

movement were to come into being, it would be necessary, while criticizing it, to recognize that it could not be equated with the white racist organizations in this country. The violence of the oppressed must never be equated with the violence of the oppressor. We must look to the situation. The racism of the Black Muslims in the States who divided humanity into white devils and black humans gave birth to a black power movement which seeks to create a new society of white and black in America from which racialism, as all forms of oppression, is absent. Welensky's platitudinous talk about 'partnership', by fogging the issue, led directly to the white racist régime at present in power in Rhodesia.

It is still possible that race conflict will not become an important political problem in Britain, though it would seem that this is unlikely if men of good will continue to indulge in exercises in papering over the blacks. But if it does become a political problem of the same magnitude as that in the United States and a significant Black Power movement grows up as a result, then those striving for reconciliation between races at the present must be prepared to recognize that movement as a necessary part of the struggle for a better society, as a necessary prelude to real equality of races. For at least three hundred years the white races have been at the top end of the see-saw in our world and the blacks have been at the bottom. A violent move to bring the blacks upward may be necessary before equilibrium can be obtained. It is in this perspective that B.P.A. and other signs of the times must be viewed.

The Natural Selection of Hierarchies

by David Hay

With all its attendant weaknesses, the current popularity of drawing parallels between the findings of animal ethologists and human behaviour may well prove to be a fruitful aid to our understanding of the human condition. I would like to take one rather commonplace example: It frequently happens in ethology laboratories and poultry farms that a group of hens meet each other in a fairly confined space for the first time. In the case of grown birds which are strangers, a series of single combats is engaged in, with each bird pairing off with every other in a way which to the casual glance appears random. Actually, what is developing is a 'peck-order' in which the leader of the flock can peck any other hen without herself being pecked, the second hen can peck all but the top hen, and the rest are arranged in a descending hierarchy ending with a hen which

is pecked by all, but pecks no one. The amount of aggressiveness shown in the contests varies with different individuals, but once the peck order has been determined, pecking starts to decrease, as individuals recognize their superiors, and eventually simply raising or lowering the head can be sufficient to register dominance or submission respectively.

This type of hierarchy is not confined to hens. In fact it is so common amongst different species of animals¹ that biologists are less inclined to lament the lack of democracy in those species, than to ask Darwin's question: 'What are the advantages which have caused this type of social arrangement to evolve?' Among the commonly accepted answers is that hierarchies have survival value in that they tend to ensure peace within the group, and hence because of their stability they cut down energy loss and physical damage due to perpetual rivalry for the various necessities of life. Also it is usual for males who are dominant to be most prominent in mating and producing offspring, thus strengthening the likelihood that future generations will prove successful.

Human hierarchies

In man, on the other hand, there is no sign of a resolution to the debate on the question of the extent to which a hierarchy is desirable in the conduct of affairs. Whatever the outcome of that particular discussion, the point to be made in the present context is that arguments do exist in favour of an hierarchical organization amongst human beings. Indeed, Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy with its pyramidal structure and vertical lines of communication claims its justification for a reason analogous to that in the avian peck order, that it maximizes efficiency. The weaknesses of this classical type of organization are well known, and some of them will be referred to later, but this does not disqualify hierarchy as such. In the Church, government would seem of necessity to have an aristocratic component in the sense that it does have hierarchic superiors in the shape of the bishops whose powers are handed down by the laying on of hands at the consecration. At any rate, at this particular moment in the history of the Church's self-understanding it seems futile to complain of it.

However, this does not prevent one from examining critically the way in which the hierarchy is constituted. The suggestion I wish to make is that particular types of social structure reflect back on their constituent populations in such a way that they bias the leadership selection procedure. What could almost be termed a Darwinian type of selection pressure occurs, which tends to funnel a particular type of person into a position of power. To illustrate this hypothesis it will be useful to examine the features of a classical hierarchy

¹See, for example, V. C. Wynne Edwards, *Animal Dispersion in Relation to Social Behaviour*. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1962.

which might bias the process. In fact there appear to be two complementary influences at work:

(a) The hierarchy is attractive to people of authoritarian personality. Among the characteristics of such people are a submissive, uncritical attitude toward chosen authorities, a tendency to condemn, reject and punish people who violate their values and a preoccupation with the leader/follower dimension.¹ Since members of a classical hierarchy are expected to behave with unquestioning obedience to their superiors and at the same time are required to enforce the code of behaviour on those below, it follows that the ambitions of some who are enamoured of the letter rather than the spirit of the law may be enkindled by the prospect of a place in the structure.

(b) There is a tendency for those in charge to appoint authoritarians to positions of power. If the field from which the choice is to be made does not contain someone of outstanding talent who, as it were, selects himself, there must be a temptation to choose someone who is exemplary in his willing obedience to orders, and who is prepared to enforce those orders automatically. It is too easy to blame a person in authority for working in this way. He has to think of the smooth running of the institutional machine, and in an organization where instructions emanate from above it is essential that the message be carried accurately down to the lower orders.

