

question, Can disciples ever kill or prepare to kill? . . .

A second way to sharpen our witness is through the style of our lives together. True Christians live and even suffer for one another, the Anabaptists said; they build up a kind of family solidarity. . . .

In our relations as male and female, black and white, ordained and unordained, do we exhibit harmonious equality or do we erect dividing walls of hostility? . . .

Anabaptists believed that true Christian witness, true Christian evangelism, confronts not only individuals but also nations and

institutions. . . .

That is where a final element of Anabaptist heritage within radical Protestantism comes into play: the sense of coming apocalyptic transformation. We today are familiar with apocalyptic consciousness; it is central in Adventism as it was central in Adventism's Reformation predecessors. The coming apocalypse keeps us always mindful of divine judgment on the present age, and always hopeful that, by whatever miracle, a new heaven and a new earth will truly come and our witness will truly matter. . . .

Adventist Tithesaying—The Untold Story



by Brian E. Strayer
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Many Seventh-day Adventists think our 19th-century pio-

neers' giving habits probably outshone those of their 20th-century descendants. Hence, tithing—practiced by 86 percent of all Seventh-day Adventists today in some form—must indeed be one of the oldest financial traditions within our church. In truth, however, this method of systematic giving entered the pantheon of Adventist practices quite late in the 19th century. While most Adventists have been sacrificial givers, they have not always given systematically. . . .

Up to 1859 no regular giving plan emerged in Adventist circles. While many sabbatarian Adventists gave sacrificially, most members gave sporadically. The three angels' messages given to the Philadelphia church in prophecy could not be spread like the leaves of autumn using the Laodicean methods of 1850s Adventists. Somehow, a new financial program had to be shaped to fit the urgency of the message. . . .

The third giving plan—Systematic Benevolence—actually originated with a church committee at Battle Creek, and not with any one

individual. James White explained to *Review* readers in February 1859 that on the previous January 16, a group of men had met to consider what he called “a System of Benevolence” that would induce every member to give regularly to fully sustain the cause while relieving the few who had given beyond their means. J. N. Andrews, J. B. Frisbie, and James White joined forces to propagate the Battle Creek plan in the *Review*. . . .

It is well worth noting that whenever James White or others discussed the Systematic Benevolence plan, they usually emphasized its nonsacrificial nature. White saw the giving ratios as low enough so those in the poorest circumstances (except widows, the infirm, and the aged, he felt) could give, while those in better circumstances, he hoped, would give even more than the stipulated amounts. At no time did anyone in 1859 mention Malachi 3:8-10, nor did any *Review* writer stress the personal blessings of faithful giving. Writers placed primary emphasis on the needs of the cause. . . .

In practical terms, how did the faithful implement this plan? James White described the procedures in Battle Creek in 1861. Every Sunday the Systematic Benevolence treasurer visited each member's home, carrying his hand trunk and the Systematic Benevolence record book. “All expect him, and all get ready for him, and meet him with open hands and benevolent feelings.” A few hours' labor netted \$25. Yet “no one feels poorer but all feel happier after casting their small sums into the treasury.” To assist the treasurers and each member in keeping track of his weekly giving, the *Review* prepared ledgers with columns for dates, names, weekly giving amounts, and monthly totals.

One sample ledger, printed in the January 6, 1863, *Review* leads

one to draw several enlightening conclusions regarding early Adventist giving. First, the emphasis is upon the giving of adult property owners; the ill, aged, and those under 18 need not participate in the full Systematic Benevolence plan. Second, the plan stresses regular giving of “donations,” not tithes and offerings as such. Finally, as will become clearer later on, the Systematic Benevolence plan asked believers to give a tithe or 10th of their *increase*, not from their *income*. James White and others would later specify that one’s increase represented about 10 percent annual growth of one’s assets; so a 10th of that really amounted to only 1 percent of one’s total assets or income. . . .

The 32-page 1876 tract “Systematic Benevolence” came out under James White’s name, but in reality represented an amplification of Canright’s lengthy articles in the February, March, and April issues of the *Review*. White advanced no new texts, arguments, or ideas that Canright had not already presented, but the fact that the editor who had earlier rejected the “Israelitish tithing plan” now put his name to a pamphlet endorsing this plan shows how far James had come in his understanding of biblical tithing. . . .

Even in 1875, Ellen White referred to the giving plan variously as “Systematic Benevolence” and the “tithing system.” “God’s plan,” she stated, is “the tithing system.” Yet she referred as well to paying “one tenth of the increase” (not income) as the amount God requires today as he did according to the Mosaic law. While she quoted Malachi 3:8-10, Ellen White still averred that tithing should be voluntary. “Systematic Benevolence should not be made systematic compulsion,” she warned.

Her real burden was to persuade Adventists to “make giving a

habit without waiting for special calls.” . . .

Gradually by the 1880s, Adventists adopted the full tithing plan as a replacement for the old “Sister Betsy” plan. . . .

Canright—not White—explained the tithing system to the 1879 General Conference. Therefore, the ex-Adventist preacher in 1913 told Colcord “the denomination can credit me with millions of dollars brought in to the treasury” through the tithing plan. The *Review* for April 24, 1879, attests that Canright did indeed address the General Conference on tithing on April 18. . . .

