



## *Joyce Cary's Creative Imagination* Living Real: Imagination for Life

Reviewed by Robert P. Dunn

*Joyce Cary's Creative Imagination.*  
Edwin Earnest Christian. American University Studies. Series IV: English Language and Literature, Vol. 68. Peter Lang: New York, 1988.

Yet Adventists who read the volume can see, through Cary's characters and Professor Christian's explanations, how practical and vital the imagination really is. Indeed, the approach need not be limited to Cary; it can be generalized to any author who respects the independence of his or her characters.

Christian's book on Joyce Cary gives evidence of the surprising maturity of recent literary criticism by Seventh-day Adventists. Thirty years ago Adventist literature teachers tended to stick to the business of teaching. Such scholarly activity as they practiced was mainly employed to deflect the attacks of Ellen White supporters who proclaimed the danger of the imagination to moral and spiritual stability. The difficulty in the fundamentalist attitude was that it gave insufficient attention to the importance of the imagination in ordinary life, and students not infrequently thought that the church frowned on creativity altogether.

Although the author was trained in Adventist schools, his agenda does not include reflection on the development of Adventist attitudes toward literature—and indeed he does not have much to say about literary theory at all. Instead, the book focuses on the importance of creative imagination for the 20th-century Anglo-Irish writer Joyce Cary.

The research that culminated in this volume began in a master's seminar Professor Christian took under Dr. Otilie Stafford at Loma Linda University Riverside. He testifies to her influence in his Acknowledgements when he says that she was "the best teacher I ever had." Would that every student who read literature in Adventist classrooms were able to translate that experience so meaningfully to the challenges of living as Christian has done. The book is not only the best defense that can be presented against Ellen White fundamentalists, it is also the best response that can be made to those secular critics whose insights do not wear well outside the library or the study.

Professor Christian says that for Joyce Cary, creative imagination is "the fundamental human faculty by which man shapes and changes his world" (p. 1). Although he does not mention it, his approach—and Cary's—seems compatible with recent ideological criticism, which holds that a work of art is not simply

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an artifact to be admired, but a power that actively seeks to change the world. His purpose is to show how Cary's characters live well (and sometimes ill) through the use or misuse of this faculty. This criticism is exciting. It not only makes one wish to read the author recommended, but also to see how any novel or poem can help you live better.

For example, Gulley Jimson in *The Horse's Mouth*, Cary's most popular work, attempts to be a serious artist in a society that does not recognize his talent. How should such a person deal with critics or with those who ignore his work? Christian writes:

Jimson understands why his art is not appreciated. He sees the creative nature of life and enjoys it, knowing that fighting it is impossible. "Whole point is, no justice possible because of freedom," Cary writes. "But life is a gift" (MS. Cary 81/fol. 61). Gully Jimson sees that he must create his own destiny (p. 168).

How Jimson creates that destiny is what the novel is all about, and Christian does a fine job explaining the process. Many good Adventist students inclined to art, music, or literature would do well to read such a novel and reflect on how they can best nurture their own talents in a philistine society.

Cary does not deal with artists and obviously creative types. Many of the most interesting characters are the blacks and missionaries in the African novels. Too often, educated people fail to notice the creative abilities and needs of those apparently less educated. A prospective missionary would do well to read one of these.

Throughout the Cary corpus, a range of characters deal with life in unusual ways. There is Rose Venn, in *The Moonlight*, whose creative energies are spent trying "to make order in the world, to make her sisters live what seemed to her good, dignified, worthy, happy lives"

(p. 108). There is Nina Nimmo-Latter, of the second trilogy, whose "special artistry is seen in her ability to adapt to misfortune. She does not like to act, she does not want to force herself on the world, but if change comes she accepts it and survives" (pp. 199, 200). In other words, Cary shows how all kinds of people use creative imagination to create lives for themselves.

I must confess that before reading Professor Christian's work, I had

not known much about Joyce Cary. His writing induced me to take Cary more seriously, and his criticism has informed my own attempt to mark out the value of the imagination—artistic and otherwise—in a church that too often seems not to value it.

The only criticism I would make is that there are a number of annoying misspellings. Yet this is a minor complaint; the book is well worth your time.

## *Poverty and Wealth in James* James: An Epistle for the Poor

Reviewed by Gosnell Yorke

*Poverty and Wealth in James*. Pedrito Maynard-Reid. 136 pp. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987. \$8.95 (paper).

Is the Book of James an epistle of straw, as Martin Luther called it? Hardly. Is it a legalistic disfigurement of Paul's beautiful theology of justification by faith in Jesus Christ? Not in the least. For far too long (in Protestant circles, at least), the Epistle of James has been relegated to the periphery of New Testament theology and ethics. Martin Luther has had no small part in this. His rather individualistic approach to the doctrine of righteousness by faith, which he considered central to New Testament theology in general and Pauline theology in particular, led him to write off James as nothing but an epistle of straw. After all, does not James make outlandish (and seemingly heretical) claims such as faith without works is dead (2:17)? And that one is justified not by faith alone but by works as well (2:24)?

