

Leadership and the Gift of Submission:

INSIGHTS FROM EARLY ADVENTIST LEADERS

By Gilbert M. Valentine

Emmanuel cared for the lawns, the yard, the car, and the garden. Parveen dusted and swept the floors, did the laundry, and cleaned the windows three days a week. Shireen filled in for him during the other two days. We would always introduce those stalwart church members to our visitors or family members who came to stay at various times as our “home help” or “workers.” One day a neighbor inquired whether he could use my “servant” for a small task. It made me feel very uncomfortable. When Emmanuel asked me to witness his thumbprint signature on a scholarship application form his son had filled out, I noticed that the youngster had listed his dad’s employment as “servant.” Now I felt even more uncomfortable. In my egalitarian culture we did not think of such roles as “servants.” The term carried overtones of hierarchy, class, and demeaning labor and implied the idea of being submissive. And were we not in the late twentieth century and supposedly beyond all that? But this was another country, another culture, and servants were very much part of everyday life on the sub-continent. Because the term was unsettling, we tried to use any employment descriptor other than “servant.”

Perhaps such sensitivities help to account for the discomfort many leaders experience in our twenty-first century world with the concept of servant-leadership. It is such a paradox. Leaders don’t take orders—they give them. How can a person lead if they have to be submissive? And aren’t servants required to be submissive, receiving directions and orders even if disguised or framed as polite requests? Are church leaders such as conference presidents meant to be servant leaders? And should General Conference presidents be submissive? To whom and when?

Although it sounds as if the concept of servant-leadership may seem derived from Scripture, that is not the source of the idea

according to its originating theorist, Robert Greenleaf. Rather, the seed idea for his philosophy of servant-leadership germinated, he recalls, from the tale related in Hermann Hesse's 1956 novel, *Journey to the East*.¹ Hesse explained how a group of travelers on a mythical journey lost its way and fell into disarray after Leo, the unobtrusive servant of the traveling group, disappeared. It dawned on them that in reality their servant had been their leader. If Greenleaf did not derive such an insight from Scripture, however, the idea nevertheless resonates well with biblical themes and finds many illustrations in the sacred text.² Because the concept of servanthood is such a strong motif in Scripture and because it provides an essential theological framework for disciples, it is also an appealing model for the leaders of such disciples.

Servant leadership was not, however, the first model that suggested itself to early Adventist leaders as they began to think about the nature of the leadership task even with their commitment to the Bible. When in the early 1870s Adventist administrators began to search for something to provide guidelines for expected leader and followership behavior, it was the "great man" motif from the story of the Exodus that seemed most applicable. A strong, authoritarian "great leader" style patterned after the manner of Moses seemed the most appropriate for a young movement. George I Butler, two-time General Conference president who occupied the position for a total of 12 years and began under the tutelage of his predecessor in office, James White, formally articulated the great leader idea in a pamphlet in 1873, and the General Conference endorsed it in session that year. Butler's essay attempted to resolve deep leadership tensions that had emerged during the first decade after the church's organization. But rather than settle the controversy, Butler's paper on leadership ignited even more intense debate about the nature of church leadership.³

The theory, carefully thought out by Butler, in fact, did not set out his own home-spun self-justifying philosophy of leadership. Rather, it sought to provide a theoretical and theological framework to scripturally justify the autocratic, domineering leadership style experienced by the colleagues of James White. The strong leader idea provided a framework and an expectation for White's close associates to be able to fall into line, implement his plans and ideas without challenge, and remove cause and occasion for any criticism or carping.⁴ God had called Moses, and he followed divine direction. Associates then followed Moses' commands. Thus, it should also be the case

in Adventism. Two years after the endorsement of the "Moses" concept and further reflection on the negative implications of the model, the church in session formally rejected it in 1875.

Theologically, James White argued, such approach to leadership did not concur with New Testament principles, however much his personal temperament locked him into that style and caused problems for his associates. Even when others tried to relate to the autocratic president White in New Testament terms, viewing him as an apostle, it did not solve the problem. The idea of one-person rule in a monarchical format claiming "kingly power" was not the way for a church trying to establish itself among a constituency both seeking to be faithful to Scripture and valuing the principles of a democracy. Even after the formal rejection of the strong, one-man-in-charge model outlined in Butler's position paper, however, the idea was difficult to dislodge from church administrative behavior. The style was so deeply linked to the temperaments of both James White and his apprentice, George Butler, that it became embedded also in the organizational culture and continued to plague church leadership relationships to the end of the century and beyond. As historian Benjamin MacArthur observed, such a leadership pattern reflected the ethos and spirit of the times. It was an era when business monopolies owned and controlled by titans of industry exercising "kingly power" were so much admired in North America.⁵ In the church, the problem of individual, autocratic dispositions was exacerbated by an inadequate and over-centralized organizational structure. As a result, an anti-autocratic emphasis became the theme of many of Ellen White's letters to church leaders during the last decade of the century.⁶ Nevertheless, despite the tendency for senior leadership to adopt autocratic modes of leadership and exercise "kingly power," another prominent strand of early Adventist leadership reflected a broader but related approach now understood within the framework of servant-leadership.

This article will argue that although early Adventist administrators may not have used the technical terminology of servant-leadership, nevertheless one of the key concepts of servanthood—submission—lies at the heart of the model and characterized Adventist leadership even as it posed distinctive challenges for them. The requirement of submission was essential for survival under James White's practice of leadership. But even more generally, the idea of submission was seen as an important dimension of successful spiritual

leadership. Being a servant inevitably involves submission. My article reflects on this distinctive dimension and investigates how early Adventist leaders related to it. What did submission mean in practice for them?

