

STEPHEN BEVANS

Catholic Theological Union

A Theology Of Leadership, Not Management: Trinitarian Mission And Baptismal Discipleship

Introduction: Leadership Today

Right at the beginning of his 2007 book, *Spiritual Leadership*, noted lay theologian Leonard Doohan writes that, today, “the understanding of leadership and or experience of leaders have permanently changed, and the change is so great that both writers and practitioners refer to a paradigm shift, a transformation, an awakening, and others simply speak of “the new leadership.” (Doohan, 2) As the term implies, such “new leadership” “is not leadership in the way people have typically understood it” (Doohan, 35). In fact, some people who might have been thought of as leaders in years past, are no longer considered so in the light of today’s thinking. Instead of talking about “competition, productivity, structures, power, authority,” and focusing on the individual leader as such, leadership studies are focusing on learning skills that inspire people “with a shared vision, influences them through faith, hope, and love, changes structures when necessary, and models the way.” (Doohan, 35). Doohan quotes Jack Hawley, who says that “The key questions for today’s managers and leaders are no longer issues of task and structure but are questions of spirit.”¹

Even though Hawley speaks of “managers and leaders,” the title of my paper refers to “leaders, not managers.” This is because, while good leaders do need to practice the skills of good management, the two are not at all the same. Peter Koestenbaum suggests that the models of leadership are “religion, art, politics, and love.” (Koestenbaum, 50). As Timothy Brown and Patricia Sullivan express it, “the art of leadership involves influencing, guiding, and

¹ Hawley, Jack, *Reawakening the Spirit in Word*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koelev, 1993, 11, quoted in Doohan, 35.

directing others to new heights of understanding, interacting, and commitment. Thus, the difference between a leader and a manager lies in the ability to motivate or inspire others – in other words, *to give a vision*.” (Brown and Sullivan, 5) Leaders’ concerns are with Mission; managers’ concerns are with Maintenance.

In an interview in the Summer, 2015 issue of LCWR’s *Occasional Papers*, leadership consultant Peggy McAllister says much the same thing. She distinguishes between a “reactive form of leadership” – which we might call management – and a “creative state of leadership,” which to her mind is the right way to lead today. Reactive leadership, she says, focuses on “trying to prevent problems, on preventing what feels threatening, and on maintaining our comfort zone.” This kind of leadership urges us to try to be “utterly perfect,” to control others, or to be “the nice girl” and give up our power (Sanders 2015, 24). On the other hand, creative leadership practices the art of “trying to bring something into being.” In this model of leadership, McAllister says, “we are asking different questions of ourselves and others. Instead of trying to protect something, we are trying to create outcomes in service to something much bigger than ourselves” (Sanders 2015, 25). Leaders need to ask questions like “what are we in service to and how must we express that now?... How do we model openness, community, collaboration in everything we do? How do we bring all the voices into the room? How do we move into this mystery together?” (Sanders 2015, 28).

Leonard Doohan distinguishes between a “transactional leadership” that promises rewards for loyalty and performance, and “transformational leadership” that offers vision and mission (Doohan, 21-22). The same distinction is made by German theologian Michael Böhnke, who argues that leadership effectiveness is measured by how co-workers are motivated to do things for others “without expecting something in return.”² Such an understanding of leadership, Doohan insists, roots ministry not in the acquisition of skills, but “in a changed attitude toward others, a conversion, and a new way of looking at the world ... ‘the heart of leadership lies in the hearts of leaders.’”³ Accordingly, Doohan offers “ten core values” of leadership today, all of which combine to make what he calls a “spiritual leader.” These are: (1) a sense of

² Böhnke, Michael “‘Their Right and Duty by Reason of Their Baptism’ (SC 14): How Far Does the Idea of a ‘Common Priesthood of the Faithful’ Extend?,” 13. Unpublished Address given at the symposium “Baptismal Awareness and Leadership: Impulses from the Global Church,” June 15-17 at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Böhnke quotes Rosenstiel von, Lutz “Leadership and Change,” in ed. Bruch, Heike, Krummacker, Stefan, and Vogel, Bernard. *Leadership: Best Practices and Trends*, Wiesbaden 2006, 152.

³ Doohan, 12 quoting Bohman, Lee, G., and Deal, Terrence, E., *Leading with the Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995, 6.

call and inner integrity; (2) faith in a shared vision; (3) nourishing the shared vision and inspiring commitment; (4) relentless pursuit of a common mission; (5) profound sense of community and human interdependence; (6) humility toward one's views; (7) making a difference on others' lives; (8) having the courage to say what needs to be said; (9) challenging others to their best; and (10) ability to maintain distance from task and people. (Doohan, 30-33).