A book like *Poverty and Wealth* comes as a welcome corrective to

Luther's view, although that was not the author's primary objective or even his stated purpose. Based on a doctoral dissertation submitted in the early 1980s to the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Maynard-Reid's book illustrates very well what happens when James is allowed to speak on its own terms. By situating the Epistle within the much larger context of the socio-historical and geo-political world of its time (mainly Syro-Palestine), Maynard-Reid shares with us a perspective on James that is refreshing, revealing, and perhaps, for some, even revolutionary.

For Maynard-Reid, the larger context of James is the Old Testament and Intertestamental literature, first-century Jewish life, and the New Testament as a whole. Under the rubric of Old Testament literature, he includes the premonarchial and monarchial periods, the wisdom literature, and the Psalms; under that of Intertestamental literature, he discusses briefly and mainly the books of I Enoch and Sirach; and under that of first-century Jewish life, he surveys the Palestinian, diasporan, and sectarian situation. In the New Testament, he draws our attention to

Matthew, Luke's two-volume work (the Gospel and Acts), and the Pauline corpus (in fact, the Corinthian correspondence).

This commendable attempt to situate James within a broad context is both the major strength and one of the minor weaknesses of the work. It is a major strength in that it gives us a glimpse of the much larger picture. But, I am afraid, it is only a glimpse. In a work of this length (only 131 pages with notes and excluding the one index), Maynard-Reid can give us only a relatively superficial exposure to the relevant literature. With regard to the Hellenistic tradition, for example, Book 8 of *The Republic* would have been a valuable source—one in which Plato not only describes and decries democracy as a degenerate form of aristocracy, but also one in which he disparages the poor and adulates the rich.

In terms of the socio-economic conditions of Palestine during the first three centuries A.D. (or C. E.), Gildas Hamel's more recent work can now be consulted with much profit as well. (See *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries CE*. [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989]).

Instead of pitting James against Paul (as is the habit of some scholars), Maynard-Reid uses a more con-

temporary socio-historical approach to the text. In particular, he draws our attention to James' apparent preoccupation with the same issue of poverty and plenty within the community he addresses; and the ecclesiological and ethical implications that follow and flow from it.

In four tightly reasoned chapters, the author takes us through the economics of the Epistle by focusing on 1:9-11; 2:1-13; 4:13-17; and 5:1-6. And in each case, he shows us that James exhibits a preferential option for the poor. Reference is made, for example, to "the author's [James'] sensitivity to the trials of the poor and his censoriousness of the rich" (p. 48). For James, the rich include the well-dressed and the well-fed, such as landed proprietors, itinerant merchants, and profit-loving agriculturalists—those for whom the many exploited tenant farmers in Palestine used to till and dig "to fill *one* 'single belly'" (p. 86).

Throughout the work, Maynard-Reid rightly urges us to resist the temptation to spiritualize and/or privatize away notions of rich and poor as they appear in the four passages under study. For him, the rich in James do not constitute those who are rich in faith or anything of the sort. Rather, they point to the avaricious and the arrogant—those who know how to exploit and oppress others for economic advantage.

Similarly, the poor refer not to those who are merely or mainly poor in spirit as Matthew, for example, would have it (See Matthew 5:3-5). In short, the rich in James point to the rich; and the poor, to the poor. Further, the rich are admonished to keep their theology and ethics, belief and behavior, faith and works together. By insisting that faith without works is dead (2:17), James, the half-brother of Jesus, is saying no more than that the *faith* that works is the faith that *works*—and for the benefit of the indigent believer.

After carefully analyzing chapter

5:1-6, this is essentially how Maynard-Reid ends the sixth and final chapter of his book. The book just stops, and the reader feels somewhat let down.

Personally, I would have loved to see a concluding chapter, with some provocative comments on how an epistle like James can be made relevant to our own time; one in which the "Third World" (more correctly, the Two-Thirds World) is kept in a state of economic dependency *vis-à-vis* the "First World."

Maynard-Reid, from the "Third World" himself (Jamaica), could have ventured to tell us what James would have said about our contemporary situation. According to the liberation theologians of Latin America, a mere handful of nations (and Christians) are filthy rich because of the fact that the vast majority of others are dirt poor.

Overall, Maynard-Reid's book is definitely worth having. Thank goodness, one doesn't have to be rich to purchase it.

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## *We Have Tomorrow* A History of Black Adventist Americans

Reviewed by Susan M. F. Willoughby

*We Have Tomorrow—The Story of American Seventh-day Adventists With an African Heritage*, Louis B. Reynolds. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1984. 383 pages (edited by Raymond H. Woolsey).

During its April 7-9, 1969, meeting, a Regional Advisory Committee in Miami, Florida, recommended "that the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) give study to the establishment of a grant for the development and publication of a book dealing with the history of the work among the Negro minority" (p. 367). The committee further recommended that L. B. Reynolds, associate secretary in the Ministerial Department of the General Conference, be asked to research and write such a book. *We Have Tomorrow—The Story of American Seventh-day Adventists With an African Heritage* was the product.

In this age when "diversity" is the buzz word in the denomination, it is timely that this book, which has been off the press for a while, be reviewed.

