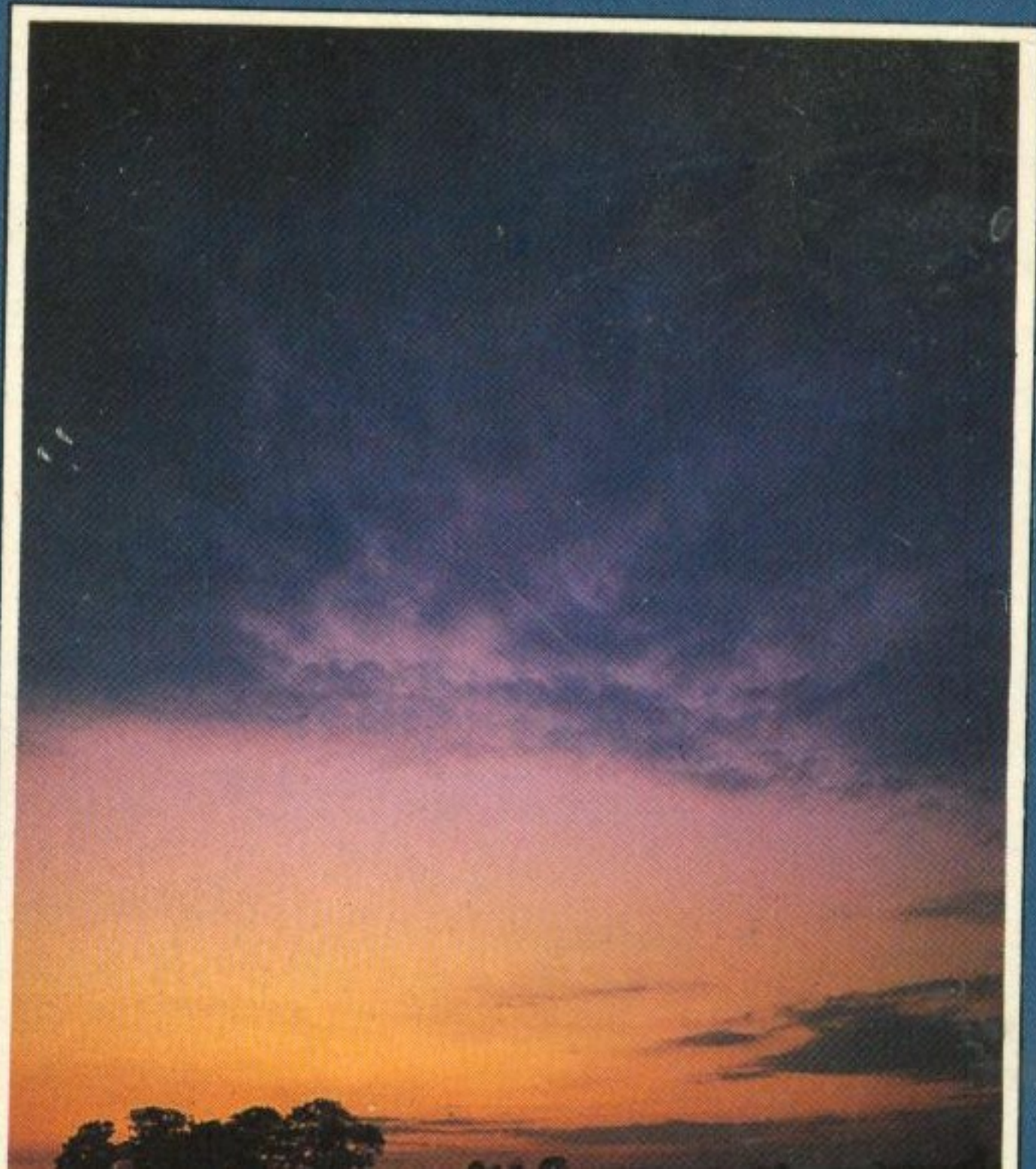


SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

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anoints him with His Spirit and separates him to his distinctive ministry (Acts 9:17; 22:21).

Samuel Logan Brengle was one of the truly great leaders of the Salvation Army. A man of scholarship as well as of singular spiritual power, he outlined the road to spiritual authority and leadership in challenging words: "It is not won by promotion, but by many prayers and tears. It is attained by confessions of sin, and much heartsearching and humbling before God; by self-surrender, a courageous sacrifice of every idol, a bold, deathless, uncompromising and uncomplaining embracing of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified. It is not gained by seeking great things for ourselves, but rather, like Paul, by counting those things that are gain to us as loss for Christ. That is a great price, but it must be unflinchingly paid by him who would be not merely a nominal but a real spiritual leader of men, a leader whose power is recognized and felt in heaven, on earth and in hell."²

This is the type of man for whom God is searching, on whose behalf He desires to show Himself strong (II Chron. 16:9). But not all who aspire to leadership are willing to pay so exacting a price. However, God's conditions must be complied with in secret before He will honor a man in public. Our Lord made it clear to James and John that there is a sovereignty about leadership in His kingdom. The highest positions are reserved for those who have qualified in secret. It is this element of sovereignty that begets awe and a great humility in those to whom leadership is entrusted.