First, I will consider servant-leadership as submission particularly in a context in which charismatic and executive leadership function together in a shared or team leadership relationship. Several case studies from Adventist history will then examine various attitudes to submission and the role of submission in such a shared leadership relationship when a strong charismatic style is present. Such historical analysis would suggest that empirical studies might profitably further explore submission as a characteristic of servant-leadership in contemporary shared leadership settings. Hopefully insights from the historical analysis will both illuminate and inform contemporary leaders who perceive the model of servant-leadership as more adequately embodying biblical ideals in achieving the objective of being a servant-leader.

Servant-leadership as Submission

In 2002 leadership theorist Larry C. Spears identified ten distinctive characteristics of servant-leadership. The list included, among others, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, and stewardship.⁷ But submission was not among the ten. A growing body of study on “servant-leadership” as an empirically verifiable model or theory of leadership has in more recent years, substantiated the core behaviors and attitudes linked with this understanding of leadership. Some studies have sought to clarify whether the pattern is linked to temperament or if it is more appropriately described as a set of behaviors. Peter Northouse in his classic text on leadership devoted a whole chapter to this distinctive approach to understanding leadership.⁸ A 2011 review and synthesis of the new wave of servant-leadership studies in the *Journal of Management* by van Dierendonck notes that thus far, researchers have identified about 35 “key characteristics.”⁹ Some of the descriptions of the characteristics overlap with each other, and it appears that some are clear duplicates such as when researchers simply use different terms to describe the same thing. Sen Sendjaya, J. C. Sarros and J. C. Santora of Monash University in Australia, in a 2008 study of servant-leadership, identified “voluntary subordination” as a key characteristic of servant leaders.¹⁰ In 2011, D. Van Dierendonck and I. Nuijten distinguished “humility” and “standing back” as two

separate characteristics that may together mirror the “voluntary subordination” that Sendjaya noted.¹¹ The linkage would seem to be a natural one. Research on the identifying characteristics continues from a variety of perspectives including study of the impact that culture may have on attitudes and behaviors, for example in societies such as Nordic Europe where “power distance is low” and in Germanic Europe where “low humane orientation” may present a challenge.¹² Here I note that in early Adventist leadership practice, submission is a clearly observable characteristic of leadership.

The concept of submission is, in reality, inherent to the idea and the role of servant. Serving involves work done for another. It necessitates personal subjection in the process. The ancient world considered such a stance as unworthy and dishonoring for a free person, because it implied inferiority and stood in contrast to governing or ruling. “Lord” and “servant” were antonyms. In the New Testament, for example, the word cluster used to describe the act of serving exhibits a clear overlap of meaning between the roles of servant and slave. The common Greek term *doulos* is translated into English as both “servant” and “slave.”¹³

Submission for either servant or slave involved the absence or removal of one’s autonomy through the subordination of the will to another. Culturally, the ancient world viewed the roles with revulsion and contempt.¹⁴ Both servant and slave received instructions and submitted to the will or desire of the master. It is at this point that the paradoxical heart of the idea of servant-leadership is so striking. A servant, by definition is one who submits. And yet the idea of submission seems so totally at odds with the strident ambition commonly associated with leadership. Thomas Cronin and Michael Genovese elaborate on the nature of this paradox in *Leadership Matters* in which they argue that the role of leader as servant is a vital part of understanding the link between leader and follower. Leaders are nothing without followers. Leaders serve their followers in a submissive relationship. Yet this stands in tension with the common understanding of ambition, of leading from the front and the exercise of power.¹⁵

Early Adventist leaders working within the framework of their distinctive shared leadership arrangement often experienced pressure to submit, frequently enforced with a particularly sharp edge. They could not, in fact, succeed, nor even just survive in leadership if they did not manifest a markedly “submissive” spirit. It was not submission of the kind suggested by the leader-

follower paradigm, but submission required by the model of shared leadership. The submission needed for participation in Adventist shared leadership had a distinct and unique focus occasioned by the presence of a distinctive authoritative charisma among the leadership team. Manifesting a “submissive” spirit was thus an essential requirement for success as an early Adventist leader.

Shared Leadership and Submission

Persons called to formal positions of administration in the early Adventist church organization found themselves leading alongside a very strong, informal, extra-organizational influence and authority. It derived from the distinctive charismatic leadership of Ellen White which functioned outside the formal organizational structure.¹⁶ She never held any official position or appointment within the organization other than to attend General Conference sessions as a credentialed delegate. Nonetheless, her influence inserted itself aggressively into the processes of the organization alongside and in collaboration with formal leadership. In organizational terms, the exercise of Ellen White’s charisma required shared leadership. The community validated her charisma and give it a high degree of deference and respect.¹⁷

Studies of the social source of power and influence in an organization such as those by French and Raven in 1962 help elucidate the nature of power and the inevitable tensions associated with its exercise. Formal position or legitimate power gives control over resources and therefore is linked with the ability to reward, or punish and coerce. Referent or personal power derives from the possession of expertise or specialized knowledge. Personal power also involves a recognized personal charisma or giftedness.¹⁸ Other studies have explored how the dynamics of such influence work. The ability to exercise influence and power in an organization can be viewed as political skill and/or social skill linked with the capacity to call on and utilize accumulated social capital.