Such an understanding of leadership obviously reflects a different understanding of power. For a creative, transformational, spiritual leader, power is not a "zero sum" concept, to be held on to or dealt out carefully with the conviction that whatever is shared is lost. Rather power is understood as something that grows and expands as it is shared. "We keep our power, spiritual writer Thomas Moore writes, "when we protect the power of others."⁴ To quote Doohan yet again: "Leadership exists only when *power and wisdom come together*, and the leader knows both are attained through dialogue among the entire group ... who have discovered their own self-leadership." (Doohan, 15-16).

A Theology of Leadership: Three Theological Paradigm Shifts

Had the notion of leadership I have been presented that of a more managerial, maintenance, reactive, transactional type, I would be justified in offering a theological foundation that was based on an understanding of God who is monarchical and unilateral, and who is the foundation for a hierarchical order of an anthropocentric and androcentric universe, created by omnipotent fiat, and patterned on an ordered procession from Father to Son, and from Father and Son to the Holy Spirit. In turn, this ordered procession within God as such would serve as a pattern for an anthropocentric, androcentric, and hierarchical State, and an anthropocentric, androcentric, and hierarchical church, the mission of which would be to bring all peoples to acknowledge the sovereignty of the one God under the Lordship of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The vision, however, of a more creative, transformative, and mission-centered leadership that I have sketched out here offers the possibility of a very different theological foundation, one based not on Greek philosophical and Roman and Germanic legal structures, but on the vision and values of the Christian gospel. The theological foundation I will offer for leadership as it is understood today is based on Trinitarian mission and baptismal equality, a foundation marked, as leadership itself is today, by a profound paradigm shifts in theology in the last half- century, although their roots go back much further.

⁴ Quoted in Brown and Sullivan, 15.

A first paradigm shift has been in the area of Trinitarian theology. In Protestantism this shift was begun by Karl Barth in the first half of the twentieth century, when he began his massive systematic theology, *Church Dogmatics*, with a thorough treatment of the Trinitarian nature of God. For Catholics the shift began with Karl Rahner's small but groundbreaking work on the Trinity, the central thesis of which was that "the economic Trinity was the immanent Trinity, and *vice-versa*" – in other words, as Kathleen Cahalan, referring to the work of Catherine LaCugna, has put it "who God is in essence is what God does." (Rahner, 22; Cahalan, 149; LaCugna, 4-6). What God does, Edward Hahnenberg explained eloquently, is to work for communion among all creatures, and so God in God's very self is "a dynamism of relationship, communion of persons." (Hahnenberg, 85). In both Protestantism and Catholicism there has been a renaissance in Trinitarian theology, so much so that most theologians would agree that today Christian theology's "only option ... is to be trinitarian." (LaCugna, 3). In addition, the Trinitarian perspective emphasizes the radical missionary nature of God. If God is what God does – exist as a loving communion – God also does what God is. The Triune God, in other words is a "communion-in-mission," expressed better as a verb rather than a noun (Bevans and Schroeder, 9-18; Hahnenberg, 91).

The second theological paradigm shift has been ecclesiology. It is marked by the development of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church at the Second Vatican Council, but its roots go back to the Tübingen School and the ecclesiology of Johann Adam Möhler, and the liturgical, patristic, and biblical movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. (O'Meara, 138-160; O'Malley, 71-80). A century before the Council, the Church understood its essence as institutional, hierarchical, and monarchical, and Pius X could speak of it in 1906 as fundamentally an "unequal society."⁵ At the Council the chapter on "The People of God" was placed before the chapters on hierarchy and laity, thus pointing to the fundamental equality of all believers, an equality based on baptismal, "missionary discipleship" (Gaillardetz, 184-205; Bevans 2014; Francis, 24). Any understanding of leadership in the Church today has to begin with this reality of fundamental equality and vocation to discipleship. There are no passive Christians. Leadership has to serve the mission of the church that all share equally in an ordered communion.

A third paradigm shift has been present in theology at least since the time of the great theological visionary Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and has been expressed in various works of process theology, but has only come to full blos-

⁵ Pius X, *Vehementer Nos* (to the Bishops of France), February 11, 1906. Quoted in Fahey, Michael A. "Church". Ed. Schüssler Fiorenza, Francis and Galvin, Joh. *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 2. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991, 32.

som in the Catholic Church the last several years with writings by John Haught, Denis Edwards, Ilia Delio, and Elizabeth Johnson, to name only a few authors⁶. This is a shift that has embraced as fully as possible the “new creation story” of contemporary physics and the theory of evolution in contemporary biology. In this theological perspective, God is not *outside* of creation, manipulating it and determining every aspect of its existence. Rather, God is *within* the process of creation that has not stopped but is ongoing. The God of evolution is a God who deeply respects creation’s freedom, and works by the power persuasion rather than the power of domination. This is especially true in terms of human freedom, where God shows Godself, as Ilia Delio beautifully expresses it, “the beggar of love who waits at the souls’ door without daring to force it open; God does not violate our freedom to create ourselves because divine love has imparted to us the freedom to be” (Delio, 10).

A Theology of Leadership: Trinitarian Mission and Baptismal Discipleship

Putting all three of these theological paradigm shifts together, we discover a powerful theological foundation for leadership that dovetails amazingly with its contemporary understandings. We can outline this foundation in the form of a Trinitarian narration within the perspective of God’s emerging universe. God has chosen certain women and men to be partners in getting the job done and giving them the tools to do it (Brown and Sullivan, 15). Christians call this the church.

The Triune God is the Leader of the universe, whose vision the completion of creation, a vision that Christians call the Kingdom, or Reign, or Kingdom of God. In order to bring the vision to completion, the Spirit has been present in and to the world from its first nanosecond, sent from the Heart of God’s self, the divine Matrix whom Christian tradition has often named the “Father,” the “Source of All Being.” As Denis Edwards puts it powerfully, “as particles of hydrogen and helium separated out from radiation and formed the first atoms, as the clouds of gas compressed to form the first generation of galaxies, as the universe was lit up by the first stars, it was the Spirit of God who breathed life into the whole process”. (Edwards 2004, 172). As the earth formed, as life on

⁶ See, for example, Haught, John. *God after Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*. Cambridge, MA: The Westview Press, 2000; Edwards, Denis. *Partaking of God: Trinity, Evolution, and Ecology*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2014) Delio, Ilia. *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011; Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

earth began and plants and animals and humans emerged, the Spirit was present, but not, as Elizabeth Johnson says, as a monarch, but as a lover, (Johnson, 159) coaxing, cajoling, persuading, grieving, raging but always letting be.

The Spirit was there as well, no doubt, as women and men tried to understand their mysterious drive to go beyond themselves, and developed the first gropings of religion. And the Spirit was among God's people Israel, chosen for the blessing of all nations (Gen 12:3), as life-giving breath, as life-restoring wind, as prophet-anointing oil, as nourishing water, in powerful wisdom, as hope-filled and challenging word. The people were unfaithful, but God remained faithful, promising a new covenant with a new outpouring of the Spirit that would change their hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. The work was slow and painful, with many mistakes and much sin, but God's leadership never faltered. God was working for "an order of His own quality." This is why God "proceeds in the slow and hard way, which alone promises the highest prize" (Hick, 6; Niccol).

"In the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4) the Spirit took on a human face in Jesus of Nazareth, the Word-become-flesh, whom the Spirit anointed to bring good news to the poor, to heal the lame, to give sight to the blind. Jesus was tempted to use his authority for his own ends, but he resisted and persisted in God's way of leadership – not manipulating, but leading by example, by integrity, always offering freedom. His message was one of forgiveness, of healing, of inclusion. It was God's vision that he preached and embodied: "The time is fulfilled, the Reign of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news" (Mk 1:15) – in other words, think differently, imagine a new way of living, realize that although God's ways are not our ways, they could be (Wiebe, 258; Boyle, 155).

Jesus was clearly a leader, a man of power. He didn't speak "like the scribes," quoting authorities. He spoke from his own experience and deep relationship with God – "you have heard it said, ... but I say to you." He gathered disciples and sent them out in his name, sharing his vision and his work with them. When his disciples vied with one another for power and position within their ranks, Jesus reminded them that his was a different vision from the "kings of this world." They lord it over one another, Jesus said, "but among you it shall not be so. Rather, the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant" (Lk 22:25-26). He was among them, he said, as one who served (Lk 22:27).

As he predicted, Jesus was arrested and killed. At his trial he was asked about his authority, and acknowledged it, but it was not a human authority with which he preached and healed. His kingdom was not of this world. And yet, three days after his death, that vulnerability and weakness was vindicated. He was raised to life, and shared that life and new authority with his disciples.

As God had sent him, so he sent them, a sending that was soon sealed by the Spirit at Pentecost. Eventually the church was born, but only through the patient yet persistent prodding of the Spirit to think out of the box, to go beyond preconceptions – to go beyond Judaism and include all peoples and all nations.

