

Where none admire, 'tis useless to excel;
Where none are beaux, 'tis vain to be a belle

George Lyttleton, Soliloquy of a Beauty (Penguin DQ)

There is always an audience for a new religion, and always will be.

Dakin, E.F. (1929) *Mrs Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind*. New York: Charles Scribner. P. 110.

A prophet must have followers. Without them, he is, at best, an eccentric holy man, at worst, a lunatic. In this section, I shall look at the followers from three points of view. First, in terms of job description. Second, in terms of what we see in the followers of existing cults. And third, in terms of the requirements for the genetics of group splitting.

The job description of the prophet is to have a primary mazeway resynthesis (Wallace, 1995; Stevens and Price, 2000), and to communicate the results of this resynthesis (the new mazeway) to members of his group. That is, the prophet has a change of belief system and he preaches it. It is this change of belief system which leads to group fission. The followers must also have a change of belief system, and their new belief system must come from the prophet. In other words, they must be converted to the prophet's mazeway. The prophet conjures his new belief system out of the elements of his unconscious mind, but this cannot occur in the followers, because the new group must have a shared belief system, and there is no room for innovation except in the mind of the prophet. The new belief system is transferred from the mind of the prophet to the minds of the followers. Wallace called this secondary mazeway resynthesis, and he pointed out that it is less lasting than the new mazeway of the prophet. The new mazeway of the follower coexists with the old mazeway, which is temporarily in eclipse; the two mazeways exist in a state of mutual dissociation, and there is always the possibility of a switch back; whereas in the case of the prophet the new mazeway is permanent. This secondary mazeway resynthesis in the follower is similar to religious conversion.

The second requirement of the follower is submission. It is usually a joyful submission, like submitting to a God. Conversion without submission is not enough. Likewise, submission without conversion is not enough.

Features of the charismatic audience

Max Weber used the term charisma to define a relationship between a teacher who produces new material and an audience who ascribes to that teaching a divine or at least supernatural origin. Thus we can properly speak not only of a charismatic leader, but also of a charismatic audience.

Russell Gardner included an "audience psalic" as one of the basic plans we have in our genome to organise social relationships (Gardner, 1988). Indeed it must be one of the universal traits of man to enjoy sitting in a semicircle, as it were, and listening to a speaker. We start it gathered around our mother's knee, and continue it in the classroom listening to the teacher, and then in the council chamber, the theatre, around the camp fire, and so forth. Sometimes it is the role of the audience just to pay attention and listen, sometimes it is required to express a judgement; but, if so, it is a very simple judgement, expressed by the alternatives of booing or clapping, or voting for one candidate rather than another.

If we think of church congregations, they differ along a dimension for which the term charismatic is commonly used. In the UK, there are conventional congregations whose role is to listen, and to stand or kneel as they are told, to sing or to repeat prayers. This is the conventional C of E congregation. Then we have an evangelical or charismatic movement within the Church of England which has different properties, and seems more likely to be receptive to the revelations of a prophet. This manner of relating on the part of the audience might be called the "charismatic audience psalic". Taking the manifestations of such congregations together with the job description of the cult follower, we can list the following characteristics as appropriate to this basic plan:

1. The capacity for religious conversion.
2. The willingness to submit to a higher power.
3. An expectation of divine revelation from another person.
4. A desire for participation and personal involvement in the proceedings.
5. A schizotypal disposition to believe in the paranormal, to experience numinous states, to see visions and hear voices, and to converse about "religious" matters which are not directly testable and which sometimes require the suspension of the laws of physics.
6. Proneness to enter dissociative states such as speaking in tongues, being possessed by spirits, automatic writing, fainting and other alterations of consciousness, and to practice and be the subject of spiritual healing.
7. The capacity to experience "darshan" (a sense of extreme reward from contact with a charismatic leader).
8. A willingness to make a sudden major commitment, such as to go forward at a revival meeting, or to obey a command of the general form "Leave all that you have and follow me!"

These are the behaviour patterns and dispositions which we can see in charismatic audiences, and which seem likely to characterise the followers of a successful prophet and lead to group splitting. Actual studies of cult followers are difficult, because the subjects operate in a different belief system and are not likely to see the point of research. The work of Goodman et al. (1974) and Peters et al. (1999) illustrate different approaches to a challenging task. See also the discussion of cult followers in pages 104-113 of "Prophets, Cults and

Madness" (Stevens & Price, 2000).

Is the capacity to manifest the charismatic audience psalic a trait restricted to a proportion of mankind, or is it a state into which anyone can switch in the appropriate circumstances? If some people are more prone to such states than others, we can speak of the "charismatic audience phenotype" which is a form of dispersal phenotype, complementary to the dispersal phenotype which is manifest in the prophet.

What are the requirements of the charismatic audience phenotype from the population genetics point of view?

