

# THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

A WRITING BY

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An excerpt from an address by Charles Malik before the faculty and students of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas, Austin, Texas, in the evening of Tuesday, April 22, 1975. Themes from this address were later repeated before several audiences in Austin and Houston, including the joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Legislature of the state of Texas.

## 4 | The Problem of Leadership

I respect all men, but it is fair to say, there are no great leaders in the world today. In fact, greatness itself is laughed to scorn. You should not be great today—you should sink whatever greatness you might have into what is termed “collective leadership.”

The commanding voice is missing. The voice which speaks little, but which when it speaks, speaks with compelling moral authority, this kind of voice is not congenial to this age. The age flattens and levels down every distinction into drab uniformity. Respect for the high, the noble, the great, the rare, the specimen that appears once every 100 or every 1000 years is gone. Respect at all is gone. If you ask whom and what people do respect, the answer is literally nobody and nothing. This is simply an unrespecting age--it is the age of utter mediocrity. To become a leader today, even a mediocre leader, is a most uphill struggle. You are constantly and in every way and from every side pulled down. One wonders who of those living today will be remembered a thousand years from now--the way we remember today, and with such respect, Plato and Aristotle and Christ and Paul and Augustine and Aquinas.

If you believe in prayer, then pray that God send great leaders--especially great leaders of the spirit.

A great leader suffers in a hundred different ways, and keeps his suffering to himself.

A great leader survives both his suffering and the fact that nobody knows anything about it.

A great leader loves being alone with God.

A great leader communes with the deepest the ages have known.

A great leader knows there is a higher and there is a lower, and he always seeks the

higher and indeed the highest.

A great leader fights against the spiritual forces of darkness, both in his own soul and in the world.

A great leader is very polite, but he never tones down the truth just to please others.

A great leader hitches his wagon to the remote, the unattainable, the stars.

A great leader does not worship quantity, multiplicity, perpetual motion--he stubbornly sticks to the one or at most two ultimate truths that there are.

A great leader is very simple, but the moral force of his conviction shines through every tone of his voice and every gesture of his hand.

A great leader lets the oneness of his interest burst forth with endless creativity.

A great leader is absolutely fearless--because he fears only God.

A great leader loves, not sentimentally, not by making an effort, but as the effortless overflow of God's love for him.

A great leader identifies himself with and is not ashamed of the deepest in his own tradition.

A great leader is decisive, yet with the utmost tentativeness and tenderness.

A great leader, under God, does not care if he is crucified--there is something he knows and sees in the distance infinitely more important than to avoid crucifixion.

A great leader calls forth the most secret and the most sacred impulses of those whom he leads.

A great leader leads those who are not even aware that they follow him, but only rejoice in the fact that he leads them.

A great leader is at the forefront of danger, be it physical or moral danger, when danger strikes.

A great leader heals.

And so I say, if you believe in prayer, then pray that God send great leaders, for that is the world's greatest need.