

BOOK REVIEWS

Bull, Malcolm, and Keith Lockhart. *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2d ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. 499 pp. Paper, \$29.95.

Seeking a Sanctuary is a comprehensive look at the sociology, history, and culture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The first edition was published in 1989 and contained 319 pages. The revised work follows the same scheme but expands to 499 pages by adding material from the seventeen intervening years, including updated maps, graphs, and tables that use more statistical and census data; several revamped chapters; and a chapter on schismatic movements.

The volume is organized into three main sections: “Adventist Theology,” “The Adventist Experience and the American Dream,” and “Adventist Subculture,” with an introduction on “Public Images” in which the public face of Adventism from the Millerite movement to the present is discussed.

Part 1 begins with a chapter on authority, including discussion of the role of Ellen White and the struggle between fundamentalists and moderates. The authors point to the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* as a pivotal point in the development of Adventist doctrine. Chapters follow on the struggle to define organizational identity, eschatology, the trinity, salvation, and perfectionism. The section closes with a chapter on “The Development of Adventist Theology.”

Part 2 is the heart of the book and carries the authors’ main premise—that Adventism is an alternative to the American Republic. Topics covered in this section include the structure and polity of the church, the patterns and extent of its growth throughout the world, health reform and sexual restrictions, schismatic movements from T. M. Preble in 1864 through the Shepherd’s Rod and Davidian challenges to protests from organizations such as Hope International and Hartland. There is also a chapter on the church’s relation to the arts and one on the church’s understanding of and role in religious liberty. The final chapter in this section expands on the major theme of the book, “Adventism and America.”

In Part 3, the various subcultures within Adventism are probed, including issues of gender, race relations, the professional ministry, medical work, education, and the self-supporting movement. The concluding chapter, “The Revolving Door,” hypothesizes about the church’s understanding of who are converts and who are apostates.

As the title suggests, the most central concept, according to Bull and Lockhart, is that Adventism represents a deviant but successful response to the general American dream of self-realization and material success. In developing this theme, the authors begin with an 1851 article in the *Review* by J. N. Andrews, in which he identified the second beast of Rev 13 with the United States. This beast was originally lamblike, but then “spoke like a dragon,” forcing the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast and to receive the mark of Sunday-keeping. From this, it was deduced that though the United States originated with principles of civil and religious liberty, it would change at the end of time and become a persecuting power. Evangelists have continued to present this interpretation. For instance, during the American Civil War, denominational writers excoriated the government for its tolerance of slavery.

Therefore, the authors believe, Adventists have always been suspicious of the government, not wanting to be closely allied with it, waiting and expecting persecution to break out in the form of compulsory Sunday laws. The state Sunday laws of the late 1800s and the attempt to pass a national Sunday law served to support this view.

However, Adventists did not want to be seen as opposing the Republic. The answer was to create an alternative system—a nation within a nation. Thus Adventists developed their own educational system and health institutions, the Medical Cadet Corps for military training and “conscientious cooperation” in military service, and Pathfinders to resemble Scouting.

Another issue that Bull and Lockhart address is the fact that Adventists do not join ecumenical organizations: “Adventism does not define itself against individual denominations in the mainstream, but against the mainstream as a united body of tradition” (245). They note further that “At the base of the rift between Adventism and the mainstream is the Adventist refusal to view American society as the means of universal redemption” (246).

While these facts cannot be disputed from a historical basis, it could be argued that the picture might be changing and that modern Adventism is moving closer to the mainstream. For instance, communication specialists work to present the denomination in the most favorable light to the public. Also, as the authors point out, more Adventists are serving in public office and holding positions in government agencies. The authors are correct, however, in noting that Adventists in government are much more common in other countries outside of the United States. The church has dropped its insistence on noncombatancy in military service, supporting enlistment of members and the bearing of arms. Most significant, today’s evangelists tend to downplay the identification of the second beast of Rev 13. Thus the question remains to be asked: Does the premise that Bull and Lockhart advance still hold true? Perhaps, but it seems less true than in the early days of the Adventist movement.