We can clearly observe such patterns of interaction between different sources of power and influence in the early Adventist Church as its organization developed. Many times tension developed between the charismatic influence of Ellen White and the formal positional executive or legitimate power exercised by officially appointed leaders. In fact, an ongoing systemic state of tension existed between those sources of influence. Leadership even as it “serves” also inevitably involves

the exerting of influence, the exercise of power. It is a leader’s role to cast the vision, bring about desired change, and monitor, control, and direct resources. The sources of power available to leadership to enable it to function derive from position, skill, charisma, and the ability to reward and punish.

The problem for those called to positions of formal executive leadership in early Adventism, from an organizational perspective, was the presence of a complementary external source of influence which, while it was consistent in its pursuit of principle, could also, at the same time, be erratic, unpredictable, and idealistic. To be successful, Adventist leaders had to learn to submit to this strong para-organizational source of influence and find workable ways of relating to it. It required diplomacy, depths of spirituality, patience, forbearance, and an attitude of submission, a reality easier for some than for others.

Many accounts of Adventist history have viewed the presence of this charismatic influence as a large factor in the survival and expansion of the community. It provided guidance and spiritual insight. In hindsight it has been seen to have helped the community grow and prosper. But that was an outcome not always able to be perceived in advance. The relationship between charisma and senior executive leadership was often actually a partnership that involved mutual planning, traveling, preaching, and even using shared living and accommodation arrangements. From this perspective it was essentially a cooperative, collaborative partnership in leadership—of serving the community of faith together. At times, however, the relationship was also competitive, and thus it generated conflict, sometimes quite serious. For some early leaders, finding ways to submit in the midst of conflict was not always easy or successful. Furthermore, at times executive leadership paradoxically had to find some way to resist the expectation to submit—even while submitting.

For example, properly constituted executive authority in the church (democratically elected leadership acting on decisions of committees and boards), often faced the need to make a decision that involved the determination of priorities, goals, and strategies to meet such goals. It would then be followed up by the strategic allocation of financial resources as well as the assigning of personnel. At this point and sometimes during the process of determining priorities, conflict would open between the executive and the charismatic views of the issues involved.

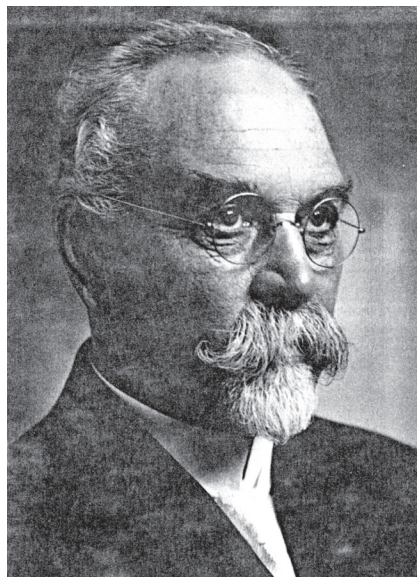
The problem became how to resolve the competition

between the two sources of authority. Which source of authority should prevail? Servant-leadership for Adventist leaders at such times more often than not required “submission”—often at significant personal cost. And there could also be a price to not submitting. On some occasions, in spite of the potential cost, it was clear that submission was not considered to be the best resolution to a conflict.

I believe that the following five episodes offer exhibits or short case studies of how various Adventist leaders approached the various dimensions of submission. Significant tensions between the two leadership nodes in the early Adventist movement often surrounded the determining of strategic priorities and the allocation of financial resources. Two particular flashpoints were especially significant. The first involved the matter of the timing, locating, and financing of new projects. How was it to be done? The second was the distribution and disbursement of funds raised for special projects. Again, the question concerned how to do it. The leadership team often saw priorities differently and struggled with the requirement of submission.

Case Study 1: A. G. Daniells and the Locating of a College

In late 1894, the 36-old president of the Australian Conference, Arthur G. Daniells, found himself wrestling his way through a perplexing requirement to be submissive. American church leaders in Australia were in the midst of trying to establish a school and had made a start in Melbourne. Unfortunately, disputes had emerged among them over school discipline and significant tensions among the staff. Criticism from Ellen White directed at the spouses of the leaders had also strained relationships. To a certain extent the group was experiencing aspects of what has been called “cabin fever.” Then in the search for a new location for the school there had risen a genuine disagreement among the leaders over the appropriateness of a certain possible property proposed for the new college at Cooranbong near Newcastle, 90 miles north of Sydney. A serious lack of money and an inability to find a good site that could be profitably



Arthur G. Daniells, Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

used for farming complicated the matter. Daniells, an experienced man of the land from the American corn belt, was not at all sure that the Cooranbong location was the right place. Furthermore, a government agricultural officer advised against it. So did the General Conference. But the site did have some attractive elements. Ellen White strongly favored it, and so a holding deposit had been put on the property.¹⁹

A decision by Australian conference officials made at camp meeting in Sydney in November 1894 authorized proceeding with the purchase at Cooranbong. Ellen White had urged the action. But in December, even after their decision, members of the group were still not certain that they had made the right choice. Ellen White also was persuaded to continue searching for better land, inspecting a possible site in the Penrith area west of Sydney.

At the camp meeting in Sydney, she had hard words to say to Daniells, because of his opposition to the Cooranbong site. At the end of December, she followed up with a letter to him. Although scolding in tone, because it came from Ellen White, it carried spiritual authority. Ellen White informed Daniells that he needed to get behind the Cooranbong location and stop opposing it.²⁰ So troubling and harsh was the letter that Daniells was not able to write for three months. And when he did reply, he wrote with difficulty.

Since the Ashfield camp meeting my mind has been exercised almost daily with reference to the matter you read to me on the campground, and which was forwarded to me by post a few weeks later. I have desired to write to you, but my reason for not doing so is that I have not known what to write. I have been tempted to feel that you have little confidence in me, and that anything I might say would lead to more severe criticism.

