



## *Servants or Friends?* Graham Maxwell's Latest Book

Reviewed by Gordon Bietz

Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?* Redlands, Calif.: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992. \$15.95 hard-cover; \$9.95 paper. 224 pages.

From the first chapter on, Graham Maxwell has a pastoral objective for his book. He seeks to reach a generation of people turned off to Christianity. The book opens with a variety of his personal experiences with people whose distorted concept of God drove them away from the Christian church. Maxwell seeks to bring them back by picturing God as seeking our friendship rather than our servitude.

Anders Nygren, in his classic work *Agape and Eros*, builds a paradigm of contrasting motifs through a word study of *agape* and *eros*. He sees the world and everything in it fitting into one of these words. Graham Maxwell is doing

the same with the motifs *servant* and *friend*. He gets these words from a phrase in John 15:15 where Jesus says, "I no longer call you servants, . . . Instead, I have called you friends . . ." (NIV). One might question building such an extensive picture of God based on one text, but then Nygren used only two words and one of them isn't even in the Bible. I illustrate Maxwell's contrasting motifs in the table below.

The bias of any theologically conversant Adventist will have them looking for some praiseworthy or damning clues in the book that reinforce their ideas about Maxwell's ideas. There are those who would suggest that the paradigm doesn't stand up theologically because of the way it deals with the cross (God's supreme demonstration of his love, according to Maxwell, as compared to a forensic

ISSUE	SERVANTS	FRIENDS
Questions	Don't ask	Freedom to question
Obedience	From fear	From love
Revelation	Sinai and thunder	Still small voice
Hell	Fire from God	Love from God
Faith	Leap in the dark	Leap into light
Communication	Dark speech	Plain speech
God	Judge to appease	Father to love
Law	Restrictive instruction	Loving guidelines
Obedience	Fear of punishment	Trust of law-giver
Sin	Breaking the rules	Breaking the relationship
Salvation	Legal transaction	Supreme demonstration
God's wrath	Anger	Absence
Judgment	Records in heaven	Record of heart
Atonement	Making amends	Making friends

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view of his death as a sacrifice). Maxwell's theory of the atonement is not the focus of the book, though his ideas come through.

I am not a theologian. I am a pastor who lives a long way from the semiarid land of theological hair splitting, so I won't get into all the implications for the doctrine of atonement. I simply know that the picture of God presented by Maxwell ministers to people whose lives have been abused by religious demagogues and who don't experience God's peace. Some will suggest that there are many inappropriate theological thoughts that minister to people but in the end lead them down the garden path to destruction. I agree. I don't believe that this paradigm is one of those.

One test of the God-as-friend paradigm, aside from whether it is theologically valid, is "Does it work?" I answer that question with a decided "Yes." I might not be as exclusive in using the servant/friend paradigm as Maxwell is, but it nonetheless makes a very distinctive contribution to Adventist thought. Several of my parishioners has come to me with a reflective question about eschatology or the atonement. Their reflections have been stimulated by coming in

contact with Maxwell's ideas. I don't necessarily believe that Maxwell's paradigm answers all the questions about the atonement, but then that wasn't the goal. Certainly other theories also fall short of making clear this event that we will study for eternity.

When it comes to thinking about God, we all need to take off our sandals like Moses and walk very carefully. No one picture is the *sin qua non* picture of God. I find that many perspectives deepen one's appreciation of Scripture, and of God.

The book is "an easy read." It is filled with illustrations, both pictorial and written. The points are made clearly. Just pick up the book *Servants or Friends* and you have the feel that this is not published for the Adventist Book Center. There is a clear attempt to reach a wider audience than might find their way into an Adventist store. It is good to see an attempt to publish to the larger community rather than just having continuing conversations with ourselves.

I recommend the book to you. Give it as a gift to friends who are struggling with their perception of God. It may just open up a whole new vista and enable them to receive God's friendship.

than addressing only the symptoms and casualties of those structures. This results, the authors contend, when Adventists individually and corporately throw off such inhibitors to social action as the deep-seated fallacy of ancient body/soul dualism; internalize the Old and New Testament roots of social concern; and set their own house aright by dismantling the black conferences of the North American Division.

