

### The Impact of Religion in Adventist Marriages

Charles C. Crider; Robert C. Kistler. *The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study*. xii + 284 pp., bibl. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1979.

reviewed by Herbert L. Smith

Seventh-day Adventists view themselves as a very religious people, particularly in terms of corporate worship and other highly visible religious activities, but only about one-third of American Adventist families regularly conduct family devotions in their homes, and many more feel dissatisfaction with their spiritual lives. Such indications of tensions in the spiritual life of Adventist families illustrate the substantial contribution *The Seventh-day Adventist Family* brings to our understanding of the impact of religious beliefs on marital interaction and family systems.

I recommend a careful reading of this book with particular attention to the implications that the findings have for church programming for marriage and family enrichment, and dating and pre-marriage counseling.

Marriage and families in the United States have been undergoing severe strain recently, and although the various dimensions of this strain are well documented statistically, they are not so well understood on the human level. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church exists in the larger society, and its members interact with people in that society, Charles Crider and Robert Kistler, professors of sociology at

Andrews University, believed that the factors contributing to the problems and stresses of contemporary American home-life might also be felt by Adventists. Although the church encourages stable, well-regulated family life, sound child-rearing practices, and no divorce, no information existed to establish how these basic principles actually worked out in the homes of its members. While conducting a series of Family Enrichment Seminars, Dr. Crider became aware that effective programs to strengthen family life in the church could not be developed without an adequate assessment of the real nature and extent of the problems involved. To create a religious and marital profile of the Adventist family, Crider and Kistler questioned American Adventists about their homes, spouses, and religion. Among other questions they asked: Do you view your home as a happy place in which to live? Do you rate your spouse high on such personal traits as kindness, courtesy, and poise under stress? Do you give your partner high marks for those traits that are important to successful marriages such as affection, cooperation, communication? How do you evaluate the spiritual atmosphere in your home?

Based upon the information provided by 2,004 respondents, the "typical" American Adventist in this study was a forty-six-year old female who belonged to a congregation located near an Adventist institution. She met her spouse at school, was married by an Adventist minister in a church, and described herself as a professional in terms of occupational status. She and her husband had two, three, or four children, and she believed their family organization was "democratic." The "typical" male (46 percent of respondents) paralleled the female in socio-economic characteristics,

and the average couple experienced freedom from economic pressures, was attached to its material possessions, and felt that what it possessed was in line with its neighbors. Due to certain sampling restrictions, the authors did not claim the respondents to be a "representative sample" of Seventh-day Adventists, but the respondents did represent a sample of Adventist marriages and families.

The survey revealed that couples tended to see themselves and each other in a favorable light as individuals, but were likely to have an unfavorable view of their marriages. Such perceptions provide important indicators of the nature of the marital relationship, shed light upon the functioning of the family system, and can highlight possible marital and family problem areas for later support and development. The authors appropriately pointed out the need to develop specific programs of enrichment and growth to help Adventist couples create more meaningful marital relationships.

In contrast to the patterns of American society, the authors discovered a direct relationship between occupational status and marital happiness and religiosity, and noted that non-mobile couples have a slightly higher divorce rate than do mobile ones. The authors explored the reasons for this somewhat unusual finding in terms of motivation for mobility, for example, to pursue higher education or to work at an Adventist institution. The majority of the respondents reported that they were "married once and living with that spouse." However, the authors pointed to the possibility that the rate of family disorganization and divorce might be as high as 15 to 17 percent for the overall church membership.

The authors concluded their book with comments from their respondents concerning family life. One-third commented on factors contributing to success or failure. Factors leading to a successful family life included adherence to counsels of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, a happy

childhood, consistency and firm discipline for children, warmth, and deep companionship with one's mate. Included among the 10 factors that contribute to failure are lack of family worship, not living up to the standards of the church, living in a religiously divided home, unfaithfulness to one's companion, and sexual incompatibility.

My favorable reaction to this study carries with it several reservations about its sampling procedures and measurement devices, but these are in part recognized by the authors and in no way detract from its significant contribution to literature on the family. The volume deserves reading not only by Adventists but also by students of marriage and the family who wish to better understand the dynamics of marital and family relationships within the North American Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

---

Herbert L. Smith is an assistant professor of sociology at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich.

## The Influence of Beliefs about Truth and Reality on Educational Goals

George R. Knight. *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*. 244 pp., bibl., index. Berrin Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1980. \$9.95 (paper).

reviewed by F. E. J. Harder

The conjunction "and" in the title of George R. Knight's *Philosophy and Education* makes the title descriptive of the book's contents; the preposition "of" in its place would have been inappropriate. However, since the author did not develop a philosophy within the Christian perspective, the subtitle can mislead until one reads the preface. What Knight intended, and achieved with considerable success, was to show the relevance