But I believe that all this is from Satan, and I had desired to say nothing until the Lord had delivered me from wrong thoughts and put into my mind right views of this matter.

I have read the testimony which you sent me many times, and have endeavored to do so with a prayerful heart. Some portions I do not as yet understand. Other parts are plain. I do not cast any of it aside, but pray the Lord to help me to be admonished by it all. Some of the points I would like to write about, but I do not know as it would be right to do so. I am sorry that I have not counseled with you more about the perplexities of my work, but at first I thought you would not care to be troubled with me. But I feel that my course has increased your burdens, and now if you are willing I feel that I should like to write you freely with reference to the plans we are trying to carry.²¹

Milton Hook, the historian of Avondale College, observes, “These are the words of a leader groping to find his way back from a fractured relationship.” Despondent, Daniells admitted his uncertainty and the depths of his spiritual struggle. Hook suggests that his expression “some portions I do not as yet understand” is perhaps “a euphemism for his feeling that some of the criticisms were unjustified.”²² Clearly, Daniells struggled with the need to be submissive at this point. His carefully chosen words indicate that he desperately wanted to reply in self-defense but chose to bite his tongue, as it were, and to keep moving on for the good of the cause. It took another 18 months of some very difficult experiences before he realized that the school project was really going to succeed and that he should get fully on board. Doing so, he apologized to Ellen White for being so cautious to begin with. As a result, he came to appreciate her role in the project even if in his own mind the college could have perhaps succeeded better or at least as well in some other location. His need to submit clashed with what seemed to be his better judgment.

Case Study 2: A. G. Daniells and the No-Debt Policy

After what Daniells described as a terrifying financial experience in the establishment of the college at Cooranbong, church leaders resolved as a matter of general policy that new enterprises should not be established under large loads of debt. Wherever possible, funds should be raised first, and when sufficient money was in hand, only then should the building or the purchase get under way. Ellen White agreed, and although allowing for an occasional

exception in a new field where the “the brethren are few” and “their means limited,” she laid it down as a principle that institutions should be established free of debt. “We should shun debt as we should shun the leprosy.”²³ It was a mantra she reiterated many times during the years that followed the exceptionally difficult experiences at Avondale and a lesson that Daniells learned well. He had been obliged to go cap in hand to banks and businesses and friends of the cause to seek help after deposits and other financial commitments, which he considered rash, had been made on the purchase of the properties at Cooranbong. Daniells felt he had been forced into raising funds to meet commitments made by others when adequate resources were not in hand, and he did not like it at all, particularly when it involved deadlines and forfeitures and he had come perilously close to losing everything. Such an approach had cost him many a night’s sleep. The interests of the cause had been put at grave risk. From Daniells’ perspective, it was not sensible stewardship, a signature characteristic of good servant-leadership.

Daniells had adopted the no-debt approach for new institutions as the standard policy for his administration after his election as leader of the worldwide General Conference, and he tried to insist on it, for the most part successfully. He disagreed vigorously with those organizational entities and leaders who would venture into new enterprises, whether colleges, sanitariums, or publishing houses, or start a major program without sufficient resources, and then come to the General Conference and expect it to bail them out. It was over this issue of policy and leadership that led Daniells into his power struggle with Dr. J. H. Kellogg, director of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, who wanted to establish a new sanitarium in England entirely on borrowed money. But Daniells also found himself in conflict on the issue with others, including Ellen White. Tension arose over the possibility that a too rigid approach on the issue would retard the growth of the church. Ellen White felt that the church could ignore the issue of debt if the opportunity for mission and expansion seemed too good to pass by. A real point of tension between the two sources of influence in the church, it proved exceptionally difficult at times for administrators such as Daniells who experienced the dilemma as a conflict between vision and opportunity on the one hand and good stewardship and rational common sense on the other.

On some occasions, such as in regard to Kellogg’s proposal to build a sanitarium in England on borrowed capital, Daniells fiercely resisted. But in regard to other

projects such as the establishment of Loma Linda and several other sanitariums in California, the tension was resolved by allowing such project to go ahead. Even though Daniells might personally disagree, he found himself needing to submit.

The attitude to debt continued to cause ongoing problems for church administration. Ellen White's own accumulation of debt in 1915 at the time of her death embarrassed church leaders and led to continuing tensions and conflict with the administrators of her estate. In those later conflicts, paradoxically, it was the managers of the literary legacy of Ellen White's charisma who found themselves obliged to adopt a stance of submission.²⁴

Case Study 3: W. W. Prescott and the Redirection of Special Donations, 1899-1905

Another area of tension between the charismatic leadership of Ellen White and the executive administration of the church related to the question of ethical obligations in regard to special donations. Could special gifts solicited and targeted for one specific mission project be reassigned to some other project, and could they be used to offset regular allocations already budgeted? The latter had happened in the late 1890s when apparently some treasury officials in Battle Creek had in their accounting calculations credited private donations for Ellen White's work in Australia to general consolidated church revenue instead of designating the money directly for her. They had then offset the special donations from the already budgeted appropriation to Australia without any additional funding. Ellen White had labeled the practice "robbery." It seems that the episode was long remembered, and it created an enduring suspicion of the General Conference treasury by Ellen White over the way some officials handled her finances.