Nevertheless, the result of this twin selection process must be to increase the likelihood that the hierarchy will include members who are somewhat aloof, autocratic and either uninterested in, or frightened by, suggestions of change from below. As I have mentioned elsewhere, there is evidence recurring from time to time in its history that people of authoritarian personality have played a leading role in the Church.² That so many saintly or scholarly men have also graced the hierarchy is powerful evidence of the selfless devotion of those who appointed them, in spite of the pressures.

Stability and Change

In a situation of social and cultural stability, a rigid hierarchy would appear to be no bad thing, and indeed to have considerable survival value. Where change is invisibly slow the members of the hierarchy provide detailed and helpful instructions on how one is to behave. Nor is a tendency to dogmatism³ particularly harmful, since all are agreed on the major outlines for the conduct of society. We have direct evidence from the work of Burns and Stalker⁴ of the advantages of a classical organization in industries which produce

¹See T. W. Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality*. Harper, New York, 1950, and cf. my previous articles, 'Authority and Democracy', *New Blackfriars*, March and April, 1969.

²*New Blackfriars*, April, 1969.

³For an up-to-date review of Dogmatism see Ralph B. Vacchiano *et al.*, 'The Open and Closed Mind: A Review of Dogmatism', *Psychol. Bull.* 71 (4), 261-273, 1969.

⁴Burns & Stalker, *The Management Of Innovation*, London, Tavistock, 1960.

an unchanging article as the result of a series of simple processes. Hence, drawing analogies, if one sees the Church as purveying an unchanging message by a set of time-hallowed missionary devices, it may be both irrelevant and destructive to propose any kind of modification to the hierarchy or to the way in which its members are appointed.

But of course here one must juxtapose what is now a well-worn cliché, the speed of social change. It is not always realized just how rapidly or at how profound a level this is occurring. For example, the current transformation in school science teaching consists of a change of orientation from the conveying of factual information to one of inculcating mental flexibility, the talent for handling novelty with confidence and a grasp of rather abstract principles. The reason is simply that many of the major guiding concepts for science in thirty years time have in all probability not yet been discovered. Hence, children in school now are being given explanations of universal phenomena which will almost certainly be proved wrong or inadequate by the time they are in the prime of their working lives. In the physical sciences this will no doubt have an effect on our self-understanding, but even more so will it be the case for the biological and social sciences. Alterations in economic systems, ways of arranging people in dwellings, and forms of working conditions must all affect the way people understand their relationship to their environment.

After Vatican II it hardly seems feasible that the Church can remain aloof from such changes. In its mission to the world it can only be successful if it monitors social change with understanding and even with a certain amount of sympathy. This means, in turn, that whilst its major function never changes, in detail it is constantly adapting and reorganizing to meet the altered circumstances of mankind. Two illustrations of the requirement for flexibility come to mind. The first concerns the Church in East Africa. In a recent article¹ Adrian Hastings remarks that adaptation to fit the intrinsic needs of that society would cut across the normal Western categories. Thus, contemporary requirements would include a richly ritualistic liturgy on the one hand, and yet would be quite revolutionary in requiring the ordination of men of very little formal education. What is to be feared, Fr Hastings argues, is a conservative reluctance to change anything to fit with local conditions, which might be described as the colonialist approach, and on the other hand the piece-meal adoption of any reforms adopted in Western Europe and North America, which is simply neo-colonialist. The second illustration relates to the persistent arguments in the correspondence columns of the Catholic press over the use of the vernacular/Latin Mass. As someone heartily in favour of the liturgical reforms of the last few years, I tend to expect that letters from those who support

¹Adrian Hastings, 'The Catholic Church in East Africa', *Convergence* 4: 16-18, 1969.

the Latin form will have a somewhat dogmatic tone, and to be sent in by the elderly, whilst those in favour of the vernacular will be flexible and youthful. Neither prediction is always borne out, and in fact one sees on the same day a letter from a seventeen-year-old boy describing the English Mass as 'disturbingly irrelevant' and one from an octogenarian expressing thanks that he had lived to see the day. I am worried by letters which criticize members of the Latin Mass Society on the grounds that they are not being docile to a Vatican ruling. Two points come to mind here, firstly that for people from a certain type of background it is not unreasonable to believe that a Tridentine Mass does help them to love God and neighbour rather more than the modern vernacular, and secondly that a more flexible approach by the Church authorities to change would reduce the chance of people becoming heated over the existence of different styles of approach to God within the One Church.

To summarize, the supersession of dogmatism by a greater flexibility cuts across our preconceived conservative/progressive boundaries. But dogmatism is insidiously tenacious, and under the cover of desirable change may mean only moving from an old rigidity to a new. Therefore, granted the need to change to greater flexibility and the risk of recurring dogmatism, it is necessary to return to the question of appointing leaders who are prepared to accept that in its dialogue with the world, the Church must constantly be ready to adapt. How can we cut down the pressure towards selection of authoritarians, whilst not affecting the doctrine of apostolic succession or even the hierarchial principle, and thus aid the Church to approach more nearly its true objectives? The fundamental step, it seems to me, is to accept the proposal for the election of bishops by the faithful. This would alter the selection pressure in a number of health-giving ways:

(a) In the first place, the attractiveness of the hierarchy to the classical authoritarian is somewhat reduced. It is true that his consecration is handed down from above, and yet since he has been elected by the People of God, it is clear that he is their servant, because it is by their will that he steps forward to receive episcopal power.