Reynolds gathers under special topics his extensive review of selected segments of important achievements or contributions of blacks, for example: "Infants in the Spring"; "Shadow and Substance"; "The Right Arm." He documents black involvement in the "work" from 1863 to 1983. Within themes, Reynolds gives a chronological account. However, there are several noncontextual emphases that will be included in this review.

This book makes reference and gives credit to persons other than those of African heritage who sacrificed in the carrying of the third angel's message and "the principles of Christian education to the people of the South." Reynolds notes that, in 1863, the 5,000 Adventist members were for the most part poor, and their limited holdings seemed scarcely equal to the great things they set out to do. But leaders (all white) did not use this as an excuse to refrain from working for blacks, most of whom were ex-slaves in the South.

In a statement entitled "Slavery and the War," published in 1863, Ellen White declared that "God Himself was bringing judgment against America for the high crime of slavery." As Reynolds highlights, the tragic Civil War, which facilitated the freeing of the slaves, could be called the catalyst for the beginnings of the black Advent work. It was God's method of preparing the way for the gospel of salvation to be heralded throughout the South.

Reynolds emphasizes the point that President Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, effective January 1863, does not mean that freedom for blacks was a given. He aptly compares the emancipation of the slaves to the freedom of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt.

Jennie B. Allison embraced the opportunities created by that emancipation. As far as can be ascertained, she was the first black woman to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is fascinating to learn that she graduated from high school at age 77. She was 95 years old when she died in 1953 (p. 101).

The South has been looked upon as the cradle of the gospel work

among blacks. Churches, church schools—both elementary and secondary schools—seem to have begun there, eventually reaching toward the North. The only Adventist black college is also located in the South.

For Adventists, the close of the Civil War provided a clear signal to begin evangelism among the black population of the United States, most of whom were ex-slaves and lived in the South. Heretofore,

"Plantation owners had held unchallenged power over Negro field hands and could deny them conversations with anyone whose motives might be suspect. This rendered a gospel mission to the captive laborers almost impossible" (p. 142).

Freedom, however, was not an unmixed blessing. The "angry scar" had not yet healed, and Reynolds' work asks if it is still "itching" among God's people. For example, Reynolds mentions that, in the 1970s, only five black ministers were assigned to non-black churches either as pastors or assistant pastors.

The basic message that Reynolds conveys is how crucial it is to create environments for the expression of freedom and maximum attainment. He has developed this message through several themes that will undoubtedly be discussed for a long time.

*Church Growth.* Two of Reynolds' mini-case studies include feats of soul-winning. He tells of E. E. Cleveland's leading "more than nine thousand persons to Christ in thirty-six years of ministry" (p. 262). He also cites the case of Frederick S. Keitts, who, in 1923, held a six-week tent meeting in New Orleans. When the meetings were over, he baptized more than 100 converts. "Fifty years later all could be accounted for—either they were still in the church or had died in the faith" (p. 242).

*Heritage of Dedication.* Reynolds cites the fact that the grandfa-

ther and father of the recently retired president of the North American Division of the General Conference, Charles E. Bradford, were also ordained Adventist ministers (p. 257). Reynolds also calls attention to 1902 when many well-qualified black medical and educational personnel became ambassadors to the world.

*Organization.* Reynolds recognizes the importance of checks and balances by referring to Ellen White's concern that Sabbath school offerings collected in 1896 for the Southern work were appropriated for other denominational work. "The whole incident made clear the urgent need for church reorganization" (p. 87). This reorganization took place in 1901, when all interests were drawn together into the General Conference and its departments.

It seems that before reorganization of the work of the General Conference in 1901, the International Sabbath School Association . . . directed the Sabbath Schools (p. 86).

Another type of reorganization

occurred in 1944—reorganization into separate conferences, resulting in phenomenal growth and development for the black work.

*Hope.* Reynolds highlights blacks who were first: first physician, first missionary, first Ph.D., et cetera. He shows that black Adventists were not isolated. He cites a black Adventist leader greeting the President of the United States, and recounts how a judge (because of his firsthand experience with Adventists' use of hydrotherapy and of vegetarian meals) assisted Oakwood College's admission to the United Negro College Fund (p. 149).

Incidentally, in highlighting Oakwood College, Reynolds discusses few black graduates of other Adventist colleges. Reynolds is also biased in his treatment of black Adventist leaders. For example, one leader's contribution is extolled for a page, while another leader's equivalent contribution is summarized in a sentence or two.

This book may be a milestone, but, as Dr. Reynolds himself once

admitted, it is not the full story of black Adventism in North America. For instance, much needs to be written about the growth of the black work in Canada, and inner-city work all over the United States. Also, although this book describes some contributions of Americans of West Indian descent, no history exists that relates the development of Adventism in the Caribbean.

This book effectively brings to light many of the contributions of blacks. It is a very readable work, and may well be used as a springboard for discussion in human relations committees in Adventist colleges and other institutions. It will appeal to a variety of readers—to young people who need to learn, or older people who need to be reminded, of the contributions of black Adventists.

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