

salvation of all mankind, Jews included. Jews consider the idea of incarnation as blasphemous, for no man can claim the status of divinity. An invitation to Jews to be more sensitive to the physical dimension of God (114) will not settle the matter. The solution may well have to be pursued on a semantic level. If the humanness of God is for the Jews a more acceptable idea than the divinity of man, the idea of God's being Messiah could be more acceptable than the idea of the Messiah's being God. Perhaps worded in those terms the dialogue between Jews and Christians will break new grounds on the sensitive question of Christology.

After twenty centuries of disputations shadowed by the holocaust, Jews and Christians attempt, at last, to look at each other with respect; yet the abuses of the past have affected the present dialogue. So far, the exchanges have been essentially confined to a humanist concern; theological issues have been cautiously avoided. The present work dares to go further and marks a new step in the Jewish-Christian debate. The new ideal is neither to forcefully convince the other nor to inform oneself from a distance, but to humbly seek theological truth in a climate of dialogue. This enterprise is not easy; it is an open adventure. Encounter still lies in the future; the title of the book happily reflects this difficult dynamic: *Toward a Theological Encounter*.

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JACQUES DOUKHAN

Knight, George R. *My Gripe with God: A Study in Divine Justice and the Problem of the Cross*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990. 160 pp. Hardcover, \$14.95.

Knight, George R. *The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness: A Study of Sin and Salvation*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992. 256 pp. Hardcover, \$14.95.

In spite of the fact that different publishers were involved, these two books were intended as a matched pair. *My Gripe with God* wrestles with the basic issues of the atonement and the cross, while *The Pharisee's Guide* is concerned with the role of behavior and character development in salvation.

Since Knight's reputation as a popular writer is secure with Seventh-day Adventist audiences, these books do not pander to those who care only for stories and action. Although written in reasonably simple style, they plunge freely into the depths of many of the theological issues being discussed. Although Knight generally does not attempt to break new scholarly ground, these books have the kind of literary vigor that stimulates the reader to much personal discovery and insight. Both books contain an interesting blend of biblical study with philosophical and theological questioning.

My Gripe with God draws its energy from three sources. To a careful study of the great literature regarding the atonement and the cross, Knight adds insights both from his unique perspective as a Seventh-day Adventist scholar and from his questioning background as a former self-confessed "agnostic." The book is thus broadened from a study of the atonement to include insights into theodicy, the problem of sin, and the nature and work of Christ.

My Gripe with God is not easy to summarize. Roughly speaking, the seven chapters focus on human questions about the character and justice of God; the consequences of sin and the wrath of God; the issues related to the concept of substitutionary atonement; the biblical metaphors for salvation; a broad definition of the atonement that involves seven stages (the incarnation of Christ, his obedient life and ministry, Gethsemane, the cross, the resurrection, Christ's heavenly intercession, and the final judgment); the reason for the millennium; and the proper human response to the cross. A further driving force of the book is a running polemic with those Adventist thinkers whose discomfort with the concept of substitution causes them to pursue various versions of the "moral-influence" theory of the atonement.

The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness is a humorous title to a very serious book. Knight himself states that the basic thesis of the book is that "different definitions of sin lead to varying approaches to 'achieving righteousness' (9)." The book strikes one as part of a running dialogue with the SDA followers of M. L. Andreasen and his concept of "final-generation perfection." Knight attempts to draw parallels between the theology of the Pharisees who opposed Jesus and Paul and that of the "right-wing perfectionists" within present-day Adventism, with no intention of flattery toward the latter, of course.

The book is divided into 10 chapters. The opening chapter, which outlines the parallels between ancient and "modern" Pharisees, is followed by a chapter on the definition of sin and one on "unlawful" uses of the law. The fourth chapter offers an overview of justification and sanctification, while the fifth zeros in on various issues in sanctification. Chapters six through eight probe the issue of perfection from theological and biblical perspectives and from the writings of Ellen G. White. The ninth chapter seems to be what the whole book is heading toward, an attempt to ground the Adventist concept of a last-generation character perfection in the timeless verities of Christian faith. The final chapter briefly notes that, in one sense, perfection will remain a goal for even the redeemed people of God throughout eternity.

It is hard to imagine a more powerful and effective approach to the intended audience than one finds in *The Pharisee's Guide*. Knight has brought both clarity and depth to issues that have plagued Adventists for over a hundred years. He has wisely avoided trying to build his case on "extended meanings" in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. While the book may not, and should not, settle all the Adventist issues with

regard to sanctification and perfection, it certainly offers a model of sober and careful scholarship for all who would refute Knight's claims.

Of the two books, *Pharisee's Guide* is the more attractive. The print is larger, and of better quality, the cover is more pleasing, and the book in general is much more readable. One gets the impression in places that *My Gripe with God* is not as polished as its sequel, and that the issues had not matured as thoroughly in the author's mind before publication. By way of balance, however, I must point out that *Gripe* is the more consistently biblical in approach (which I, at least, prefer). In addition, books on the cross have to contend in the reader's mind with such gigantic achievements as John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* and Leon Morris' *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* and *The Atonement*, not to mention works like those of McGrath, Denney, Forsyth, and Murray which are repeatedly cited in Knight's own book. *The Pharisee's Guide*, on the other hand, has the field to itself and will become, I believe, the standard by which other Adventist books on the subject will be judged.

A small element of disquiet that I feel concerning these books must be mentioned. I am not certain that the Pharisees, the Adventist advocates of some form of "moral influence," or the so-called "Adventist right-wing" would always recognize their positions in the descriptions that Knight lays out. Knight has a tendency to caricature opposing positions, which strengthens and clarifies his own position but may not be entirely fair to the positions of those he critiques. As a result, although Knight strives for, and generally achieves, balance in his presentations of a given subject, his polemical style leaves the impression of overreaction.

In spite of minor flaws, however, both books are worth the time and effort it takes to read them, at least for Seventh-day Adventist readers. And I think that I am on safe ground when I assert that *The Pharisee's Guide* is probably the best book published by an Adventist press in years.

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Kuyper, Abraham. *The Problem of Poverty*. Edited by James W. Skillen. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; and Washington, DC: The Center for Public Justice, 1991. 94 pp. Paperback, \$6.95.

On November 9, 1891, Abraham Kuyper, Protestant theologian and Dutch statesman, addressed the First Christian Social Congress held in the Netherlands. One hundred years later, James W. Skillen re-edited this keynote speech on the problem of poverty and Baker Book House published it.

The enduring value of Kuyper's speech lies, first of all, in the fact that present social conditions show no improvement since his time. The persistence of poverty, strikes, unemployment, welfare-dependent families,