Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda (Rev. & Expanded Ed.) [review] / Blackaby, Henry T and Richard Blackaby

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BOOK REVIEW   **STANLEY E. PATTERSON**

The final two dimensions—Scripture and theology, and ministry of the Word—were collectively the most outstanding contribution of this book. The counsels from these ancient sources bear a powerful testimony to the centrality of the Word in the life and leadership of the pastor. The effective pastor must be and remain a committed student of the Word and follow a discipline of theological study as a condition of being entrusted with the authority of spiritual leadership. Beeley again quotes Gregory the Great:

> No one presumes to teach an art that one hasn't mastered through study. How foolish would it be therefore, for an inexperienced person to assume pastoral authority when the cure of souls is the very art of arts? . . . And yet, how often do people who are completely ignorant of spiritual precepts show no fear in proclaiming themselves physicians of the heart, when anyone who is ignorant of the power of medicine would be embarrassed to be a physician of the body? (p. 77)

For the pastoral leader, the application and distribution of the Word through teaching and preaching is, according to Nanzianzus, "'the first of all our concerns'" (p. 105). Integrity in the use of Scripture and professionalism in its presentation are matters of highest importance.

My primary criticism of this book would fall in the area of sensitivity to the broad readership it will likely attract. Use of the more generic term of "pastor" rather than "priest" would allow a more inclusive understanding and application of the content Beeley is recommending.

The secondary criticism relates to the stated purpose which did not seem to have been adequately fulfilled. The narrow use of non-inclusive ecclesial language and little mention made of how this purpose

would be realized led to this conclusion.

Lastly, the book totally sidesteps the historical context marked by the decay of leadership behaviors that led to the clergy dominant church during the period of the Church Fathers.

I would recommend *Leading God's People* as helpful reading for church leaders who would better understand the heritage of an age long past wherein faithful men served as bishops and pastors and who led the church during difficult times of transition. Reading and benefitting from Beeley's work will require an understanding of the unique characteristics of the Anglican tradition from which he writes, but spiritual leaders should know that there is wisdom to be gleaned from this book, as exemplified by my favorite quotation from the book: "No exhortation can encourage the laity, no reproof can correct their sins if the person who is supposed to be a protector of souls becomes the executor of earthly affairs" [Gregory the Great] (p. 103).

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SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: MOVING PEOPLE ON TO GOD'S AGENDA (REV. & EXPANDED ED.)

By Henry T. Blackaby & Richard Blackaby
Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman (2011)
Paperback, 418 pages
Reviewed by STANLEY E. PATTERSON

This "revised and expanded edition" of *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* follows the

original 2001 publication, which has for many become the defining work on leadership within the context of the Christian community. It works from the foundational premise that Christian spiritual leadership begins with a relationship of obedient followership of the God of creation (pp. 38-39). Whatever the specific leadership function or position, the Christian leader leads from a platform of being a steward of the kingdom of God. This subordinate relationship of the leader with God presupposes the subtitle of the book in that the Christian leader serves to motivate, inspire, and coordinate people toward alignment with God's agenda rather than the leader's agenda or even the collective agenda of the faith community: God's agenda is primary.

The theme of God's agenda is supported by a call to obedience (pp. 80-82). This is presented as obedience in the context of a "friend" relationship between the leader and God, as opposed to obedience in the hierarchical chain of command. It is further supported by the description of corporate vision: the vision for the organization is developed in a collective manner but via a spiritual process where the goal is to discover a revelation by God of His vision for the organization. This is unique to the Christian model assembled by the Blackabys in that secular leadership does not stray beyond the boundaries of self and community—with the leader as the source of vision or the leader and community collectively developing and casting the vision. Leadership vision that leans on revelation beyond self and community assumes a personal God who is actively engaged in the process of leading both the individual and the faith community.

The book dedicates 33 pages (pp. 147ff) to the role of character as a pri-mary source of influence in the process of leadership. In addition, a full and compelling chapter (pp. 313ff) is dedicated to the failures of character that contribute to the fall of leaders. Character-related dimensions of leadership that were included—position, power, and personality—were treated as illegitimate influences, while God's hand leading through surrender, integrity, successful track record, preparation, humility, and courage were seen as legitimate influences related to character. It seems unwise to assume the pragmatic posture of a "successful track record" as an indicator of positive character, which interjects a doing element in an otherwise consistent expression of the being aspect of leadership. It nevertheless emphasizes the character of the leader as the primary inspiration and motivation in spiritual leadership.

Surprisingly, a discussion of the role of universal Spirit-gifted competency for all believers is largely absent in this book. Spiritual gifting is a primary function of the Holy Spirit and the bedrock of leadership development in the church. It is the Spirit that gives rise to the adjective that modifies "Leadership" in the title of the book and should be treated as a more prominent element of Christian leadership. In a similar vein, the chapter on character missed the opportunity to tap into the other primary contribution of the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ—fruits of Christian character that take the form of character traits that ensure the relational context in which leadership gifts are practiced by the collective body of Christ.

This updated and revised edition includes new chapters on leading change and leading teams. The book is well-written and edited. Illustrations are updated as are the concepts developed in the original publication. The book successfully and consistent-

ly develops the thesis suggested in its title: spiritual leadership in the Christian context must seek God's agenda for both the leader and those being led. *Spiritual Leadership* is a book that deserves a prominent listing in any bibliography that would intend to guide the Christian leader. Those who wish to contribute to the process of leadership in a manner that honors the Master and the community that is identified by His name will benefit from reading this book.

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WHAT MATTERS NOW: HOW TO WIN IN A WORLD OF RELENTLESS CHANGE, FEROCIOUS COMPETITION, AND UNSTOPPABLE INNOVATION

By Gary Hamel
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (2012)
Hardcover, 304 pages
Reviewed by MATTHEW SHALLENBERGER

A critical concern for Christian leaders today is maintaining relevance in the world around us. This is a challenging task, especially considering the breakneck pace of change in the 21st century. Too often our "new" ideas are outdated before we even get them off of the ground. And in many cases, truly innovative strategies are short-circuited by the bureaucracy in our organizations. Gary Hamel's new book, *What Matters Now,* provides a clarion call to transform the very nature of management and organization so that leaders can move from

surviving to thriving in our ever-changing world. Though Hamel's book is written primarily from a business management perspective, his application of the supporting concepts includes several examples from a church perspective. Christian leaders, managers, and organizations can benefit from this book as well.

Hamel divides his book into five modular sections corresponding to his five principles that matter now more than ever. The first principle is values. Drawing from the 2008 financial crisis, which continues to plague the global economy, Hamel demonstrates how a breakdown of ethics and morals led to a broken system and diminished trust. He cites a Gallup poll that reported only 15% of people willing to describe the ethical values of executives as "high" or "very high" (p. 5). Greed, pride, dishonesty, and other ethical lapses infect even the highest levels of business and financial leadership. Sadly, Christian leaders are not immune. How many prominent evangelical leaders have been brought down by scandal and corruption? Christian leaders would be wise to heed Hamel's call for a renewal of values. Reproach is brought not only on the leader but also on the religious organization and on God when the leader's integrity fails.

The second principle is innovation. Hamel argues that in order for organizations to remain competitive, they need to create a culture of distributed authority and innovation that extends top to bottom throughout the organization.

The third principle is adaptability. The rate of change is so rapid that there is no perfect strategy for keeping pace. Organizations cannot bank on their time-tested models to sustain them. What worked in the past may not work in the future. Honest assess-