



A Spirit-Filled Adventism for a New Generation

Reviewed by Andy McRae

Steve Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation* (Portland/Clackamas, Oregon: Better Living Publishers, 1993). 323 pages. \$12.50 paperback.

Steve Daily has done this denomination a great service with his new book. In a spirit one could call "prophetic," he seems to be calling for a long overdue renewal and reinterpretation of Adventism—its beliefs, its self-understanding, its mission, its place in the world. Intentionally or not, Daily will offend almost every interest group in the Adventist denomination. The book throws down the gauntlet; it nails theses to cathedral doors. This book needs to have people read and study it, then debate and grow.

Adventism for a New Generation is an invitation to a dialogue about the meaning of our faith, not an exhaustive systematic theology. In framing the conversation, Daily repositions Jesus at the very center of all Adventist deliberations, formulations, and actions. Daily develops three aspects of Christ: Christ as the final revelation and therefore the central basis for interpreting scripture; Christ's gospel of grace as Adventism's central experience; and Christ as the model of the principles of healthy religion.

Christ as model for healthy religion is the leitmotif of the book. Daily argues that unless our church

comes to terms with Christ as the core of our faith and experience, our church may disappear or at worst continue as a large but decidedly dysfunctional family. Christ's "principles of healthy religion" are described as the "five identifying marks of a healthy religion which are not only found in each of the world's five major religions . . . but fit with the findings of some of the most recent works which have attempted to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy religion" (p. 44, 45). Daily says that these five marks of a healthy religion (1) give meaning to life rather than contributing to its chaos; (2) encourage worship and absolute allegiance only to what it perceives to be the ultimate source of goodness; (3) seek to meet the needs of all human beings to the greatest possible degree; (4) promote mental, physical, and emotional health; and (5) give priority to love, courage, humility, purity, justice, service, and faith in a higher power, rather than to doctrinal creeds, personal piety, and institutional self-preservation.

Adventism for a New Generation's opening chapters include a delightful comparison between Perestroika and Adventism. Succeeding chapters take us back to the roots of Adventism: Judaism, Protestant Reformation, "shouting" Methodism (its Pentecostal roots!),

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and Millerism. Subsequently, the book links Adventism to Christianity's central doctrines, redefines the pillar doctrines of Adventism, and connects this renewed Adventist theology to both the church and the practical life of the world.

In the final section of the book, "Applying Our Theology in the Church and in the World," Daily addresses myriad issues. He draws special attention to what the results of Valuegenesis say about the Adventist family, and discusses how the church sometimes functions as a dysfunctional community. Daily also discusses Adventist attitudes toward social issues such as abortion, minorities, poverty, and feminism, and takes a cursory look at issues that concern and often divide both Adventists and the society—homosexuality, AIDS, premarital sex, music, amusements, dress standards, and competitive sports. The list reads like the index to Adventist Bull Sessions 101. Yet, through all of the hip-deep wading, Daily bends every discussion to his central theme of Jesus as the only Savior, the essence of "healthy religion," and the ultimate basis for interpreting Scripture.

An example is Daily's reflection on prophecy and Adventism's claim to be the "remnant church" of prophecy:

The Adventist church, like many others, has often overstated its relation to the remnant church of Scripture; throughout much of its history it has even made exclusive claims to remnant status. Such claims, past and present, are unfortunate evidence of unhealthy and dysfunctional religion in Adventism" (p. 194).

The author takes the church to task for its failure to allow the Spirit to lead it to surprise the predictions of sociology. Adventism, Daily declares, has reached the crossroads

that all institutions eventually reach: the choice between stagnation and death, or ferment and renewal. Daily calls his church to live beyond the parochial boundaries of denominationalization; to embrace not only other Christians, but God's other faiths as well.

As a pastor, I have discovered that *Adventism for a New Genera-*

tion moves people to think about their faith in new ways, and discuss it with new language. In the Sabbath School class I facilitate at Sligo Church, we are working through the book and finding the experience stimulating and nourishing. Get it, read it, and discuss it. But Steve Daily, I think, would say, "Live it!"

An Excerpt From *Adventism for a New Generation*

My concern was addressed that night in a dream. I saw the colleges and universities of Southern California gathered together for a great student congress on the floor of the LA Coliseum. Each school was instructed to single out the one issue that was attracting the greatest attention on its campus. It was impressive to see the students of UCR erect a huge banner which read, "Free South Africa—Down with Apartheid." UCLA raised a similar sign with the words, "Stop World Hunger." UC Irvine was concerned about overpopulation and pollution. The Claremont colleges chose as their slogan, "End Racist Nationalism—Join the Sanctuary Movement." Fuller Theological Seminary raised the issue of sexism, expressing its support for women's ordination, and USC proudly proclaimed its commitment to fighting terrorism and the threat of nuclear war.

Then all eyes seemed to focus on La Sierra University as it elevated a gigantic poster that clearly contained the most perplexing message of the day. It was a very simple looking sign, inscribed with the word SHORTS. There was a moment of profound silence and then a pervasive buzz could be heard throughout the crowd. Most of the students seemed embarrassed that they were not familiar with what these letters stood for, assuming that SHORTS must be an acronym for something. A tremendous debate ensued as the various schools attempted to decode its meaning. One coed from USC suggested that the letters stood for, "the Shortage of Housing and Opposition to Rising Tuition by Students." But this idea was quickly dismissed by others as far too parochial and insignificant in its global implications to occupy the attention of an entire campus.

Suddenly, a UCR student shouted, "I've got it! I've got it! La Sierra has managed to include all of the major issues facing our world today in a single acronym. How could we be so blind? SHORTS obviously stands for South Africa, Hunger, Overpopulation, Racism, Terrorism/war, and Sexism." A murmur of approval quickly moved throughout the crowd and resulted in thunderous applause and shouts of jubilant affirmation. The roar became so deafening that it woke me from my sleep, and a still small voice whispered, "Why are the children of this world wiser in their generation than the children of light?"