On the floor of the 1899 General Conference session held at Union College in Nebraska, W. W. Prescott, at that time, director of the British Mission, had dared to raise the particular matter publicly and exposed it as an example of miss-appropriation of mission field funds by

the General Conference treasury. Prescott spoke on behalf of the absent Ellen White, being familiar with her plight after having spent some time assisting with her projects in Australia. His speech seems only to have created hostility. At the time, the General Conference was continually operating in the red, constantly struggling with over commitments and having to operate on the basis of loans from the publishing house. Financially, from every angle it was a highly stressful time.²⁵

Later, in 1905, when Ellen White aggressively advocated the kind of re-allocation she had previously condemned, church leadership was chagrined. At this time Prescott was serving as the vice president of the General Conference and as editor of the *Review*. He had recently been pressed into taking the responsibility of relocating the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Washington, D.C., following the destruction by fire of its previous facilities in Battle Creek.²⁶ Establishing

a new publishing house had its challenges, especially given the lack of funds for rebuilding.

The church had launched a fundraising drive targeted to help the struggling institutions in Washington and advertised it in the *Review*. After the announcement that \$15,000 had been dedicated for the new publishing house, funds had been solicited and given for this specific purpose. A few months later, Ellen White sent instructions that the \$15,000 should instead be sent to the work in the southern states, because she thought that the need there was greater at that time, Prescott was not a little "troubled" and "confused." The

switch perplexed both W. C. White and W. W. Prescott. Previously, she had sharply reproved church leaders for such a practice that she had called "robbery," and Prescott had attracted considerable opprobrium by speaking about it. He couldn't figure out how if such a diversion was robbery then, could such a similar diversion be made to "look straight" now? And besides, Prescott wrote back to W. C. White, the diversion had forced the publishing house to breach another policy and go into debt.²⁷

There was no easy answer. It seemed plainly inconsistent. W. C. White replied that he was just as



W. W. Prescott, Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

puzzled. But he pointed out that in the past submission had resulted in blessing. The way that W. C. White explained the matter to himself was that “perhaps the Lord knows more about his work than we do.” Prescott went along with the re-assignment even though for him it seemed inconsistent and even unethical. Submission in this instance appeared to impose a heavy cost on personal integrity.²⁸

Case Study 4: J. H. Kellogg and Intellectual Property Rights

A further case of tension between the two nodes of leadership occurred in 1894 when submission of executive leadership in the medical branch of the church in a dispute over resource

allocation required a “submissive spirit” in order for progress to occur. In this instance, Kellogg had initiated the development of new health food products at the Sanitarium in Battle Creek. The church had not been able to invest in the research and in the development of the technology, and thus Kellogg had used his own money to develop a number of cereal and nut products. He had then patented them. When Union College started to manufacture the products on their campus as part of its student labor program and to provide financial

support for the institution, Kellogg asked for license fees since the patents were his. As a result, a very intense quarrel broke out. Church administration argued that Kellogg had created the products while employed at the Sanitarium and so they belonged to the church. Kellogg responded that if copyrights for a book or an article belonged to the author even though that author might be employed by the church as a pastor or teacher, how would that be any different than for ideas about food products and production? He subsequently took an action prohibiting Union College from manufacturing the foods until they paid licenses, crippling the college and unraveling much of the student work program. The General Conference officials sympathized with the college.

Ellen White sided with the college and the General Conference on the issue. Unable to understand the

ethics of the situation, Kellogg fought it. It was an example of how he found it difficult to submit when the referee ruled against him. Mrs. White supported the college, because it was a matter of financial necessity. It was the only way that she and the General Conference administration could see for the school to survive, and mission always outweighed other priorities.²⁹

Case Study 5: A. G. Daniells and Madison College-- Submission Resisted

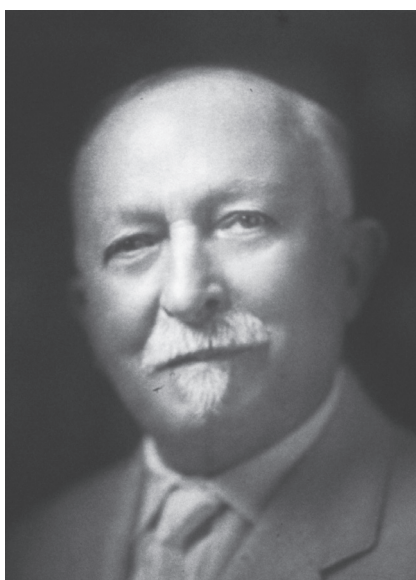
At times in their leadership experience, General Conference presidents endeavoring to follow the path of servant-leadership judged that submission was not the best way to resolve the tension between the charismatic

gift and executive administration. In some circumstances, resistance would be a more appropriate response. Such an example occurred during a particularly difficult stretch of Daniells’ administration in 1907.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, he experienced difficulty relating to the increasing assertiveness and negativity of some independent ministries. Ellen White and her son W. C. White had actively encouraged the establishment of several such endeavors, particularly what became Madison College. It, she had insisted, should be independent and not owned by the church. The work should not be bound by always having to go through “regular channels,” she

advised. Daniells could understand and appreciate this, and he was willing to accept the idea of a structurally independent Madison College in Tennessee. But then later, when she urged the General Conference to give donations to Madison College and support them in their work, the request, to Daniells, seemed contradictory and inconsistent. In fact, it seemed to him to be an impossible demand. He wrote a lengthy response to Ellen White about the issue in which he stated that he was “more perplexed and troubled over this matter than any other one problem” his administration faced at the time.³⁰

For Daniells, if Madison could be independent but supported by the church, then why should not the same apply to Battle Creek Sanitarium? What was the trouble with Dr. Kellogg also being independent? Or any other group? Daniells just didn’t see the logic in that. His



John Harvey Kellogg, circa 1880s, Center for Adventist Research Image Database.