Readers will notice that the case for social concern is not made by caricaturing the church. Positive recent developments are acknowledged: our forays against the tobacco industry, the release of General Conference statements on selected public policies, revisionist interpretations of the Adventist church in Peru, integration of the South African church, and the like.

Noteworthy also, the prescribed social activism does not spring from the hearty individualism that we rightly or wrongly equate with liberalism. Indeed, the authors' valuation of the individual, which is not altogether clear, seems low—at least too low for triggering the remedial passions that are wanted. As in the Hebraic and conservative traditions, the individual becomes truly human only as the member of a group.

Social activism, as generally understood in Adventist circles, misses the mark. Too smart to voice the dualism they deplore, Dudley and Hernandez do not separate spiritual concerns from social concerns and then uphold the latter. It only seems that they do this. Social concerns are emphasized because they are the more neglected component of the Adventist mindset.

For the authors, the desideratum is always an integrative holistic model that brings into creative tension all dimensions of human life. Soul and body become one. Evan-

## SDAs: Conservative *and* Liberal

Reviewed by Gary M. Ross

Dudley, Roger L., and Edwin I. Hernandez, *CITIZENS OF TWO WORLDS: Religion and Politics Among American Seventh-day Adventists*. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1992. \$14.95 paperback. 318+ pages.

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This book appears to be a manual for social activism and an empirical demonstration that Adventists need it. On closer analysis, it is not quite either of these things.

The later chapters of the book, the part where recommendations emerge, describe what ought to constitute the relationship between religion and politics: a commitment to the radical, prophetic kind of social involvement that transforms oppressive structures rather

gelist and activist coincide with singleness of purpose and mission. No aspect of human life escapes the power of the gospel. And all of this because, for Ellen White, "the union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel."

The authors ask, Is it empirically the case that Adventists shun politics and neglect the social side of things? In this book advocacy, such as that which is outlined above, follows inquiry. Turning, then, to the section written by the authors in their role as social scientists, we find inquiry aplenty—and surprisingly meager results.

Able researchers that they are, Dudley and Hernandez disclose their methodology, acknowledge the shortcomings of questionnaire-generated data, and qualify the results. A survey of 419 adult lay members in North America on religion and politics forms the basis of their study and produces the eventual thesis that Adventists "vary on their politics according to certain measures of religion and background variables such as ethnicity."

Ambitiously, the book first identifies differences among Adventists in religious beliefs, behaviors, and experiences. Pastors and church administrators should draw heavily upon this material as they nurture their parishioners and determine policy. For example, questions on orthodoxy discovered beliefs in the imminence of Christ's second coming to be unexpectedly low, and belief in a works-oriented doctrine of salvation to be unexpectedly high. While at the experiential level Adventists were found incorporating much subjectivity and emotion into their religion, church-related practices such as attendance, tithing, witnessing, and the conducting of worship in the home

produced a mixed and quite disturbing picture. Given the North American Division's recent book-length repudiation of such unofficial journals and ministries as *Our Firm Foundation*, it is curious that these journals were rarely even known to the respondents.

The question posed next is whether social variables determine the religious differences among Adventists. Comparisons between the measures of religion and such demographic groups as gender, religious background, marital status, age, ethnicity, family income, and level of formal education revealed considerable predictability in the areas of age and socioeconomic status. That is, religious commitment increased among the elderly, perhaps because of the increasing imminence of death; and it fell markedly among the affluent and professionally trained. Apparently, when the former leave the scene one cannot expect the latter to take up the mantle and support the church with equal commitment.

A chapter follows on how Adventists responded to the political, economic, and social issues current in 1988. Most favored a "liberal" stance on socioeconomic and peace issues, such as the elimination of racial discrimination and the establishment of peaceful relations with Russia. But Adventists took a "conservative" position on strictly political concerns, like law and order—perhaps reflecting their own law-oriented soteriology.