It remains to be said that there can be such a thing as inverted leadership. If those in positions of power and influence fail to lead their people into the spiritual uplands, they will unconsciously yet nonetheless surely lead them down into the lowlands, for none can live to himself.

Give me men to match my mountains,
Give me men to match my plains,
Men with empires in their purpose,
Men with eras in their brains.

² *The Soul-Winner's Secret*, by S. L. Brengle, p. 22.

3

Natural and Spiritual Leadership

When I came to you, . . . my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

—I Corinthians 2:1,4

LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE, the ability of one person to influence others. One man can lead others only to the extent that he can influence them. This fact is supported by definitions of leadership by men who have themselves wielded great influence.

Lord Montgomery defines it in these terms: "Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence."¹ The outstanding exemplar of this quality was Sir Winston Churchill, especially in the darkest hours of World War II.

Dr. John R. Mott, a world leader in student circles, gave as his definition: "A leader is a man who knows the road, who can keep ahead, and who can pull others after him."²

President Truman's definition is: "A leader is a person who has the ability to get others to do what they don't want to do, and like it."

General Charles Gordon once asked Li Hung Chang, an old Chinese leader, a double question: "What is leadership? And how is humanity divided?" He received this cryptic answer: "There are

¹ *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, Bernard L. Montgomery, p. 70.

² *Charles E. Cowman*, by L. B. Cowman, p. 251.

only three kinds of people in the world—those that are movable, those that are immovable, and those that move them.”

Spiritual leadership is a blending of natural and spiritual qualities. Even the natural qualities are not self-produced but God-given, and therefore reach their highest effectiveness when employed in the service of God and for His glory. The definitions above concern leadership in general. While spiritual leadership partakes of these qualities, there are other elements that supplement and take precedence over them. Personality is a prime factor in natural leadership. “The degree of influence will depend on the personality of the man,” wrote Lord Montgomery, “the ‘incandescence’ of which he is capable, the flame which burns within him, the magnetism which will draw the hearts of men towards him.”³

The spiritual leader, however, influences others not by the power of his own personality alone but by that personality irradiated and interpenetrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Because he permits the Holy Spirit undisputed control of his life, the Spirit’s power can flow through him to others unhindered.

Spiritual leadership is a matter of superior spiritual power, and that can never be self-generated. There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader. He is able to influence others spiritually only because the Spirit is able to work in and through him to a greater degree than in those whom he leads.

It is a general principle that we can influence and lead others only so far as we ourselves have gone. The person most likely to be successful is one who leads not by merely pointing the way but by having trodden it himself. We are leaders to the extent that we inspire others to follow us.

At a large gathering of the leading Protestant missions in China, the question of qualifications for leadership was being discussed. There was vigorous debate on the subject. Mr. D. E. Hoste, General Director of the China Inland Mission, sat quietly listening until the chairman asked if he had anything to say on the subject.

³ Montgomery, *op. cit.*

From all over the auditorium came murmurs of approval at the invitation, for his contributions to a discussion were always listened to with more than ordinary interest.

With a twinkle in his eye, he said in his curiously high-pitched voice: “It occurs to me that perhaps the best test of whether one is a qualified leader is to find out whether anyone is following him.”⁴

Natural leadership and spiritual leadership have many points of similarity, but there are some respects in which they may be antithetical. This is seen when some of their dominant characteristics are set over against one another.

NATURAL	SPIRITUAL
Self-confident	Confident in God
Knows men	Also knows God
Makes own decisions	Seeks to find God’s will
Ambitious	Self-effacing
Originates own methods	Finds and follows God’s methods
Enjoys commanding others	Delights to obey God
Motivated by personal considerations	Motivated by love for God and man
Independent	God-dependent

While conversion does not normally make leaders of people who would never become such otherwise, Church history teaches that in the hour of full surrender the Holy Spirit sometimes releases gifts and qualities that have long remained latent and dormant. It is the prerogative of the Spirit to bestow spiritual gifts which greatly enhance the leadership potential of the recipient.

This was Dr. A. W. Tozer’s conviction:

A true and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position of leadership by the inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the press of the external situation. Such were Moses and David and the Old Testament

⁴ D. E. Hoste, by P. Thompson, p. 122.

prophets. I think there was hardly a great leader from Paul to the present day but was drafted by the Holy Spirit for the task, and commissioned by the Lord of the Church to fill a position he had little heart for. I believe it might be accepted as a fairly reliable rule of thumb that the man who is ambitious to lead is disqualified as a leader. The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God's heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing and altogether as ready to follow as to lead, when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared.⁵

In the biography of William E. Sangster, a private manuscript found after his death illustrates this contention. He was writing of his growing conviction that he should take more part in the leadership of the Methodist church in England.

This is the will of God for me. I did not choose it. I sought to escape it. But it has come.

Something else has come too. A sense of certainty that God does not want me only for a preacher. He wants me also for a leader—a leader in Methodism.