A related theme discusses whether the sectarian Adventism of the nineteenth century has become a mainline church in the contemporary world. The authors invoke H. Richard Niebuhr’s “church-sect theory,” which argues that religious bodies often begin as sects in tension with major religions, but over time accommodate their beliefs and reduce tension with society because of a need to socialize new generations into their faith and thereby progress into denominations. The authors note that the theory is widely held by sociologists of religion and has been described in Adventism particularly by sociologist Ronald Lawson and church historian George R. Knight.

Bull and Lockhart argue that the “church-sect theory” cannot be applied straightforwardly to Adventism. Because Adventists still hold to teachings such as the sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the Spirit of Prophecy and do not join ecumenical organizations, the authors see the church still retaining its sectarian character. Instead of a linear progression from sect to church, they see the denomination alternating through at least four stages: the late 1800s, in which radical Adventism, during the lifetime of Ellen White, clung to its distinctiveness; the 1920s, when the church was influenced by the fundamentalist reaction in Protestantism, which persists among some conservative groups within the church today; the 1950s, in which there was a swing toward mainstream religion, marked by the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* and the involvement of more liberal leadership, such as that of General Conference President R. R. Figuhr; and the 1990s, in which “elements of fundamentalism were re-invoked in a conscious effort to preserve Adventism’s distinctiveness and unity” (104).

Evidence of the recent sectarian strength in Adventism can be seen in the organization of the Adventist Theological Society, the publication of *Adventists Affirm*, the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, the official statement on the proper interpretation of Scripture and the rejection of critical methods, the international board to control theological education, the opposition to the ordination of women, and active fringe conservative groups. A key point is also made concerning the replacement of so-

called “liberal” professors at the Theological Seminary by a more conservative group under the deanship of Gerhard Hasel. The authors note that progressive Adventism is also making a strong stand, as witnessed by publications such as *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum* and by the views of many Adventist scientists and some theologians.

In the concluding chapter, “The Revolving Door,” the authors refer to studies showing that converts are disproportionately of lower economic status, which is beyond dispute. But the authors hold that in common with other religions, second and subsequent generations tend to be upwardly mobile, due primarily to an extensive educational system and the promotion of higher education, especially along medical lines. They comment that “Insofar as Adventism has departed from its original faith, it has not really been through the model of denominationalism at all, but by a process of medicalization” (313). Thus, “through negating the American dream, Adventists have made it into a reality” (362). However, in a somewhat strange twist of logic, they conclude that “The revolving door indicates that, at a sociological level, Adventism functions like a sect, and not at all like a denomination, for it recruits low down the social scale and deposits ex-members higher up. Having an upwardly mobile membership is itself a characteristic of a sect, not a denomination, for upwardly mobile sects only become denominations when, like the Episcopalians, they lose the capacity to attract the poor” (359-360). This is no doubt true of the Episcopalians and other upscale denominations such as the United Church of Christ. But what of the Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, which has many members from lower social orders, or the booming Pentecostal denominations? From the perspective of this reviewer, as far as I am aware, there is not sufficient evidence to support the idea that as members become more prosperous, they tend to leave the church. Adventism has many well-off members and certainly many loyal ones among the medical community. Nor have I seen statistics that survey dropouts as to their economic status. But the authors consider it a strong point in their rejection of “church-sect theory” as applied to Adventists.