The early disciples, then, gradually understood themselves, as Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe describes it, as a “Jesus society”:

a new *society* that sets all the old ideas of man living with other men on its head, that looks so strange it is either the most stupid, foolish thing on earth, or it is so beyond man’s usual thinking that it could only come as a revelation right from God. ... [In the church] you have a new attitude toward everything, toward everybody. Toward nature, toward the state in which you happen to live, toward, women, toward slaves, toward all and every single thing (Wiebe, 258).

What holds the Church together is Baptism. As its early theologian Paul wrote eloquently, baptism plunges us into Jesus death, so that we might hope to share in his resurrection (Rom 6:1-11). By it we become a “new creation,” in which differences of nationality, social status, culture, and gender are overcome because we have all put on Christ (Gal 3:27), and live now no longer ourselves but in him (Gal 2:20). Such life in Christ means, says Paul, that we have become his body (1Cor 12:27), and that the Spirit has lavished upon each one of us gifts that differ, but for the benefit of all (1Cor 12:4-7). It is because we are baptized into Christ that we Christians share in his mission of service, carrying it out in the way he did, acknowledging and sharing his leadership. It is because of baptism, “which is accessible to all,” (Francis, 104) that all Christians are endowed with an instinct or sense of the faith that needs to be taken seriously by the church’s leaders (Francis, 119). It is this kind of understanding of God’s authority in the church as a whole that Pope Francis expresses in EG when he speaks of the ministry of the bishops as fostering “missionary communion in his diocesan church.” Sometimes, Francis says, the bishop “will ... go before his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant.” At other times, he will simply be present in their midst. But at other times “he will have to walk after them, helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths” (Francis, 31).

In the light of our missionary triune God, who “hasteth not and is not weary” (Oman, 176) in leading creation to its fulfillment in freedom; in the light of Jesus’ life of loving service to God’s dream of a completed creation; in the light of our baptism, which calls us to be Christ in the world and endows the entire church with Christ’s authority: in this light we can understand the deep theological foundations of leadership today, both in our church, but also in our world. It is because many in our church – and especially our lead-

ers! – have not made the conversion, the new way of looking at the world on which Leonard Doohan insists, that we struggle with leadership today. We have a long way to go. Fortunately, however, we have a Leader who is omnipotent in love, patience, and mercy.

Conclusion

Let me conclude these reflection with a blessing for leaders composed by the late Irish poet John O'Donohue⁷ – itself a theology of leadership:

May you have the grace and wisdom
To act kindly, learning
To distinguish between what is
Personal and what is not

May you be hospitable to criticism.

May you never put yourself at the center of things.

May you act not from arrogance but out of service.

May you work on yourself,
Building up and refining the ways of your mind.

May those who work for you know
You see and respect them.

May you learn to cultivate the art of presence
In order to engage with those who meet you.

When someone fails or disappoints you,
May the graciousness with which you engage
Be their stairway to renewal and refinement

May you measure the gifts of the mind
Through reading and creative thinking
So that you continue as a servant of the frontier
Where new will draw its enrichment from the old,
And you never become a functionary.

⁷ John O'Donohue, "For a Leader," *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*. New York: Doubleday, 2008: 151-152.

May you know the wisdom of deep listening,
 The healing of wholesome words,
 The encouragement of the appreciative gaze,
 The decorum of held dignity,
 The springtime edge of the bleak question

May you have a mind that loves frontiers
 So that you can evoke the bright fields
 That lie beyond the view of the regular eye.

May you have good friends
 to mirror your blind spots.

May leadership be for you
 A true adventure of growth.

ABSTRACT

The understanding of leadership and or experience of leaders have permanently changed, and the key questions for today's no longer issues of task and structure but are questions of spirit. The models of leadership are connecting with mission hence the roots ministry are not in the acquisition of skills, but in a changed attitude toward others, a conversion, and a new way of looking at the world. In this perspective is presented a theology of leadership: tree theological paradigm shifts, Trinitarian Mission and baptismal discipleship.

Keywords: theology of leadership; mission; spirituality; dialogue; authority

Słowa kluczowe: teologia przywództwa; misja; duchowość; dialog; autorytet

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STEPHEN BEVANS SVD, is a priest of the Society of the Divine Word. Ordained in 1971, he served from 1972 until 1981 as a missionary to the Philippines and is currently the Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, where he has taught since 1986. Fr. Bevans has lectured all over the world, including the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Germany and Italy, and in many places in the United States as well. He is the author of *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis, 1992), *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Orbis, 2009), and, with Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context* (Orbis, 2004) and *Prophetic Dialogue* (Orbis, 2011). He has served as president of the American Society of Missiology (2006) and on the board of directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America (2007-2009).