I feel a commissioning to work under God for the revival of this branch of His Church—careless of my own reputation; indifferent to the comments of older and jealous men.

I am thirty-six. If I am to serve God in this way, I must no longer shrink from the task—but *do* it.

I have examined my heart for ambition. I am certain it is not there. I hate the criticism I shall evoke and the painful chatter of people. Obscurity, quiet browsing among books, and the service of simple people is my taste—but by the will of God, this is my task. God help me.

Bewildered and unbelieving, I hear the voice of God say to me: "I want to sound the note through you." O God, did ever an apostle shrink from his task more? I dare not say "No" but, like Jonah, I would fain run away.⁶

⁵ *The Reaper*, February, 1962, p. 459.

⁶ *Doctor Sangster*, by Paul Sangster, p. 109.

That spiritual leadership and authority cannot be explained solely on the grounds of natural ability is strikingly exemplified in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. On one occasion Brother Masseo, looking earnestly at Francis, began to say: "Why thee? Why thee?" He repeated it again and again as if to mock him.

"What are you saying?" cried Francis at last.

"I am saying that everybody follows thee, everyone desires to see thee, hear thee, obey thee, and yet for all that, thou art neither beautiful, nor learned, nor of noble family. Whence comes it that it should be thee whom the world desires to follow?"

When Francis heard these words, he was filled with joy, raised his eyes to heaven and, after remaining a long time absorbed in contemplation, knelt praising and blessing God with extraordinary fervor. Then he turned to Brother Masseo:

"Thou wishest to know? It is because the eyes of the Most High have willed it so. He continually watches the good and the wicked, and as His most holy eyes have not found among sinners any smaller man, nor any more insufficient and sinful, therefore He has chosen me to accomplish the marvelous work which God hath undertaken; He chose me because He could find none more worthless, and he wished to confound the nobility and grandeur, the strength, the beauty and the learning of this world."⁷

Much may be learned from the wisdom of men who have made their mark as leaders. Two men already quoted had tests by which they determined the leadership potential of men they were interviewing.

Lord Montgomery enunciated seven ingredients necessary in a leader in war, each of which is appropriate to the spiritual warfare: (1) He should be able to sit back and avoid getting immersed in detail. (2) He must not be petty. (3) He must not be pompous. (4) He must be a good picker of men. (5) He should trust those under him, and let them get on with their job without

⁷ *Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders*, by James Burns, p. 95.

interference. (6) He must have the power of clear decision. (7) He should inspire confidence.⁸

Dr. John R. Mott moved in student circles and his tests covered different territory: (1) Does he do little things well? (2) Has he learned the meaning of priorities? (3) How does he use his leisure? (4) Has he intensity? (5) Has he learned to take advantage of momentum? (6) Has he the power of growth? (7) What is his attitude to discouragements? (8) How does he face impossible situations? (9) What are his weakest points?⁹

Since leadership is essentially the power of one man to influence another, it is well to consider the almost limitless possibilities of a single life, for good or ill. Both Scripture and experience affirm that no one can be neutral, either morally or spiritually. On lives that come within the range of our influence we leave an indelible impress, whether we are conscious of it or not. Dr. John Geddie, for example, went to Aneityum in 1848 and worked there for God for twenty-four years. On the tablet erected to his memory these words are inscribed:

When he landed, in 1848, there were no Christians.

When he left, in 1872, there were no heathen.

When the burning zeal of the apostolic church resulted in converts multiplying at an extraordinary rate, the Holy Spirit taught a striking lesson on the nature of spiritual leadership. The exigencies of the work made such heavy demands on the apostles that the creation of a lower echelon of leaders to care for the neglected poor and widows became necessary. These must be carefully selected, so the apostles specified the type of man to be chosen: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3).

Is it without significance that the central requirement is that they

⁸ Montgomery.

⁹ *John R. Mott*, by B. Mathews, p. 346.

be "full of the Holy Ghost," even for what might be termed a secular service? They were to be men of *integrity*, of honest report; of *sagacity*, full of wisdom, of *spirituality*, full of the Spirit. Spirituality is not easy to define but its presence or absence can easily be discerned. It has been called the diffused fragrance which has been assimilated in the garden of the Lord. It is the power to change the atmosphere by one's presence, the unconscious influence which makes Christ and spiritual things real to others.

If this is the standard for those who occupy the lower offices of the church, what of those who aspire to the higher? Spiritual ends can be achieved only by spiritual men who employ spiritual methods. What a far-reaching change could be effected in our churches and Christian organizations if this priority was strictly observed! Secular men, be they ever so gifted and charming in person, have no place in the leadership of the church, even in temporal matters.

The essential ideas of true spiritual leadership are gathered up in these words of John R. Mott:

I have in mind the use of the word leadership which our Lord doubtless had in mind when He said, "He who would be greatest among you shall be the servant of all"—leadership in the sense of rendering the maximum of service; leadership in the sense of the largest unselfishness; in the sense of unwearying and unceasing absorption in the greatest work of the world, the building up of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 353.