

acquainted with most relevant literature. At times one may wonder why a particular source has not been referred to. One such example is her failure to mention the outstanding (published) dissertation about the life and work of Jacobus Capitein (David Nii Anum Kpobi, *Mission in Chains*. Zoetermeer, 1993), when she briefly discusses the fascinating life story of this 18th-century Dutch-trained Ghanaian theologian. Much more mysterious is the fact that she only once refers to Adrian Hastings' works on the history of the church in Africa. His recent masterpiece (*The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) was probably too late to have been incorporated in Mrs. Isichei's research, but that was certainly not the case with his earlier work (*A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

However, in spite of some weaknesses, *A History of Christianity in Africa* is an excellent book and is to be highly recommended, not only for readers who want to be initiated into the subject, but also for those who already have a solid background in this area.

St. Albans, UK

REINDER BRUINSMA

Kern, Kathleen. *We Are the Pharisees*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995. 160 pp.. Paper, \$9.95.

Kathleen Kern proposes to do two things in this small volume. Initially she intended to alert the reader that the Pharisees "had gotten a bad rap historically" (11), and that Jesus' criticisms of that group are in reality criticisms of us. Ultimately, she hopes the book will facilitate better relations between Christians and Jews.

In chapter 1, "We are the Pharisees," she proposes five reasons why we need a better understanding of the Pharisees. First, by studying centuries of Jewish culture before the time of Jesus, we understand more clearly how the New Testament came into being, and thus grasp God's revelation in it. Second, all Pharisees are not alike. Not all are guilty of our stereotypical rigidity, legalism, self-righteousness, and pride. Third, the harsh words of Jesus are not only relevant to a Jewish sect of the first century, but also to us. Fourth, the words of Jesus have been used as anti-Semitic propaganda to hurt and destroy, instead of to help and empower others. And fifth, historic Anabaptist churches can find in their own history parallels to the Pharisees that can help them be more loving and humane in dealing with Jews.

The next six chapters flesh out the above reasons. Chapters 2 through 4 are historical or biblical; chapters 5 through 7 focus on application. In the first of the historical chapters, "First-Century Palestine," a birds-eye view of the background of the Pharisees within Judaism is given. The next two chapters analyze the biblical portrayal of the Pharisees. Chapter 3, "The Overlooked Pharisees," constitutes a positive look at them, while Chapter 4 studies "Negative Accounts of Pharisees in the Gospels."

Chapter 5 sets forth "How Jesus' Critique of the Pharisees Applies to Us." In this chapter, Kern admits that the comparisons between Jesus' accusations against

the Pharisees and the contemporary North American religious scene will not always be exact, but does demonstrate striking applications at the personal, congregational, national, and global levels.

A summary of "Christendom's Persecution of the Jews" is presented in chapter 6. Kern recounts how, particularly over the past millennium, well-educated, well-meaning Christians have used the Pharisee passages in the New Testament to justify anti-Semitism, murder, and the Holocaust. Possibly surprising to the reader will be the blatant anti-Semitism in Kenneth Taylor's paraphrase, *The Living Bible*, from which she presents numerous examples (122-126). She argues that texts like this fuel anti-Semitism.

The final chapter of the book presents what is probably Kern's deepest goal in writing this book. "Toward Humility and Dialogue" particularly addresses her own denomination. She calls for dialogue and understanding between Mennonites and Jews who have shared a similar history of persecution.

The volume is good. Yet some things bother me. For example, she states that the information on first-century Palestine which she presents in chapter 2 is "hypothetical and based on the conjectures of scholars" (25), because the material we have available is relatively skimpy. There is some truth to this observation; but the lack of qualification is distressing. The tools and methodologies of archaeologists and biblical social scientists allow us to be more accurate in our assessments and conclusions than previous biblical scholars were able to be.

