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2012 Ellen White Issues Symposium: "Ellen G. White on Leadership and Power"

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Memory, Meaning & Faith

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2012 Ellen White Issues Symposium: "Ellen G. White on Leadership and Power"

Presentation

Stanley E. Patterson* presented his research on the topic "Ellen G. White on Leadership and Power". The following exposition summarizes his presentation, giving the main points of his findings.

[The presentation was followed by a response. All the presenters of the Ellen White Issues Symposium have the time to revise their papers on the basis of the formal responses to each paper given at the symposium before it will be published in the *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium Journal* in March next year, 2013.]

Purpose

Stan Patterson expressed his intention to offer a sense of structure for several counsels from Ellen White on leadership, authority and power. To create this structure he used the Model of Power and Leadership as presented by Janet Hagberg in *Real Power* and, analyzing various statements by E. G. White, correlated them with Hagberg's model.

Stage One: Force as an Expression of Personal Power

According to Hagberg, leaders of stage one use some kind of force and/or dominance to lead people. By using coercive structures available to them, stage one leaders manage and guide with control authority. In certain limits control is healthy and can benefit the leader and the ones being led (see voluntary contracts with duties, commitments and rights, for example). In Christian contexts and regarding Christian values, however, fear as such should not be part of leading processes, since "perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18).

Stage Two: Rules as an Expression of Personal Power

Where leaders build their authority foremost on and by rules and policies, the relational aspect of leading is diminished or absent and can result in dealing with people as with objectified "employees", not as full individuals. Where organizations and their guidelines become more complex, the number of stage two leaders increase.

The emergence of the Stage Two leaders will likely increase as our organizations and the policies that guide them become more complex. The loss is experienced most keenly in objectifying of the individual who depends upon the leader for guidance and development. The worker or member will be treated as an "employee" without the benefit of a sense of having meaning and being as a person in the eyes of the leader. Though policy and rules are intended as a means of creating parity for the community, the opportunity for unethical disparity in the enforcement of the rules is a temptation for this leader as the corrupting influence of such power matures.

In regards to Ellen White's stand regarding rules in leadership Patterson quoted the following statement by White: "No man standing in his own strength is ever to be mind and judgment for another man whom the Lord is using in His work. No one is to lay down man-made rules and regulations to govern arbitrarily his fellow laborers who have a living experience in the truth." Referring to man made rules, which have no basis in biblical teachings and standards, White argues for a certain freedom of every believer, or in Patterson's words, "to be free of the mental control of another".

Stage Three: Charisma and Persuasion as an Expression of Personal Power

Not yet in the category of *true leadership*, at this stage the leader is marked by being very goal-focused (more clients, more income, higher market share, etc.) and geared to success strategies. Thus the foci of success are measures of growth, progression, productivity. Being probably the most encountered type of leader in business and, for several last decades also in church organization, this is a very familiar profile for society and churches. Setting goals, trying to convince the audience by enthusiastic, educated speeches, and conducting reward- and recognition-occasions can be encountered in most church meetings. In the SDA context we are familiar, according to Patterson, with quantitative evaluation of a pastor's work: baptism goals, targeted amounts for ingathering campaigns, reward events where the successful employees (pastors and other religious professionals) were praised and the less successful, well, shamed.

The presenter pointed out that the main issue with this form of personal power is the question regarding those who are led. If a primary person, a talented and charismatic leader, is doing most or everything, and very well so, then how are they, the members, enabled to lead? Or may the focus rest too much on the one who does everything in a great, compelling way?

Before giving Ellen White's stand on this leader profile, Patterson explained the historical administrative background of the leadership statements by White. Thus in most of her lifetime the local churches were not pastor- but member-led, because pastors were not assigned permanently to churches/districts as is the case today. That was coming more and more by the second quarter of the 20th century. She actually fought against that transition. Therefore it has to be kept in mind that her leadership-statements are rather directed to denominational leaders and pastors in general than to pastors who serve primarily, like today, local congregations. When we want to apply her counsels to the local level, then, we have to look on the principle expressed in her statements, rather than making a one-to-one, direct application.

Patterson quoted Ellen White who said:

"In counseling for the advancement of the work, no one man is to be a controlling power, a voice for the whole. Proposed methods and plans are to be carefully considered, so that all the brethren may weigh their relative merits and decide which should be followed."