Are Bull and Lockhart favorable or unfavorable to the denomination? Perhaps a bit of both. The authors make neither a positive nor a negative judgment on the items they report. Bull, a lecturer at Oxford University, was born into an Adventist home in England, attended Newbold College, but never became a member of the church. Lockhart, a free-lance journalist, who was baptized into the church at the age of 12 and who studied theology at Newbold College and Andrews University, is no longer a member of the church. The overarching purpose of their book was an attempt to better explain to interested readers what Adventism is all about. At the same time, the authors hoped to demonstrate to church members that it was possible to consider Adventism in a way that is neither critical of the faith nor apologetic about it. Lockhart notes that he and Bull had and still have “no agenda to promote, no axe to grind, no faction we needed to appease. I think we wanted to show Adventists that Adventism was even more significant in the world than they even knew.” Areas that seem quite positive to the authors are the church’s comprehensive health message and system, the extensive educational system, and the multiracial diversity of the denomination. Areas that seem more negative to them are the hierarchical organization of the church and the progression toward fundamentalism. The description of the development of Adventist doctrines is presented from a merely human rather than divine standpoint, but that would be expected in a sociological study.

All in all, *Seeking a Sanctuary* is a fascinating read. It raises many areas for discussion and points to numerous directions for further research. Whether or not every interpretation of the authors is accepted, anyone who wishes to seriously study Adventism should read this book.

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Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. xxxvi + 539 pp. Hardcover, \$34.95.

Craig A. Evans is Payzant Distinguished Professor of NT at Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University, in Nova Scotia, Canada. His highly productive NT career has witnessed a plethora of publications. Among the most recent ones, he coedited with Stanley E. Porter the *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (2000); wrote *Mark 8:27–16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary series (2001); and authored *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (2003) and *Fabricating Jesus* (2006).

Evans, a highly credible scholar, has put together an important reference book that will become a standard volume in the libraries of scholars and students alike. He recognizes two principal difficulties with those who aspire to NT exegesis. On the one hand, they have to master the biblical languages and, on the other, they have to become “familiar with the myriad of cognate literatures” (1). The purpose of this volume “is to arrange these diverse literatures into a comprehensible and manageable format (xi). *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* is a substantial revision and expansion of an earlier work by Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (1992), that had a similar purpose. In addition to his volume, there is also an OT counterpart: Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (2005).

The title under review is divided into eleven *types* of writings that also constitute the first eleven chapters of the book: “Old Testament Apocrypha,” “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,” “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” “Versions of the Old Testament,” “Philo and Josephus,” “The Targums,” “Rabbinic Literature” (Talmudic, Tannaic, Amoraic), “New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” “Early Church Fathers,” “Gnostic Writings” (also covering Mandaean material), and “Other Writings” (Greco-Roman, Corpus Hermeticum, Papyri, Inscriptions, coins, and ostraca). The last chapter, “Examples of New Testament Exegesis,” examines the practical side of these diverse materials, in which Evans applies what he has claimed so far, namely, that these sources are important and illuminative in doing exegesis. He provides the reader with several examples of NT passages that are informed by these sources. For example, there is an essay on the “Parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants” (Mark 12:1-11 and its synoptic parallels). While Isaiah’s parable (Isa 5:1-7) is directed against the “house of Israel and the men of Judah” (Isa 5:7), Jesus’ parable is directed against the religious authorities of his time. Evans asks: “How could the chief priests (cf. Mark 11:27) so readily perceive that the parable was directed against them? . . . The explanation is suggested by *Targum Isaiab*, which inserts ‘sanctuary’ and ‘altar’ in place of tower and wine vat. This would seem to indicate, that in the time of Jesus (for *Targum Isaiab* clearly contains traditions that derive from the first century), Isaiah’s ‘Song of the Vineyard’ had come to be understood as directed against the temple establishment” (333).

To all of these different classes of writings (e.g., OT Apocrypha, OT Pseudepigrapha), Evans provides the reader with brief introductions, as well as brief summaries to many individual writings within these classes (e.g., “Tobit,” “Apocalypse of Adam”). Furthermore, the author offers secondary source treatments of the classes and the individual works themselves under the headings: “Texts,” “Survey,” and “Critical Study/Commentary.” In other words, the book is a treasury of secondary literature to these various writings. Finally, the book contains nearly 200 pages (341-539) of quality indices that are worth noticing: “Comparative Canons” (charting the inclusion of the apocryphal books in the various canons, i.e., Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox,