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Book Review of Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership, by Harold L. Lee, with Monte Sahlin

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analyze how and why our current theologies of mission are lacking.

One contribution to the new theology of mission that Kuhn seeks could come from a focus on holism in the Bible. Kuhn defines holism as “the belief or theory that reality (things or people) are made up of organic or unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. The term ‘holistic’ has to do with holism and as such it emphasizes the importance of the whole and the interdependency of its parts” (135). He is clearly referring to the synergistic nature of wholes and parts as they relate. I have begun work on a biblical theology of synergism or holism, and have identified five conditions (based on a study of Gen 1–4 and qualitative field work) for building synergic unity among diverse parts in Christian organizational wholes: spirituality, communication, identifying, appreciating, and defining mission (see Doug Matacio, “Creating Unity in a Multicultural Christian Organization: Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church Effectively Meeting Its Goal of Scriptural Unity?” *AUSS* 43 [2005]: 315-331).

The biblical section of this book, with its numerous examples of welfare and development principles found in the Bible, is a good source of support for field workers around the world. These are the seeds for Kuhn’s future theology of holistic mission, a theology that will need to carefully balance social concern with evangelism. The historical section is a superb summary and fingertip resource for historical trends. It is also a good starting point for those planning deeper research into the history of Christian social responsibility.

By comparison, the contemporary perspectives section, while informative and useful, does not thoroughly engage contemporary secular or Christian theorists in dialog. For example Jayakumar Christian’s work, including *God of the Empty-Handed: Poverty, Power and the Kingdom of God* (Montovia, CA: MARC, 1999), is barely mentioned. This book should be read along with Myers’s *Walking with the Poor*, mentioned above.

The fairly numerous typographical mistakes found in this book do not detract much from the author’s ability to get his message across in clear and easily understandable prose.

Many lay persons who have logged hours of fund-raising in behalf of the poor, and who volunteer in community service centers have questions about the relief and development enterprise of the church. I know of no better place to direct them than to Kuhn’s introduction to the field. This book should stimulate further studies into God’s plan for holistic mission.

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DOUG MATACIO

Lee, Harold L., with Monte Sahlin. *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 2005. 259 pp. Paper, \$14.95.

Charles Bradford, a truly historical figure, was the first Black leader of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Harold Lee and Monte Sahlin describe his life as a “moving story of visionary Christian servant-leadership manifested in a gifted personality, a Jesus man” (v). The authors have attempted to include much of Bradford’s thinking on the major issues faced by the church during his life and ministry, drawing much of the material for the book from Bradford’s personal experiences, memories, testimonies, scholarly papers, official documents, letters, sermons, and essays.

This rich treasure of material casts a revealing light on the life of Bradford, showing him to be a visionary and Christ-centered leader, a powerful and persuasive preacher, a competent administrator, and a skillful and tactful negotiator. His most

enduring contribution to the church was in the area of ecclesiology. His practical ideas and approaches to leadership, church administration, and church growth, along with his concerns about social issues and creative evangelism, still influence the Seventh-day Adventist Church today.

Brad reflects biographical characteristics, but is not a true biography. Although the book initially deals with chronological issues in Bradford's life (chap. 1), it focuses primarily on the great themes and issues that dominated his life, ministry, and personal reflection, approaches, and methodology in dealing with those issues (chaps. 2–8). Chapter 9 is a summary and a challenge to readers to consider the continuing relevance of Bradford's ideas.

Using excerpts from a number of Bradford's articles on preaching and pastoral ministry, the authors conclude that he was first and foremost a pastor who passionately believed that the local church is the most important entity in the denominational structure. For him, all ministry was local. He fervently believed that the ministry of the gospel was given to all members, thereby leaving no room for hierarchy or rank within the community of faith. This fundamental belief would inform his leadership style, preaching, views on women, and concerns about social issues within the church.

On the matter of preaching, Bradford strove for clarity and a distinct Adventist message. He once noted that "We are living in the age of double speak, technical jargon and information overload. There are many confusing voices. Nobody seems to understand what the other is saying. Preachers must not fall into this pattern. Clarity is imperative. We cannot afford the luxury of being obscure. We must ruthlessly discard every ounce of excess verbiage" (30).

According to the authors, Bradford's approach to administration was highly relational. He was committed to "servant leadership" and was convinced that the main duty of the pastor is to equip, enable, and encourage members to carry out their individual ministries. Leaders are "to empower others, to widen the leadership group, to grow new leaders" (57). For him, the denominational structure existed to serve the local church; it was never intended to be a hierarchal superstructure to rule over God's people.

Bradford was also noted for his bold and courageous stance on issues that were considered controversial. He excoriated the church for its position on the issue of race, drawing upon the counsels of Ellen G. White to buttress his case. He challenged the church to reach out to African-Americans of the inner cities and to implement remedial action to alleviate their suffering. He raised serious questions about the fairness of the Adventist financial structure relative to the regional conferences. He urged the church to employ more Black Adventist youth and set up scholarships for them.

Bradford was not afraid to engage in one of the church's most controversial issues: women's ordination. He urged his readers to look into the broad, general principles of the Bible through the prism of three major biblical doctrines (salvation, Holy Spirit, and the church), arguing that the ordination of women was in keeping with biblical principles. Who are we to question whom God has called? For Bradford, Christians achieve a new identity in Christ. Race, nationality, color, and gender are superseded by this new identity, making the believer one of God's people. God is at liberty to call any of us to any position regardless of gender.

A minor criticism of the book is that while Lee and Sahlin have painted a powerful portrait of a great visionary leader, they seem to have forgotten that he was also human. Little is said about Bradford's faults and weaknesses. Did he experience any significant failures in his ten years as president of the North American Division? What were his deficiencies in the different areas of leadership in which he served? We rejoice in his successes, but we are aware that no one is perfect. A chapter that focused on Bradford's

challenges and failures would have brought a balance that the book lacked. Even the Bible is not afraid to tell us about the failures of its heroes.

The book also lacked a coherent theme in conveying Bradford's life, making it feel disjointed and disconnected. While Bradford's personal papers were insightful, at times it was difficult reading. Some of them could have been summarized and analyzed by the authors so the readers could better understand them.

In spite of these criticisms *Brad* is excellent reading material for church leaders at all levels. It provides precious gems of wisdom from one of the most successful Adventist administrators who, despite his rise to international leadership, maintained a pastor's heart for the local church and an attitude of a servant-leadership that reminds all of Christ the Chief Shepherd and great Servant-Leader.

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McKibben, Bill. *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job and the Scale of Creation*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 2005. 73 pp. Paper, \$13.95.

Modern Western culture blindly pursues a false god that Bill McKibben succinctly summarizes with one word: "more." Unfortunately, this is no benign idolatry; the entire earth groans under our consumerism as we cut down forests, fill in wetlands, drive rare species to extinction, and consume obscene quantities of oil and coal—all so we can eat cheaper food, make and acquire more stuff, and live in greater luxury.

What are we to do? The answer is obvious, but deep patterns of thought and life die hard, and we must find sources of wisdom and strength deep enough to motivate and sustain new habits. McKibben's essay mines such wisdom from the book of Job by suggesting two parallels between Job's crisis and ours. First, both crises witnessed collision between reality and received wisdom (in Job's case, he knows the reality of his innocence, but his friends repeat *ad nauseum* the conventional view that his suffering must reflect God's punishment). Second, in both cases the received wisdom reflects a deep, underlying anthropocentrism—Job's friends expect that God will act according to *their* standards of justice; modern man believes that all things exist to support *our* wants.

But the central message of Job, as developed by McKibben, emerges as God appears in the whirlwind. God does not directly answer Job or his friends, but confronts him with a visceral portrayal of the mystery, grandeur, and wildness of creation that McKibben views as history's "first great piece of nature writing" (43). Much of what God describes provides no direct benefit for humans (e.g., rain in the wilderness, food for the lions, behavior of the ostrich, freedom of the wild ass), yet God uses these aspects of nature as exhibits of his power and care.

McKibben believes that God's revelation to Job calls for two responses: First, we (like Job) should fall humbly before God, acknowledging that "God can" and "we can't." Job accepts his place as part (not center) of creation and repents, and so should we. Second, we are drawn upward and outward into a deep, visceral sense of transcendent *joy*, a joy that comes when we find our place in God's creation. It is this combination—humility with joy—that McKibben hopes will motivate and sustain new ways of thinking and living toward creation, although he worries that we may lose both as humans increasingly eliminate wildness and gain the power to shape what remains for our own ends (think genetic manipulation).

McKibben is a writer and environmentalist, not a theologian, and his well-written book is more evocative than scholarly (his book has no footnotes or references). I cannot evaluate McKibben's theological arguments or fidelity to the original text of Job,