

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

THE PHARISEE'S GUIDE TO PERFECT HOLINESS: A STUDY OF SIN AND SALVATION

George R. Knight
Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press
Publishing Association, 1992.
Hardbound, 256 pages, \$14.95.

George Knight's computer has exploded again! The insightful mind of this most prolific contemporary Adventist educator, historian, and philosopher continues to challenge some popular misconceptions about salvation.

The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness was stimulated by Knight's personal experience. Since his conversion from agnosticism in 1961, he has wrestled with what it means to be saved and to be perfect. Thus, in the first year after his conversion he went from 165 pounds to 120

pounds in his effort to be "the first perfect Christian since Christ" (p. 131). Ultimately he came to the frustrating conclusion that the harder he tried, the worse he became.

Knight discovered that the issue of perfectionism, which so devastated him, has polarized Christians throughout the centuries. His study revealed parallels between perfectionism and the dominant Pharisaic view during Christ's ministry. The error of the Pharisees and perfectionists is grounded in a false definition of sin, and thus a false definition of righteousness and perfection. The book attempts to present orthodox biblical definitions.

The Pharisee's Guide can be divided into three sections. First, Knight gives a good overview of first-century Pharisee theology. Their praiseworthy characteristics are well documented, but their inadequate view of sin (i.e. a specific act rather than a condition) has not been emphasized. The parallel between the Pharisees and the practice and beliefs of some earnest Adventists is hard to miss.

Chapters 2 through 5 comprise the second

section. Here Knight attempts to define theological categories that lie at the root of the debate. They include "sin," "law," "justification," and "sanctification." Knight makes the helpful distinction, for example, between lower-case "sins" and upper-case "SIN." The former is individual acts of sin; the latter, a state or a foundational principle. Using this model for other categories such as law, righteousness, and perfection, Knight brings the debate into focus.

The final section (chapters 6 through 10) is the heart of the book, where Knight addresses the issue of perfection. He argues that the biblical view of perfection is not the abstract standard of flawlessness found in Greek philosophy but a person's perfect relationship with God and other human beings. Knight thus makes a clear distinction between being perfect and sinless in attitude and being absolutely perfect and sinless in action. The former is possible now, the latter only in the next life.

The Pharisee's Guide is a valuable resource work, particularly for the Bible teacher. The Valuegenesis study revealed that a large percentage of students in the SDA school system have doubts regarding the assurance of salvation and their "perfect" status in Jesus Christ. Many of these doubts are based on a faulty interpretation of biblical and Ellen G. White passages. Knight's volume can serve as a "proof text"/apologetic for those who wish to argue point by point all the positions presented by the perfectionist wing of the SDA Church.

I am not sure, however, that such as proof-by-proof, passage-by-passage debunking of perfectionism is ultimately valuable or will meet with much success. I also question whether the teacher should spend an inordinate amount of classroom time on such an enterprise. Focusing on Christ and His ministry (personal and social) is of more importance in the final analysis.

One last word regarding style, which in a sense affects content. Knight, who is well known for his lucid writings, here attempts a "difficult marriage between a popular style and scholarly precision" (p. 11). He is trying to go beyond abstract theology. The illustrations scattered throughout, and such eye-catching headings as "Justification the Work of a Lifetime/Sanctification the Work of a Moment" do aid in achieving this goal. But the material is largely conceptual and theoretical, and could easily fail to hold the attention of a person who is not interested in the theoretical arguments.

In seeking to use a book such as this, the teacher must always remember that good teaching should not be ivory towered, philosophical, or abstract. It has to be experiential and incarnational—growing out of one's daily life and experience with

others. We must seek to make the study of sin and salvation less abstract and more meaningful to the daily lives of our students.—Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid.

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HORACE'S SCHOOL

Theodore R. Sizer
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992.
Hardbound, 238 pages, \$19.95.

In this book, Theodore Sizer suggests ways to redesign the American high school and outlines many of the typical questions and obstacles one must face in such restructuring. These obstacles are so cleverly outlined that the reader feels as if he or she is sitting in a faculty meeting dealing with the subject.

When restructuring, several issues must be addressed.

1. Should all class periods be allocated equal lengths of time?
2. Should all members of a class be taught the same material at the same time?
3. Should teachers be the only ones to decide what to teach?
4. Will it help to teach more of the same material, using the same teaching strategies?
5. Must schools do everything? What about the role of the parent, the community, and the church?

Sizer addresses these and many more questions in a practical way. He maintains that the restructured high school should produce students who know how to use knowledge in unfamiliar situations, function in the real world, put things into proper perspective, organize, analyze, use their imagination, show empathy, communicate well, commit themselves to the important aspects of life, be humble and able to express and feel joy, and see the worth of people and things. A tall order!

To produce such students, teachers need to use a variety of teaching strategies. Sizer emphasizes the use of exhibitions and gives many excellent examples.