As calls for funds became especially urgent during the 1930s depression, church leaders decided to spell out tithing duties for officers and members in a *Church Manual*, the first of which was published in 1932. . . . The 1932 *Manual* stated, . . . “all church officers should be tithepayers.” Elders must encourage members to “pay a full and faithful tithe” by preaching sermons on the topic of stewardship and by personal visitation “in a tactful and helpful manner.” But what they learned

To All the World

A sampler of the 50 countries our subscribers call home.

Barbados
Botswana
Czech Republic
Iceland
Martinique
New Caledonia
Papua New Guinea
Russia
St. Vincent
Seychelles Islands
Singapore
Sri Lanka
Tahiti
Trinidad and Tobago
Zimbabwe

about members’ tithing habits, the *Manual* warned, must be kept confidential. Later manuals in 1938, 1940, and 1942 repeated this counsel to local church elders. . . .

The *Manual* then told readers: “From its early days the Seventh-day Adventist church has followed the scriptural method for financing its work.” But as this study reveals, never before the 1880s at the earliest had the church followed anything like the “scriptural method” of true tithing. . . .

Then, establishing a 50-year tradition, the 1932 *Manual* asserted that while tithing “is not held as a test of fellowship,” those “conference workers and church elders and other officers and institutional leaders who failed to pay tithe, should not be continued in office.” Also for the first time, tithing entered the roster of “Fundamental Beliefs.” No. 18 stated:

That the divine principle of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel is an acknowledgment of God’s ownership in our lives, and that we are stewards who must render account to Him of all that He has committed to our possession.

. . . The first major revisions of the *Church Manuals* in matters of finance came in 1951. For the first time, a section on “Doctrinal Instruction for Baptismal Candidates” was included, and doctrine No. 15 read:

The tithe is holy unto the Lord, and is God’s provision for the support of His ministry. Freewill offerings are also part of God’s plan for the support of His work throughout the world.

. . . Also listed in the 1951 *Manual* were the baptismal vows, No. 10 of which asked: “Do you believe in church organization, and is it your purpose to support the

church by your tithes and offerings, your personal effort, and influence?" Candidates have usually answered "Yes" to this same question for more than 30 years.

The 1951 *Manual* also tightened some loopholes in tithe-paying rhetoric. Church elders who failed to be faithful tithe payers now faced not only expulsion from the office of local elder, but also found themselves barred from any other church office. This regulation also has been repeated in subsequent manuals. . . .

One very important additional statement on page 252 of the 1981 *Manual* clarified the relationship

between tithe paying and church membership. It stated:

A member should never be dropped from the church rolls on account of his inability or failure to render financial help to any of the causes of the church. Church membership rests primarily on a spiritual basis yet it is the duty of every member to support the work of the church in a financial way to the extent of his ability.

The church, in short, should not be seen as an exclusive spiritual club in which nonpaying members are not welcome. . . .

fare Association. The aims of the association are to render material and moral assistance to the destitute and the bereaved, and to provide scholarships to Adventist young people who would otherwise be unable to attend school. The association has also at times been able to supplement the salaries of church workers and thus help sustain them in the work. With its accumulated experience, the association has recently formed an insurance company, the Sedawa Mutual Insurance Co. Ltd., to provide inexpensive insurance protection to the members of the Adventist community. Besides maintaining a medical practice, Kisekka has been a very successful dairy cattle farmer, a director of companies in many other areas—fishing, coffee ginning, horticultural farming, printing, general trading, pharmaceuticals, and insurance. He was also the administrator and majority shareholder in a 50-bed nursing home that brought together more than 10 highly trained medical specialists and provided specialized services to the community. . . .

In Uganda participation in political activities has been taboo in Seventh-day Adventist circles. Adventists have considered politics intrinsically "dirty" and "worldly." But Prime Minister Kisekka testifies that politics is a mighty avenue for witnessing. At his public rallies Kisekka often cites the Bible and tells the people of his Christian convictions. . . .

In 1954 he made plans to form a political party but his plans were thwarted by what he calls "interference" by a "prominent" Adventist missionary. Nevertheless, his political ambitions did materialize in 1959 when he was popularly elected to the Great Lukiiko (then the Parliament of the Kingdom of Buganda within the nation of Uganda). He later became Buganda's minister for health and works. During his

Samuel Kisekka, M.D.: Adventist Revolutionary Leads Uganda



by D. D. N. Nsereko
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This profile of Samuel Kisekka, M.D., is one of many pieces in Spectrum that have examined how Adventists around the world participate in the public life of their nations. D. D. N. Nsereko, a Seventh-day Adventist member of the Ugandan Bar, holds law degrees from New York University and the Hague Academy. At the time he wrote this article, Nsereko chaired the law department at the University of Botswana.

Seventh-day Adventists now generally know that Uganda is a country where the prime minister, Dr. Samson Babi Mululu Kisekka, is a fellow believer. He is the first

Adventist anywhere in the world to rise to such a high office of state. How did this happen? How does Dr. Kisekka as an Adventist feel about being in politics? What are his government's domestic and foreign policies? . . .

Son of an Anglican chief, Kisekka was born on June 23, 1912. He attended Anglican missionary schools and Makerere College, now Makerere University, where he studied medicine. As a youth he was an active soccer player, Boy Scout leader, and church choir member. He accepted the Adventist message in 1954 after stumbling into an evangelistic effort that he decided to attend out of curiosity. He became an active and faithful member of the church and an outstanding lay leader. An ordained local church elder, he has represented his local union at several General Conference sessions. Perhaps the most notable of the many contributions that Kisekka has so far made to the Uganda Adventist community was the establishment in 1955 of the Seventh-day Adventist Wel-