls 'the spirit of a generation', must have something to do with it. It seems to be unpredictable who will and who will not be followed. Hence the definition of a leader as anyone who has followers.

By way of conclusion let me suggest three traits that will be found in one who has followers. First of all he will have strength. He will have some strength above the ordinary in the pertinent areas. If he is a religious leader, he will be strong in the spirit. He will have intelligence above the ordinary, or more than an ordinary ability to read men and to persuade them. He may be physically stronger

than most, or have more energy, or patience, or hope. Secondly, he will respond to the felt needs of the community at the time, and have a sense of timing. In all probability he will embody in himself the expression of the community needs, and be able to articulate them for the community. When the situation of the community is that of crisis, he will respond to the need which is deepest in the community. If on the other hand the community is divided in its felt needs, then the leader will respond to some degree to the diverse needs, or be moderate enough in all of them so that he does not threaten excessively any of the groups.

Finally, the leader who has followers will be a person who has a sense of the future, of what is up ahead, anticipated but not yet seen, the unknown future. In a sense he will be a person who 'has been there', has seen the promised land, and has returned to lead the others to it.