The charismatic audience genotype

If there is a genetic tendency to be part of a charismatic audience, it must be quite sensitive to environmental input in the creation of the charismatic audience phenotype. In other words, there is probably a lot of phenotypic plasticity. If the group is not ready for splitting, the dispersal phenotypes need to be suppressed, and mechanisms for group cohesion to be maximised. The dispersal phenotype needs to be activated when the group is too large, and is beset by internal strife and dissatisfaction; this is the stage at which the potential prophet has his creative illness leading to primary mazeway resynthesis, and when the charismatic audience psalic is activated to prepare for the secondary mazeway resynthesis.

Also, the frequency should not be too high. The benefits of group splitting are maximised if the daughter group is small. Then the genes carried by the dispersing individuals can benefit maximally from any adaptive radiation that the dispersal achieves. Also, group selection is enhanced if the departing group is small, so that the "founder effect" is maximised, and genetic variation between groups is thus enhanced. The optimum number of followers for a prophet would be the smallest number compatible with group survival. In fact, the ratio between charismatic audience genotype and conventional audience genotype was probably kept constant by negative frequency dependent selection, in that the charismatic audience became more fit, the rarer it got.

Another possibility is a negative correlation between the charismatic audience phenotype and the free rider phenotype. One of the problems of groups is to control the proportion of free riders who pursue selfish interests at the expense of group interests. Free riders are people who do not internalise the standards of the group and do not get indoctrinated into its beliefs, so that they have no automatic, built-in tendency to sacrifice themselves for the group. It may be that this resistance to indoctrination prevents the free-rider from being reindoctrinated by a prophet and from undergoing the secondary mazeway resynthesis which is necessary in the prophet's followers. If this were the case, the process of joining the charismatic audience would filter out the free riders and give the small daughter group a full complement of altruistic members.

The function of schizotypy

I have suggested two dispersal phenotypes, one for the prophet and another for his followers. Where does schizotypy fit in? Schizotypy is "the manifestation of the genetic tendency to schizophrenia in non-schizophrenic individuals; characterised by magical thinking, unusual perceptions, and belief in paranormal phenomena" (Stevens and Price, 2000, glossary). According to this definition, schizotypy should characterise the potential prophet, but not potential or actual followers. And yet reports of followers are full of schizotypic features, and this has been confirmed by formal surveys (Peters et al., 1999). Have the followers "caught" the schizotypy from the prophet as part of his teaching, or was it there all along? These are matters for empirical study, but at this stage it would seem that we require to alter our model somewhat, as follows:

1. Schizotypy is characteristic of dispersal phenotypes, both that of the prophet and that of the follower.
2. In addition, the prophet has the capacity for primary mazeway resynthesis, which he shares with the schizophrenic patient.
3. In addition, the follower has the capacity for secondary mazeway resynthesis, which he or she shares with the patient prone to dissociative disorders (suggestibility, hypnotisability, dissociation).

The capacity for dissociation

The phenomena of hypnosis and the existence of "hysterical" symptoms have been a bit of a mystery from the evolutionary point of view, and here we have been able to suggest one possible adaptive function: that they are manifestations of the capacity for secondary mazeway resynthesis. In view of the group forces promoting conformity, the ability of people to be "converted" to an alien belief system is surprising, and it should be no cause for wonder that a complex modality has evolved to enable the prophet to acquire followers.

Recently it has been noted that children who are physically and sexually abused tend to dissociate during the abuse, and that this experience makes them prone to dissociative disorders in later life. This would fit in with the phenotypic plasticity of the charismatic audience phenotype, which needs to be activated when the group has overcome its neighbours and when aggression is being directed to fellow group members. The abuse of children would be one means of ensuring potential followers when a breakaway prophet starts preaching his message.

Another application of our model relates to outbreaks of epidemic hysteria, such as occurred with the Witches of Salem and the Phantom Anaesthetist of Mattoon. These may represent the activation of the charismatic audience psalic in a group of people, but without the guidance provided by a prophet, so that the dissociative phenomena occur out of context. We would predict that the individuals affected in these outbreaks are high on both of the components of the charismatic audience psalic: schizotypy and capacity for dissociation.

Summary

An examination of the charismatic audience psalic has led us to modify our model relating schizotypy to cult formation. Rather than being solely a characteristic of the potential prophet, it would now seem better conceptualised as being a component of the dispersal

phenotypes as they occur in both prophets and followers. Having schizotypy in common, prophets and followers differ in the mechanism they have for mazeway resynthesis. The prophet has a capacity for primary mazeway resynthesis which he shares with the psychotic patient who experiences autochthonous delusions. The follower has a capacity for secondary mazeway resynthesis which he or she shares with the patient prone to dissociative disorders.

This co-evolved mechanism for change of belief system in both prophet and follower is evidence for the importance of group splitting during the course of human evolution.

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