(b) The natural tendency for a person in authority to appoint someone more concerned with instant obedience to instructions rather than their humane interpretation, is by-passed.

(c) It presupposes the choice of a man who the people know and trust. Hence, respect can more easily be given not simply to the 'office' but to the human being who holds that office and thus a potential source of dissonance is closed.

(d) It increases the chance that the person appointed is in touch with real events and changes, since all are involved in his selection and thus he is not chosen by a (statistically) biased sample of the population, and people of all opinions have a share in the process.

A common objection to an election procedure of this sort is that the 'electors' are limited in their choice by the people they know. Another point is that because of their subordinate position in the hierarchy they are not able to judge the episcopal talents of the candidates as well as can high-ranking officials who have a much better overview of the field. To meet these complaints, a consultation procedure could be instituted,¹ whereby a candidate must be acceptable at three levels, diocesan, national and papal, with the necessity that the person finally chosen be acceptable to all three. Such a system would require the full development of diocesan and national pastoral councils if the democracy is to be meaningful at more than the symbolic level, and although progress in this direction is slow, it seems to be inevitable, given the statements made by the Vatican Council, at the recent synod, and the lead of certain members of the hierarchy.

A fundamental objection

One very important objection to all that has been suggested above must now be examined. In a rapidly changing society, or one which in the opinion of many is in the process of disintegration, is not the most important single function of the Church to maintain a rock-like and unchanging orthodoxy in the face of the hurricane? And if this is so, is not a move in the democratic direction a disaster, since it is little more than giving way to the forces which are causing the destruction?

Accepting, without the necessary debate, that a change is occurring in society which will cause many old ideas, relationships and ways of thinking to pass away, a response seems possible at two levels. Firstly it must surely be when old ways and certainties are disappearing, that the mission of the Church can expand, no longer hampered by the fact that it is viewed through the distorting mirror of an apparently permanent but highly imperfect economic and social system. What chance has the gospel of love in an acquisitive society, compared with its possibility among those who can no longer stomach the system? However, since opposition to change often means not only theological orthodoxy but maintenance of the temporal *status quo*, it is inevitable that the expanding possibilities of a missionary initiative will tend to be stifled through the Church being implicated in many of those structures which men of good will are anxiously attempting to remove.

Secondly, developing my last point, a rigid hierarchy containing many authoritarians is, if anything, more likely to produce disintegration. The classical authoritarian tends to interpret change as a threat, and the more rapid the change the greater the threat. Hence he clings more tenaciously than ever to his orthodoxy, but, as the

¹I first heard this suggestion proposed by Canon François Houtart of Louvain University.

work of Adorno and his successors shows, this is conceived of in rather narrow legalistic and materialistic ways. Particular customs, clothing, modes of address, preferences for a liturgical language, which arose in the first place because of their congruence with surrounding culture tend to be confused with the eternal verities. To an outsider, that is, the person to whom the Church's mission is directed, the spectacle of a violent struggle over what is at best peripheral and at worst meaningless must act as a powerful deterrent to his acceptance of the essential Christian message.

Finally, one must ask what it is that distinguishes fundamentally between the highly authoritarian individual and his opposite. Roger Brown's¹ summing up seems highly perceptive. He suggests that the major factor is the type of information which is likely to cause a change of mind. For the authoritarian, what matters is the opinion of the chosen authority figure, so that if this figure does an about-turn, his follower will do likewise. It is important and salutary to note, in the context of Rokeach's work,² that this process is probably independent of political opinion and is not necessarily a function of right-wing extremism as might be assumed by a reading of Adorno alone. Thus, if Stalin signs a pact with Hitler, authoritarian communists will accept it with as much equanimity as the later denunciation of Stalin by a newer authority figure. Even at the middle of the political spectrum one might expect to find the authoritarian Liberal who uses the chance remarks of Jeremy Thorpe as the touchstone for his orthodoxy.

On the other hand, the non-authoritarian will not be over-influenced by the endorsement of an opinion by the 'authorities'. Instead he will be more concerned about whether a change of attitude will have the function of giving support to his values. It is important to note that the difference between the two types of individual does not lie along a scale of rationality, but nevertheless in the context of the remarks above, it does seem more likely that the central values enshrined by the Church are in safer hands when she is guided by a hierarchy of flexible, liberal and open men.

¹Roger Brown, *Social Psychology*. London, Collier-Macmillan, 1965.

²Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind*. New York, Basic Books, 1960.

Church: Brotherhood and Eschatology

by Fergus Kerr, O.P.

The purpose of this paper* is to explore the idea that there has been some change in our understanding of the nature of the Church in the last ten years or so. I suggest that we are being encouraged to think

*The substance of a lecture at Blackfriars, Oxford, 20th January, 1970.