Again, although she gives an excellent treatment of negative accounts of Pharisees in chapter 4, chapter 3 represents a strained attempt to find positive attitudes toward the Pharisees in the Gospels. It is certainly true that in Paul's Philippians (3:4-7) statement and in several places in Acts such an assessment is valid (as she more than adequately shows). However, to infer from the Gospel account (especially John) that Pharisees are presented in a positive light is to do injustice to those texts as well as to the author's intent.

Chapter 5 is worth the price of the volume. It is a chapter that probes, prods, and challenges us. Kern shows that "most human beings, Christian and otherwise, possess the same weaknesses for which Jesus criticized that Pharisees" (102). But she goes further. First, in focusing directly on her Mennonite denomination, she gives examples of its traditional exclusivity and church-discipline positions (85-86)—a pointed challenge that not many of us would have the fortitude to make. Second, many good contemporary Pharisees/Christians will be chagrined at her global illustrations. For example, she points to the contradiction in U.S. government policy regarding Haitian refugees versus Cuban refugees (87). Such exclusivity makes us also the target of Jesus' remarks.

Finally, the reader will be impressed with the list of questions for discussion given at the end of each chapter. They are for the most part insightful questions that can aid in the personal internalizing of the subject and the issues. They are also useful as icebreakers for small group discussions, or for extrapolating from the text to the contemporary church.

Kathleen Kern sets out "to help readers identify with the humanity of the Pharisees. In doing so," she says, "we can easily identify with the humanity of their spiritual descendants" (137). In spite of the few shortcomings of the book, Ms. Kern has accomplished her goal. Our understanding of the Pharisees, Christian-

Jewish relations, and the battle against anti-Semitism, has taken another step forward.

Walla Walla College  
College Place, WA 99324

PEDRITO U. MAYNARD-REID

Knight, George R. *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Mission Confronts the Challenges of Institutionalism and Secularization*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995. 175 pp. Paper, \$ 11.99

In this challenging book, best-selling Adventist author George R. Knight pleads with the Seventh-day Adventist Church (which he currently serves as a professor of church history at the SDA Theological Seminary) to be frank about its past, critical about its present success, and open to change as it considers its future. The main thesis of the book is that Adventism is in danger of losing its mission focus as it uses more and more of its resources and energy to keep its bureaucracy alive and to maintain its numerous institutions. The author admits that the title could be understood in terms of sexist stereotypes, but feels that this is a small price to pay for the clear parabolic message it offers: The woman, a prominent NT symbol for the church—and by extension for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination—has “increasingly gained her identity through the size, number, variety, and quality of her packages [institutions and programs],” with the final result that she cannot enter the door to the Kingdom unless she lets go of these “packages”—something she is extremely loath to do (16). Knight suggests that the Adventist Church has taken on the role of “furthering the mission of semi-autonomous institutions,” while these institutions should in fact have the primary purpose of furthering the mission of the church (17).

All chapters of the book have been previously published as articles in various Adventist journals or books or have been delivered as formal papers. Although this causes some discontinuity in style, this has not seriously affected the flow of the argument. The ten chapters are arranged in four main sections. Section I deals with “The Threat of the Present versus the Challenge of the Future.” Section II focuses on “The Shape of Adventist Mission,” while the next section studies “The Relation of Institutions and Lifestyle to Mission.” The final section is entitled “Adventist Futures in Relation to Adventist Pasts.”

In his analysis of present-day Adventism, Knight utilizes David Moberg’s model of the five stages in the life cycle of a church. According to this model, church organizations go through five distinct stages: (1) Incipient organization; (2) Formal organization; (3) Maximum efficiency; (4) Institutionalism; and (5) Disintegration. Knight suggests that the Adventist Church, at least in the “first world,” is on the brink between stages 3 and 4. This may be true for North America, but from the perspective of this reviewer, who lives in Europe, it would seem that in some countries the church already shows evidences of entering stage 5.

Throughout the book the author insists that the Adventist Church must deal with two problem areas. First, it must redirect its energies. Traditionally, the Adventist “missiological quadrilateral” has consisted of the publishing, medical, educational, and conference aspects of the denomination’s work” (81). Knight does