Having determined what American Adventists are like religiously and politically, the authors proceed to their "major research task": the demonstration of how the first quality influences the second. They lament that "the nature of the relationship between religion and politics is—in the final analysis—elusive." They also in-

sist, with Niebuhr, that correlation does not prove causation, given that social variables intervene between religion and politics. Their assumptions set the stage for scanty empirical results. Nevertheless, the book holds that "while the effect of religion on political views is by no means strong, it does exist, to some extent, independent of that of demographic considerations."

The measure of religion found to serve best as a predictor of political attitudes and behaviors is orthodoxy or ideological commitment. Where this is strong, Adventists either withdraw from politics completely or take conservative political positions. But three things can complicate this correspondence: religious liberty issues, military offensives, and ethnic experience. Indeed in such contexts the orthodox become markedly liberal, fearing that school prayer could break the wall of separation between church and state, that war and killing could curtail the spreading of the gospel, that obsession with law and order could undermine the freedom and justice that minorities (but not only minorities) crave.

We knew already, of course, that the attendees of Sabbath "rallies" on religious liberty look like, and sound like, conservatives while zealously voicing the liberal agenda on church and state. It is the conspicuous absence of moderate, middle-aged professionals that I wanted explained.

A further letdown: a Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America known to be undergoing an influx of blacks and Hispanics is assessed by an instrument that slights minorities; and a people's stance on public issues is assessed without mention of abortion. For some, these acknowledged weaknesses will loom too large to be excused.

Preoccupied as I am with this church's role in the public sector, it

is also hard to share the authors' sense that the denomination's social concern is inadequate. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency, a very far-reaching dynamic of the church, seems not to count at all. And what about the community services of local churches? Super-seding Dorcas, these efficient, professional outreaches deserve attention and approval.

Few books reach their central task so slowly. About 100 pages of material precede the above report of the empirical findings. Yet this is a virtue, too. They pack valuable information on the reversal of conservative Protestantism from involvement in society to withdrawal from society to engagement in selective aspects of state and national life; and valuable information also on the relationship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the U.S. government since the mid-19th century. Exciting research by George Marsden, Jonathan Butler, Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart laces this historical introduction.

Indeed, theoretical constructs undergird the book throughout, and constitute a major strength. The timing of this book's publication is another merit. We who have just endured a race for the White House, watched Global Mission become our church's top priority, listened to debates over national health insurance, and applauded the integration of the Adventist Church outside North America *cannot but* welcome, read, and use this book.

## Milton Murray's Dream

Reviewed by Loren Dickinson

Ronald A. Knott. *The Makings of a Philanthropic Fundraiser: The Instructive Example of Milton Murray*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1992. \$23.95, hardcover. 237 pages.

Milton Murray, the subject of this book, never himself aimed to write a book about what he does best—raise and give away money. Even less did he ever intend to have one written about him.

But his admirers thought differently. They've produced *The Makings of a Philanthropic Fundraiser: The Instructive Example of Milton Murray*.

Murray could have written it. The book's single dominant feature ends up being an array of verbatim quotes and Murray philosophy garnered and arranged by author Ronald Alan Knott. (Knott and Murray spent some six months together in early morning interviews to develop the substance of the book.)

Knott, with some considerable skill, blends Murray's views with more factual description of Murray's life, detailing a variety of family and personal influences Murray experi-

enced en route to raising millions for the church and other entities.

The book's most compelling point is not so much what Murray has done but what he is. One senses a man of intrepid style with the singular goal of raising and sharing money for good causes. Persistence and ethics may rank highest as Murray's greatest assets.

Murray offered Knott a rare and candid insight into the state of affairs at Loma Linda in the 1950s. Early in his career Murray worked to establish public relations at the former College of Medical Evangelists. He admits in the book to being both challenged and annoyed at LLU's reticence to see value in public relations and philanthropy. That has dramatically changed, probably in part due to Murray's early work there.

The book, published by Jossey-Bass, is not holy writ. Clear and fair-minded, but not holy writ. People who don't know Murray are not likely to buy it. Those who do may wish for something more than description. Interpretation, perhaps.

Still, it offers a picture of a significant church figure, setting out to be useful, and finding out that he succeeded to a measure greater than he would ever admit. That may be worth writing about.

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