

## THE WRITE OF A KING

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### POWER FOR THE PEOPLE

***"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" (St. John 1:12).***

More than seventy years ago, Bertrand Russell argued that power and glory are the chief desires of the infinite desires of humankind.<sup>1</sup> The passage of time has not nullified the veracity of this observation. People are still obsessed with the desire for the acquisition of power. This is evident in the fields of politics, business, sports, entertainment, religion, and in every other aspect of life. People desire power, and more power, because it gives them easy access to the resources of the world. They need power because it gives them the authority to impose their will and preferences on other people. Power embellishes the image of its possessors and attributes glory to them. As a consequence, many who have power, as well as those who aspire for it, will resort to any means necessary in order to retain or to claim it. They pretend, they lie, they steal, murder, turn a blind eye, pocket a bribe, and subvert; they do whatever the desire for power requires of them without remorse or compunction. History attests that no institution of whatever ilk is immune to the power virus. The view persists that every man or woman, in the pursuit of the ambition for power, has his or her price.

Those who claim to be *the people of God* must be different in their relation to power. What is said above should not be true of persons who operate within the domain of spiritual power, but, unfortunately, it is. In the

name of God and of Jesus, power has been utilized to oppress, enslave, impoverish, falsify, and to kill. In the fourth gospel, the writer indicates that God is not identified with the abuse of power. He regards power as a gift from Jesus that is bequeathed to those who receive him in order that they may become *the sons [and daughters] of God*. Viewed from this perspective, power becomes a relational tool that enhances the development of character and a bonding between human beings and God.

The children of God have a responsibility to bring a moral compass into the power arena. As a result, they should not permit themselves to become commodities for the marketplace in their quest to company with ecclesiastical or secular power. They should never relinquish their commitment to truth and justice for a fleeting association with power of any kind. Character should never be compromised for any reason, and definitely not for the purpose of exercising authority over others. Character must always be a quantity in the power equation. Ellen White writes: "True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the *Anatomy of Power* (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 1983) by John Kenneth Galbraith, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education*, (Pacific Press Publishing Association: Mountain View, 1903) ; p.225.