Barn and vineyard at Madison College, Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

administration, together with Ellen White, had carefully and painstakingly worked through those issues, and he thought that they had resolved them. Therefore, he could not understand why in 1907 Ellen White seemed to reverse herself. And he could not figure out how he would be able to submit to that advice.

The letter from Ellen White that made the suggestion about giving funds to Madison also contained veiled criticism of his integrity and honesty as a leader, something he considered quite unfair. Daniells knew that as the letter would become public, it would make his work even more difficult. As he reflected on it, such a letter would actually create complications for anyone in leadership, because of its open support for independent programs outside the organization as well as its idea that such projects should receive denominational appropriations. His response to the pressure from Ellen White on this occasion illustrates the robust interaction between the two individual leaders and also the inherent tension that arises between complimentary but also essentially competing sources of authority. In Daniells' view, appropriate leadership on this occasion required not submission but respectful resistance.

Ellen White's letter had quoted Calvin P. Bollman, who, at the time, was the secretary of the Southern Missionary Society that focused on projects in the

southern states. Apparently, Bollman had led Ellen White to conclude that his work for African-Americans in the South had not been receiving "all the donations intended for it." It seems further, that she understood Bollman to mean that the General Conference may have been diverting funds. Her letter to Daniells and I. H. Evans, the General Conference treasurer, while not exactly clear about who was actually at fault, contains a clear rebuke. "Not one penny of the means that comes in from different sources for the work in the Southern field should be diverted to the work elsewhere," she remonstrated. No portion of any means given should be withheld from the field for which it was intended, and she entreated the General Conference officers to "be very careful" in how they handled the donations. "Not one dollar is to be turned aside to any other field." To an ordinary reader, it would seem that the two men were the ones at fault.³¹

The second part of the troublesome letter went on to urge that the General Conference should financially support the Madison school in spite of the fact that it was an independent operation. She went on to explain that she had actively encouraged the Madison administration to remain separate from conference organization. Daniells bristled at this section. He read the section of the letter repeatedly and carefully, for Madison presented a huge organizational conundrum. For Ellen White, independence in this case was a virtue and ought to be supported, although she was political enough to advise that the "matter need not be blazed abroad." Part of her rationale was that while foreign missions were important (which Daniells had been emphasizing), missionary work also needed to be done "in this country, as verily as in any heathen land." While serving as a pioneer in the 1890s in far off Australia, she had continually argued for the church to invest more resources in overseas mission. Now she seemed to suggest that things had gone too far in that direction.³²

Daniells considered that the difficulties posed by the letter from Ellen White merited an urgent response. After consulting with Evans, he dictated one the following day. In this carefully worded reply he was respectful but also forthright and firmly assertive. At the outset he

re-affirmed his commitment to accepting and learning from Ellen White's counsel, but he qualified it by clearly indicating that he could not do the impossible. "It is my purpose always to heed the counsel that comes through the spirit of prophecy as far as I can understand that counsel, and know how to carry it out." Then he affirmed strongly his acceptance of the counsel about not diverting funds from the South "in its fullest and broadest meaning." Here was a principle he heartily endorsed. Almost in the same breath, however, he strongly defended his integrity. Stating that, in fact, he applied this principle "to all other fields as well," he avowed that it had been his fixed purpose, ever since he had come into office, "to never divert one dollar from the field . . . for which it was intended by the donor." If such a thing had ever happened, it had been a mistake by a careless bookkeeper. A very few cases had come to his attention during the past seven years, he reported, and he had them corrected as soon as discovered.³³

Daniells could hardly believe that Bollman would report such a serious charge to Ellen White, for he "knows that we have cheerfully cooperated with him in correcting any mistakes that have been detected." If Bollman knew of any "single instance" of "any kind of manipulation," why did he not come "straight to us with it?" Daniells questioned. The annoyance and indignation in his reply is unmistakable. Then he quoted Bollman directly back to Ellen White. He had just a few days previously received an effusive letter from the Southern Missionary Society secretary, stating that not only he, but all the leadership in the South, felt "that the brethren

in Washington have treated this field not only justly but generously." If there was any "dissatisfaction" in the South "toward the General Conference," Bollman did not "know where it exists." Was Bollman being two-faced? Was he referring to other church officials who were diverting funds? If so, why would Ellen White write to himself and Evans?

The General Conference president was particularly chagrined at the letter, he explained, because he realized that certain parties in the church would use it all over the country to sow suspicion about the General Conference. He knew that he would now have to "meet this everywhere I go." Was he implying that she had overstepped the mark this time? Daniells explained that he had read the letter very carefully and that he would be obliged to adopt a public response that would defend his colleagues. Feeling that he should inform her of what such a response would involve, he listed the points he would make.

"First," he would have to point out "that your message does not say that Brother Bollman charged the General Conference" with misappropriation of donations. "Second, that your message does not say that the General Conference has done this; third, that the General Conference has not knowingly done this; and fourth, that we accept this message as a re-statement of what has many times been made to our men entrusted with the funds of our people." Repeating his assertion that he did "not object to reproof," at the same time he told her that he wanted "to be clear as to just what was meant."



