
Reviews

Notes On Books By And About Adventists

by Rennie Schoepflin

Dewey M. Beegle. *Prophecy and Prediction*. 274pp., bibl., index. Ann Arbor, MI: Pryor Pettengill, 1978. \$5.95 (paper).

With an eye to the predictive aspects of biblical prophecy, this professor of Old Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary seeks to clarify the confusing and contradictory prophetic claims of Christian denominations by developing an understanding of the Bible's teaching. In the first half of the book, Beegle describes biblical predictions and discusses their accuracy, and outlines and characterizes biblical apocalyptic literature, focusing particularly on Daniel and Revelation. The concluding half of the book describes and critiques popularly influential prophetic schemes that have tried to find contemporary events foreshadowed in biblical prophecy—a task that he finds fruitless. He devotes one chapter to a discussion of Seventh-day Adventism, concluding that E.G. White's efforts to authenticate her prophetic claims and religious dogmas were "built on sand" and "simply not biblical." Beegle asks: "What kind of mentality is it that can keep psyched up enough to continue making proclamations when years of history witness that previous pronouncements are wrong?"

Gregory G. P. Hunt, M.D. *Beware This Cult! An Insider Exposes Seventh-Day Adventism and Their False Prophet Ellen G. White*. 152pp. Belleville, Ontario, Canada: The Author, 1981. \$7.00 (paper).

In this angry diatribe against the "cult" of Seventh Day Adventism [sic], a Canadian physician prays that a record of his experiences will shield others from the misery inflicted by Adventism and prompt them to read the Bible. But Hunt's real purpose "is to discredit Ellen G. White as a prophet and to encourage some thinking amongst the members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church [sic]." A former member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for three years, Hunt invites his readers to skip ahead to the "sensational material" of Chapter 6, "The Meat of the Adventist Health Message," to discover that "one would have to be an idiot to follow her [E. G. White's] counsel." Reciting a litany of White's "destructive philosophies" and "perversions," he discusses diet, medicine, Catholicism, the Sabbath, and witchcraft among many other prophetic "errors." Hunt concludes his private little exorcism with the invitation to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and hopes that the reading of this book will "protect" you from joining the Adventist Church.

Paul Bork. *Out of the City, Across the Sands: Retracing Abraham's Steps from Ur to Canaan*. 128pp., bibl. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982. \$5.95 (paper).

In a popular, accessible style, Paul Bork, professor of religion at Pacific Union College, continues a tradition of apologetics that uses the discoveries of archaeology to confirm faith in the historicity and accuracy of the Bible. Focusing on the patriarchal age, Bork reconstructs the ancient worlds of Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Egypt—the

lands inhabited or visited by Abraham. Tentatively, Bork ventures to assign dates to key events in Abraham's life and provides a larger context for the patriarchal stories by describing the geography, politics, culture, religion, and laws of an important cradle of modern civilization. In welcome contrast to most books published by Adventist presses, this book contains a useful, though somewhat dated, bibliography and enough footnotes to convey the air of scholarship necessary to reinforce most Adventists' faith "that God's Word is accurate and dependable."

Arnold Valentin Wallenkampf. *Salvation Comes From the Lord*. 128pp. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983. \$3.45 (paper).

Wallenkampf believes that the dangers of an unbalanced confidence in faith or works "lurk still in today's church" and argues that a true understanding of biblical salva-

tion always portrays faith and works as "good neighbors." In this brief discussion of salvation, based primarily on the New Testament books of Galatians and James, the author describes how men and women "can be made spiritually alive and fit for heavenly society." He sensitively attends to the historical and theological contexts surrounding these two books, concluding that the authors' seemingly contradictory attitudes toward the value of works in salvation only represent the different needs of their audiences. A brief glance at the footnotes reveals the author's dependence on the authority of Ellen G. White, but he also regularly and conspicuously cites Martin Luther and occasionally acknowledges contemporary commentators. For the reader confused by the apparent conflicts of Scripture, this book illustrates the power of a moderate historical-criticism to create a richer understanding of the Bible by acknowledging its diversities.

News Updates

Singer of The Rainbow

The following article is reprinted in part from a longer feature, written by Washington Post staff writer Edward D. Sargent, that appeared July 21 in The Washington Post. Wintley Phipps is an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister who is an assistant to the president of Oakwood College. Phipps and Jesse Jackson met in Huntsville, Ala. and have been friends for over a decade. Phipps defends his involvement in Jackson's political campaign by saying, "Jesse is at heart a minister in the prophetic tradition. He represents just causes—feeding hungry children and caring for the aged." Phipps points out that the presence of a black Christian Sabbath-keeper in Jackson's campaign was

noted appreciatively by many Jews, who had been angered by other aspects of the campaign. Phipps has said that he would be equally pleased to sing at gatherings to help the needy which featured Republican political figures, such as one of Mrs. Reagan's meetings to prevent drug abuse by the young.

—The Editors

SAN FRANCISCO—He was the mystery singer at the Democratic National Convention. But at his song's end, he had a rainbow of blacks, whites, Hispanics and Native Americans holding hands and swaying back and forth like a forest caught up in a forceful but calm tropical storm. Tears flowed freely. Many of those in the crowd were disarmed and numbed by the moment.

The singer, Wintley Phipps of Columbia, Md., walked out of obscurity and into the spotlight Tuesday night when he took center stage. Phipps, whose bass-baritone sounds like rumbling cannon-fire, sang a moving, meditative song called "Ordinary People" that capped off the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 50-minute electrifying appeal to the convention.

The combination was a one-two punch that dazzled the thousands of Democrats crammed into Moscone Center. "God uses ordinary people . . . put your faith in the Master's hands," sang Phipps, a 29-year old Seventh-day Adventist minister who actually lifted more conventioners and guests to their feet than did Jackson.

To those unmoved, it was a sideshow, emotional hogwash. "Ordinary people, huh?" scoffed one lukewarm delegate who declined to be identified after Mondale received the nomination Wednesday. "We're going to have to be extraordinary in order to beat the Republicans. But it was a beautiful song."

At a jam-packed reception in his honor Wednesday night, Jackson said he was glad to "share the stage" with Phipps. "I wanted the nation to hear him, too." And the response, Jackson indicated, was what he expected. "People have been calling [Jackson campaign headquarters] from all over the world asking us, 'Who is this brother, Wintley Phipps?'"

On several occasions during Jackson's campaign, Phipps sang gospel songs before the candidate spoke. "This was the first time I sang after he spoke," Phipps said. "He requested that I sing after him this time because he wanted to leave the people in a spiritual mood.

"We had some discussions about the kind of song we were going to do because they wanted to be careful that everything fit just right. We chose the song from a list of three," Phipps said. The two others, both gospels, were "Remember Me" and "I Choose You Again." he said.

Jackson and Phipps met 10 years ago while

the singer was a student at Oakwood College, a Seventh-day Adventist school in Huntsville, Ala. Their relationship grew through Phipps' participation in annual "black expo" conventions held by Jackson's activist organization, PUSH.

Phipps is president of a small recording company called Serenity and has produced three moderately successful albums that feature his singing. He has never had a runaway hit, but his music is played on gospel radio stations across the country and he has appeared on several religious television programs. He was one of the first gospel artists to perform on the black music show "Soul Train" when he sang a tribute to Minnie Riperton in 1979.

He is currently assistant to the president of Oakwood College, handling public relations and recruitment, he said.

At noon Wednesday, Phipps visited Jackson's headquarters at the Hyatt Union Square Hotel and encountered the robust former mayor of Atlanta, Maynard Jackson. "Young man, you were tremendous. Do you have a [business] card?" Maynard asked, smiling. "No," Phipps said, also smiling. "Then take mine and call me. I want to talk to you about coming to Atlanta. You were tremendous."

Rae Lewis, 22, a youth coordinator for the Jackson campaign, screamed when she saw him. "Tears were already in my eyes before you started to sing. When you opened your mouth, your voice just shook me. The tears flowed."

Phipps said he is not sure how to keep his momentary star shining. "I wouldn't know how to maximize on this moment in terms of advancing my career as a singer," Phipps said before leaving here for Washington and a reunion with his wife Linda, a nurse, and their 3-year old son, Wintley II.

But perhaps Arthur Pinkney, Jackson's campaign manager, has the next step in mind. He asked Phipps: "You released an album recently? We're going to have to do some marketing."

GC Commission Plans Minor Changes

by George Colvin

The report of the Commission on the Role and Function of Denominational Organizations to the 1984 Annual Council basically endorses the present system, recommends few changes, and does not build rationales for the changes it does recommend. Francis W. Wernick, a General Conference vice president, chaired the commission which included officers and laypeople from the world divisions.

Absent are any recommendations about the church's electoral processes. Instead, the commission affirms management by committee, rejecting business, government, and academic models. While the report suggests some ways to separate the functions of the North American Division from those of the General Conference, it firmly rejects the view that North America should become a full-fledged and separate division. The report also reaffirms unions as the foundation of the General Conference, and it strongly emphasizes the control of the General Conference by saying that its authority comes from God. Although the commission was established in the aftermath of Davenport, issues of communication and accountability are totally ignored.

The recommendations will be discussed at the 1984 Annual Council and then submitted to the 1985 General Conference Session in New Orleans. If accepted, changes will be made by the unions and local conferences before the 1986 Annual Council.

The Role and Function Commission's recommendations are notable for what they leave out. The report deals with seemingly minute matters—for instance, it recommends that the name the "North American

Division Committee on Administration" be changed to the "North American Division Committee"—but what changes like this imply in terms of actual operation is not spelled out. The commission's recommendations that lay participation should increase and administrative personnel should decrease might substantially change the way the church's affairs are conducted, but how this might come about is also not explained. The commission supports lay involvement increasing, but suggests that it still be less at the General Conference level, where policy is formed, than on lower levels. The roles of the local church and local conference are barely mentioned.

The commission argues for more centralized authority and specifically recommends that the constitutions of church organizations below the General Conference level conform closely to General Conference *Working Policy* models (at present, they differ widely). The commission also states that all changes to constitutions of local conferences and union should require the approval of the next higher level of organization, which they do not now do.

Two pages of the 24-page report are devoted to explaining the North American Division's role and function. While asserting the "special relationship which has existed historically between the General Conference and the North American Division," the commission proposes several changes to improve the division's visibility: separate division quarters (but in the new General Conference complex), separate annual estimates of the division's operating costs (possibly a step toward a separate budget), a division administrative committee with the authority to appoint study groups, and increased responsibility for the division officers and directors (complete with new titles).

In the end, by not supplying any supporting evidence or rationale for its recommendations, the commission has missed an important opportunity to build the church unity which it says is of utmost importance.

George Colvin is a doctoral candidate in government at Claremont Graduate School and served as secretary of the AAF Task Force on Church Structure (See *Spectrum*, Vol. 14, No. 4).