"Men who follow the leading of another, and are willing that another should think for them, are unfit to be entrusted with responsibility. Our leading men are remiss in this matter. God has not given to special ones all the brain power there is in the world. Men in responsible positions should credit others with some sense, with some ability of judgment and foresight and look upon them as capable of doing the work committed to their hands."

The presenter concluded his explanation of this stage with the words: "Ellen White presses for a distributed model that encourages inclusion on a radical scale. Anything that lessens the involvement of the body or replaces a relational function of the body in the pursuit of mission success should be scrutinized carefully to determine whether it should be implemented.

Bottom line, we need to move beyond the charismatic and rediscover the power of the body. It is about the people - all of them."

Stage Four: Integrity as an Expression of Personal Power

According to Patterson, Hagberg emphasizes that integrity is a form of being, including sound moral principles, sincerity, honesty. Thus true leadership is especially coined by what and who the leader is, not so much which position he or she holds.

Ellen White stated that "the position does not make the man. It is the integrity of character, the spirit of Christ, that makes him thankful, unselfish, without partiality and without hypocrisy—it is this that is of value with God."

Stage Five: Empowering Others as an Expression of Personal Power

Leaders who empower others in that they lead by inspiring, encouraging, loving, and uplifting others, are leaders of Hagberg's fifth stage. These, so Patterson, acknowledge the developmental needs of those being led and do not simply take on too much work in order to contribute to the ease of the followers/co-workers/etc. Patterson quoted the following words by White: "Leading men should place responsibilities upon others, and allow them to plan and devise and execute, so that they may obtain an experience. Give them a word of counsel when necessary, but do not take away the work because you think the brethren are making mistakes. May God pity the cause when one man's mind and one man's plan is followed without question. God would not be honored should such a state of things exist. All our workers must have room to exercise their own judgment and discretion. God has given men talents, which He means that they should use. He has given them minds, and He means that they should become thinkers, and do their own thinking and planning, rather than depend upon others to think for them"

## Stage Six: Wisdom as an Expression of Personal Power

Stage six is considered as the highest form of leadership in Hagberg's model, in that it focuses on who the leader is and not so much on what he/she does by rules, force, persuasion, etc. This is considered the most mature form of leadership. And, so Patterson, the most revealing: how much was the Holy Spirit a part of the growth-process of that leading person? Stage six leaders are vision driven and thus "they can ask questions that seem to be on a higher or broader level or that call into question some underlying assumptions" (Hagberg).

This resonates with words by Ellen White in which she points to wisdom as essential for true leadership: "The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom."

Conclusion

Patterson found Ellen White counseling toward the model of stage six: the leader guiding through and by wisdom. "There is need now of men who are firm and fearless in declaring the whole counsel of God; men who will not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober." (E. G. White) In their fearlessness those leaders will not think too highly of their own wisdom, though: "God would have the greatest cherish that humility that will lead him to be the servant of all, if duty thus orders it." (E. G. White) The Six's standard of character and behavior (Hagberg) assume that "The ethics of the gospel acknowledge no standard but the perfection of the divine character." (E. G. White)

Concluding his presentation by a short summary of each stage, Patterson condensed the advantages of the stage six as a desirable leadership model. "The Stage Six leader is the model of spiritual maturity. Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah, the Apostles, and the courageous and faithful wisdom leaders of all ages stand as models for us today. But it is Jesus who most perfectly demonstrates the Stage Six spiritual leader that sets the bar for all who aspire to be leaders who honor the calling and name of God."

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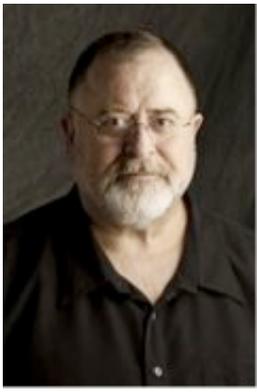
* <u>Stanley E. Patterson</u>, Ph.D., is chair of the Christian Ministries Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and Director of Christian Leadership Center of Andrews University. Patterson served as a pastor for 17 years in Texas, Wyoming, Colorado, and Georgia, ministerial director in the Greater New York Conference for two years, and for 12 years in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference as ministerial director and vice-president for pastoral ministries and evangelism.

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