Bralliar Hall at Madison College, Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

From Daniells' certain knowledge of the circumstances in this matter he knew that the General Conference was not in the wrong. Then, in respect to her authority and influence, he asked "if I am wrong in this" [with regard to his interpretation that her letter was not pointing the finger at the General Conference], "will you kindly correct me?" But then in a clear reiteration of his defense of his colleague, he pointed out that the General Conference's accounting books and correspondence belonged to the denomination and were at the disposal of the members of the General Conference committee for any investigation. Bollman could check things out if he had a particular problem. The General Conference did not manipulate funding. In what amounted to a gentle chiding, Daniells appealed for more caution in such matters. He explained that he was "in a very trying place" at the moment and "if ever we needed to be careful of what we say and do, it is at this time."³⁴

The president's response to the second part of the letter about funding for Madison illustrates the sharp conflict he experienced in trying to meet two competing expectations. As the leader of an organization, he had to be responsible for the careful stewardship of funds which inevitably meant accountability. Also, he had to ensure their equitable distribution to meet the many competing demands. In fact, earlier he had sent some money to Madison following a visit to its campus by his education secretary, Professor Frederick Griggs. Daniells had asked Griggs to check out the situation there. The General Conference president and Griggs had no way of knowing the real plans and needs of Madison. Furthermore, none of the men who had visited the campus in a show of denominational support (he cited W. C. White, G. I. Butler, and G. A. Irwin) "has ever given any definite information regarding their plans for investment, nor their true financial situation." The school had its own board of directors and private account books. Without any financial reports, how could the General Conference have confidence that the school actually needed any money that it might provide? Madison was "soliciting and receiving contributions from our people in all parts of the States, but no one but themselves knows how much is received or how it is spent." As a result, Daniells explained to her that realistically "we have no basis on which to make appropriations." Furthermore, correspondence to him from Madison's leaders acknowledging an earlier contribution had indicated that the college did not lack the "necessities of existence."³⁵

Daniells' frustration over the issue is evident in

the tone of his reply at this point. "Now Sister White," he wrote in his teacher's voice, "I want to do all that I should in this matter, but so far no one seems able to outline anything definite regarding what is required." Then he asked her what he should let go of in order to help Madison. The General Conference had "tremendous demands from all parts of the world" and with "our slender resources we must move understandingly in their distribution." He cited the case of two missionary families, one in China and one in Africa, who were living in impoverished circumstances as they sought to extend the work of the church. He sent a photograph of the mud-brick missionary house in Africa and rather boldly asked if he should *not* send money to these families in order to give it to Madison. As it was, he noted with some drama, that very day at headquarters the General Conference's treasury was "ten thousand dollars overdrawn."³⁶ Giving money to Madison was not a simple matter.

Clearly the conflicting demands exasperated Daniells. Part of him knew that as a servant leader he should submit and accept the counsel of the charisma resident at Elmshaven. But as a servant leader, he also knew that he needed to be responsible and wise in regard to stewardship. Again, his frustration palpable and his tone one of reproach as he lamented, "now Sister White, these things almost distract me." He honestly did not know what to do in response to what she had written about helping the Madison school. "Greatly perplexed" and "well nigh disheartened," he stated that he was ready to quit the presidency. "I have about made up my mind that it is time for me to clear out," he wrote. It was time for new blood--time for someone else to take his place--"who will be able to get more means and plan better." The president was in good health and perfectly willing to go overseas himself. He had not fallen into unbelief. His "confidence in the cause" was good and he longed "to see it consummated." But he had tried to do his best, and it was clearly "too great for me." Daniells would ask his fellow administrators "to let me off to other lands." In the meantime, he was expecting to visit Elmshaven in the near future and sincerely hoped that he and Mrs. White would have time to talk matters over. Above all, he wanted to "get more light as to just what to do."³⁷

This remarkable exchange of correspondence with its frank dialogue between the two sources of influence and authority in the church highlights the dilemma sometimes faced by servant-leaders. When is it right to be submissive and when should one be assertive?

Daniells' letter does not show a compliant, unthinking administrator uncritically accepting a message from the bearer of the charismatic authority in the church. Instead, we find real spiritual wrestling involved in implementing the counsel received.

Although he was willing to accept reassignment, at the following session in 1909 his fellow leaders did not wish to see him released to serve elsewhere. They believed that he was still needed in the presidency.

Conclusion

Servant-leadership would seem to be a particularly appropriate model for Christian leadership. Putting the interests of others first in order to empower them and help them develop their full capacities articulates well the understanding of the biblical doctrine of spiritual gifts that the Lord has placed in the church "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4.12). Christian leaders who have endeavored to follow the servant-leadership path recognize, as Spears has noted, that this model of leadership embraces characteristics such as empathy and stewardship among others. Servant-leadership in a shared leadership context highlights the submission characteristic of such leadership. While Adventist leaders viewed the role of Ellen White from a distinctive perspective and acknowledged a prophetic quality to her charisma, the dynamics of such shared leadership are not unique and the examples drawn from Adventist history provide helpful insights about relationships in any shared leadership context.

This study from an historical perspective suggests that the demands of Christian leadership in a shared leadership context requires a sensitive, spiritually aware, and principled "submissive spirit" to ensure that collaboration is truly fruitful. Servant-leadership senses when to submit to others and when to respectfully assert an alternative viewpoint. Such submission is itself a gift.

