

abuses of the historical-critical method, we can only pray that a worthy Briton will arise to salvage this would-be antithesis.

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Pearson, Michael. *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventists and Contemporary Ethics*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1990. x + 328 pp. \$54.40.

Michael Pearson's *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas* is the published version of his D.Phil. dissertation completed under the direction of Bryan Wilson of All Souls College, Oxford. The book's primary purpose "is to break new ground in the chronicling and analysis of significant developments in Seventh-day Adventist moral thought" (8). A secondary objective is to explore the actual practices of Adventists in the areas selected for study.

Some readers might feel that the book's title is misleading, since the "moral dilemmas" and "contemporary ethics" treated all fall in the sexual realm. The major portion of the book covers Adventist marital relations, Adventists and abortion, sex roles in the denomination, and the attitudes and practices of the denomination in regard to divorce and homosexuality. Two chapters are devoted to each of these topics.

Delimiting his coverage to American Adventism, Pearson provides general historical context on each topic, including the positions of other churches. He then develops a "detailed chronology" of Adventism's responses to each of the selected issues approximately through 1985. These responses include both official and unofficial statements. The treatment of each topic closes with an attempt to evaluate the relationship of the dilemma to actual Adventist practice.

The accomplishment of that last task, however, leaves much to be desired because of the dearth of statistical data in the field. That difficulty, of course, is no fault of Pearson, but rather indicates the work yet to be done in a field in which it is difficult to collect accurate data—especially from people who can be expected to be quite conservative in sexual matters and who might have a difficult time coming to grips with less-than-satisfactory behavior in areas traditionally associated with a great deal of guilt.

It should be noted that Pearson did not attempt to add to data on Adventist sexual attitudes and practices. Rather, he surveyed the existing knowledge.

Thus, unlike the general run of sociological dissertations, Pearson's doctoral study did not follow a statistical model. To the contrary, he surveyed a vast field and then drew out the sociological and theological implications of his findings. In accomplishing that task, the author has done an immense service both to the denomination he studied and to other religious bodies who can learn from the Adventist experience. There is nothing in the literature on Adventism that even begins to compare with the breadth and depth of Pearson's coverage.

The author's survey of issues related to human sexuality was preceded by several chapters that discussed the major influences in Adventist moral thought that have conditioned the denomination's responses to moral dilemmas. Among these influences are the tension between a belief in the nearness of the eschaton and the need to continue to live in the present world, the importance of maintaining a united church and stable homes, the role of Ellen White's counsel, and problems associated with the denomination's nineteenth-century Victorian and American heritage as it attempts to deal with moral problems on the eve of the twenty-first century.

Pearson has demonstrated that he is quite familiar with Adventist primary and secondary literature. However, an informed reader might wonder at certain omissions. For example, in a book claiming to be "an exercise in historical ethics" (14) it is quite surprising to find the author relying on A. W. Spalding's denominational history for background, while not even mentioning (even in the book's extensive bibliography) R. W. Schwarz's vastly superior history. Again, at times references to the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* were given as authority when entire dissertations and monographs exist on the topics under discussion. Finally, references to certain official General Conference actions pointed readers back to the abbreviated versions published in the *Adventist Review* when full reports of the denominational legislation under discussion exist. In spite of those documentary shortcomings, however, the work appears to be generally accurate, even where less than the best sources have been used.

Pearson is to be congratulated for making a major contribution to our understanding of an aspect of Adventism. A less ambitious scholar could have justifiably chosen a much narrower field to survey. It would be well if other doctoral students followed the model he has used as well. Meanwhile, his work will stand as the authority in the wide spectrum of Adventist sexual attitudes for years to come.