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Sizer says the curriculum should consist of three central areas:

1. Mathematics/science would include physical education, home economics, health, computer science, vocational technology, mathematics, and science.

2. Arts would include English, foreign languages, visual arts, music, theater, and some aspects of physical education and vocational technology.

3. History and philosophy would include social studies, history, political science, geography, sociology, economics, literacy in art history, culture, and guidance.

The school would have two organizational units: one for grades 6 to 8 and one for grades 9 to 11. Students would learn in "houses" of 200 to 250 students, served by 12 to 16 teachers. They would complete two courses of study. The DSE (Diploma in Secondary Education) should be reached by age 17. An ASD (Advanced Secondary Diploma) program, which prepares students for college, would accept volunteers who have completed the DSE program.

In a restructured high school, teachers would see no more than 80 students per day, to allow them to get to know their students well. Teachers would be less concerned with certification and give more emphasis to what they know. Sizer says that if all school faculty, including administrators, become involved, the desired restructuring should be accomplished with no increase to the school budget. Outside funding would be needed to provide technological equipment and to renovate spaces for study.

Horace's School offers many unique suggestions, including ideas that could be implemented or modified for use in Seventh-day Adventist academies. In reading Sizer's book, one wonders: If the goals of education are not being met in today's high schools, will doing more of the same really work? This book makes some practical suggestions to remedy the situation. While it may seem idealistic for small Adventist schools to try to implement a program in which no teacher would see more than 80 students per day, the suggestions to increase learning, making it possible for students to use knowledge gained in unfamiliar settings, are very exciting.

If your school could use some restructuring, this book is an excellent guide to help you get started!—Ted Winn.

CITIZENS OF TWO WORLDS: Religion and Politics Among American Seventh-day Adventists

**Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez
Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University
Press, 1992. Paper, 329 pages, \$14.95.**

As a manual for social activism, this book identifies what ought to constitute the relationship between religion and politics: a commitment to the radical, prophetic kind of social involvement that transforms oppressive structures rather than addressing only the symptoms and casualties of those structures. Such a relationship results, the authors contend, when Adventists individually and corporately throw off such inhibitors to social action as the deep-seated fallacy of ancient body/soul dualism; internalize the Old and New Testament roots of social concern; and set their own house aright by dismantling the black conferences of the North American Division.

But is it empirically the case that Adventists shun politics and neglect the social side of things? In their role as social scientists, Dudley and Hernandez disclose their methodology, acknowledge the shortcomings of questionnaire-generated data, and qualify the results. A survey of 419 adult lay members in North America (excluding Canada and Bermuda) on religion and politics forms the basis of their study and produces the eventual thesis that Adventists "vary on their politics according to certain measures of religion and background variables such as ethnicity."

Ambitiously, the book identifies differences among Adventists in religious beliefs, behaviors, and experiences; inquires whether social variables determine the religious differences among Adventists; and describes how Adventists responded to the political, economic, and social issues current in 1988. Then, having determined what American Adventists are like religiously and politically, the authors proceed to their major research task: the demonstration of how the first quality influences the second. The finding that "while the effect of religion on political views is by no means strong, it does exist, to some extent, independent of that of demographic considerations," is notable.

The measure of religion found to serve best as a predictor of political attitudes and behaviors is or-

thodoxy or ideological commitment. Where this is strong, Adventists either withdraw from politics completely or take conservative political positions. But three things can complicate this relationship: religious liberty issues, military offensives, and ethnic experience. Indeed, in such contexts the orthodox become markedly liberal, fearing that school prayer could break the wall of separation between church and state, that war and killing could curtail the spreading of the gospel, that obsessions with law and order could undermine the freedom and justice that minorities, but not only minorities, crave.

We always knew, of course, that the attendees of Sabbath "rallies" on religious liberty look like and sound like conservatives while zealously voicing the liberal agenda on church and state. It is the conspicuous absence of moderate, middle-aged professionals that I wanted explained.

A further letdown: an organization known to be undergoing an influx of blacks and Hispanics is assessed by an instrument that slights minorities; and a people's stance on public issues is assessed without mention of abortion. For some, these acknowledged weaknesses will loom too large to be excused.

Preoccupied as I am with this church's role in the public sector, it is also hard to share the sense of inadequacy that drives the authors' call for social concern. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency, a very far-reaching dynamic of the church, seems not to count at all. And what about the community services of local churches?

Few books so slowly approach their central task. About 100 pages of material precede the above report of the findings. Yet this has virtue. These pages pack valuable information on the reversal of conservative Protestantism from involvement in society to withdrawal from society to engagement in selective aspects of state and national life; and valuable information also on the relationship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the U.S. Government since the mid-19th century.

Indeed, theoretical constructs undergird the book throughout and constitute a major strength. The timing of this book's publication is another merit. We who have just endured a race for the White House, watched Global Mission become our church's top priority, listened to debates over national health insurance, and applauded the integration of the Adventist Church outside North America, cannot but welcome, read, and use this book.—Gary M. Ross.

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