Endnotes

1. Robert Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*, (Peterborough, NH: Windy Row Press, 1970), 4.
2. John Dugan points out the dangers of "narrowly interpreting servant-leadership through the lens of religiosity and appropriated as solely a story of Judeo-Christian leadership." It should not be confined to a single faith tradition. *Leadership Theory: Cultivating Critical Perspectives* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 200. 205. The theory has also been critiqued from a feminist perspective by Deborah Eicher-Catt who observes that when viewed as grounded in Judeo-Christian ideology, it is influenced by its roots in patriarchy, reinforces gendered tropes, and can be "appropriated to serve political ends." "The Myth of servant-leadership: A Feminist Perspective," *Women and Language*, 28 (2005), 17-25.
3. Kevin Burton "Centralized for Protection: George I. Butler and His Philosophy of One-Person Leadership," MA Thesis, Andrews University, provides a detailed study of the historical context of Butler's leadership paper.
4. This perspective corrects the mistaken assumption that Butler was just articulating his personal philosophy of leadership. See the discussion in Gilbert M Valentine, *J. N. Andrews: Mission Pioneer, Evangelist and Thought Leader* (Nampa, ID Pacific Press, 2019), 493-501.
5. Benjamin McArthur, *A. G. Daniells: Shaper of Twentieth-Century Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 93-95.
6. Gilbert M Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, (Nampa ID; Pacific Press, 2011), 95ff.
7. Larry C. Spears, "Tracing the past, present, and future of servant-leadership: in L. C. Spears and M. Lawrence (eds), *Focus on Leadership: Servant-Leadership for the 21st Century* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 1-16.
8. Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, eighth edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2019), 226-256.
9. D. Van Dierendonck, "Servant leadership: A review and synthesis," *Journal of Management*, 37:4 (2011), 1228 – 1261. Cited in Northouse, 232.
10. S. Sendjaya, J. C. Sarros, and J. C. Santhora, J., "Defining and measuring Servant Leadership behavior in Organizations." *Journal of Management Studies*, 45:2 (2008) 402-424.
11. D. Van Dierendonck and I Nuijten, "The servant leadership survey: Development and validation of a multidimensional measure," *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 23 (2011), 249-267.
12. Northouse, 234.
13. See for example Romans 14.18. In Matthew 20. 26, 27, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave," *diakonos* = servant and *doulos* = slave, are used interchangeably.
14. Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1979), vol. 3, 543-552; 589-599.
15. Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *Leadership Matters: Unleashing the Power of Paradox*, (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 20.
16. Ellen White's charisma resonates comfortably with German sociologist Max Weber's identification of a charismatic leader as one who is gifted with exemplary qualities, is highly esteemed, and who exudes confidence, dominance, and a sense of purpose. The characteristic leadership behaviors are discussed in B. M. Bass, *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Applications*, (New York; Free Press, 1990), 189-192. See also Northouse, 166-183 for a review of more recent research. Adventist leaders attributed prophetic authority to the charismatic leadership exercised by Ellen White which made the relationship in shared leadership more complex.

17. Servant-leadership writers also note the importance of foresight. In the Adventist context, what made leadership difficult at times was that such foresight was seen to reside in a particular individual and was vested with significant authority.
18. J. R. French and B. Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in D. Cartwright (ed.) *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 259-269.
19. Details of the episode are discussed in Milton R. Hook, "The Inter-Relationships Between A. G. Daniells and E. G. White During Their Years in Australia," *Symposium on Adventist History in the South Pacific: 1885-1918*, ed Arthur J. Ferch (Warburton, Vic: Signs Publishing, 1986), 92-104.
20. Hook, 96. Ellen White's letter is not extant.
21. A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, March 3, 1895.
22. "Hook, 97.
23. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), vol 6, 207, 217. The volume was first published in 1900 and comprised materials written during Ellen White's time in Australia.
24. See my *Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage: Issues in the Conflict for Control of the Ellen G. White Publications 1930-1939*, (Westlake Village, CA: Oak and Acorn, 2018) for a fuller discussion of these tensions.
25. It was not until 1895, during Olsen's third term of office, that the church adopted the idea of actually developing a budget for General Conference anticipated expenses. O. A. Olsen to L. T. Nicola and J. I. Gibson, November 21, 1895; O. A. Olsen, circular to 'Leading Brethren', November 28, 1895. See also Gilbert Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 86.
26. W. C. White to W. W. Prescott February 22, 1905; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott, January 25, 1905. Both Ellen White and W. C. White had urged Prescott to take on the onerous role as founding president of the new publishing house. "There is no nobler work you could undertake just now," argued W. C. White who pointed out that the professor would have the rare chance to put a completely new mold on the whole project just as it had happened when James White first started it.
27. W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, July 13 and 31, 1905.
28. W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, August 11, 1905. See also for example W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, September 5, 1908.
29. Gilbert Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 171.
30. A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, October 11, 1907.
31. We are reliant on Ellen White for the account of what Bollman reported. E. G. White to A. G. Daniells and I. H. Evans, Sept. 23, 1907.
32. A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, Oct. 11, 1907.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. The overseas families whose plight Daniells described included an Elder Anderson and his family living in the heart of Africa "in the midst of millions of colored people," because he had "a profound conviction that God had called him there." They were living in a thatched mud brick hut with only a dirt floor. The rain washed parts of the walls away every so often, and "he or his family will die with malaria from exposure." They needed a brick house with a board floor. The General Conference had no funds, but they borrowed some to send so that he could have a suitable house. The other family was the J. N. Anderson family in Canton, China. It was obliged to live near a fish market that opened at 4.00 am every morning. The market surrounded their house. The fish from the river were "slaughtered, washed, etc, all around their doors and windows," and by the time the sun was out the air was "reeking with the unsavoury smell." The Lord had been blessing the missionaries' work wonderfully, Daniells reported, but it was too expensive for the family to rent a home elsewhere. To build one for them in a better, more healthful place, was going to cost several thousand dollars. Prescott had recently returned from staying with the family in the midst of the fish market and had strenuously argued that they needed help urgently for their health's sake. Many other similar problems also existed.
37. A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, Oct. 11, 1907.



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