

whole book of Exodus for tomorrow and expect students to read it.

Perhaps teachers should assign a chapter of *Encountering the Old Testament* every day, test students on it, but ignore it in class. In addition, they could assign Bible readings appropriate to the lecture in class and selections from each biblical book covered by the text. Then students would get an adequate survey of the entire Old Testament, yet teachers would be free to concentrate on what they consider the most important parts.

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ED CHRISTIAN

Ballis, Peter H. *Leaving the Adventist Ministry: A Study of the Process of Exiting*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999. xii + 236 pp. Hardcover, \$59.95.

Ballis's study treats the exodus of Seventh-day Adventist pastors from their ministries in Australia and New Zealand between 1980 and 1990. During those years nearly two hundred pastors resigned or were discharged, a figure equal to roughly 40 percent of the total pastoral work force in those two nations (17).

The author, currently Senior Lecturer and Head of Sociology and Social Research in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Monash University (Gippsland Campus), writes as an insider. That is, he not only served as an Adventist pastor for fifteen years, but also as one who exited the ministry in 1992. Ballis claims that his insider status not only enriched his insights but also enabled him to gain access to official church records and information that would have been impossible for an outsider. This is not the author's first work on Adventism. In 1985 he edited a volume entitled *In and Out of the World: Seventh-day Adventists in New Zealand*. Beyond that, he has authored numerous book chapters and periodical articles on Adventist history.

Ballis began his study on pastoral exiting as a doctoral dissertation. The field of exiting in other sorts of organizations and in relation to other denominations had been studied, but this is the first serious study of pastoral exiting in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The primary purpose of the study was to examine the process that led Adventist ministers to begin to entertain doubts concerning the religious cause that they had supposedly dedicated their lives to, doubts that eventually led them to question their calling and turn their backs on the professional ministry. The central source of data was focused interviews with forty-three ex-pastors and twelve ex-pastors' wives. The aim of the interviews was to identify and discuss the types of personal experiences, organizational processes, and social relationships that generated momentum for exit. The findings led Ballis to highlight "the fragility of commitment to sect values and the sectarian worldview" (2).

The study also had a secondary aim having to do with the interaction of a highly centralized religious organization with pastors' decisions to exit. In particular, Ballis concluded that the most consistent factor behind pastors' leaving the ministry was not disagreements over theology (although that was certainly a factor) or personal reasons, but the uncaring and at times high-handed procedures exhibited by Adventist administrators toward troubled and/or troubling pastors. That focus finds expression in the book's last paragraph where the author notes

that “what the research does tell us is that the future of Adventism is in the hands of a bureaucracy that is self-appointed, maintains a tight fist over organizational processes and theological interpretation, and has the power to crush insubordinates and expel nonconformists.” Seventh-day Adventism’s future, Ballis continued, will not only be determined by market forces and sociological processes, “but also in the power that Adventist authorities have to push the movement—‘with the blessing of God’—in whatever direction they deem appropriate” (210).

The book’s first chapter highlights the Desmond Ford theological crisis that ushered in the 1980s with its large defections of pastors in the Australia/New Zealand field. Chapter 2 probes the sociological aspects of Adventist exiting. Chapter 3 sets forth the comparative demographics of fifty “leavers” and a control group of sixty-six “stayers,” while chapter 4 provides three dissimilar case studies of leavers and analyzes their commonalities. Chapters 5 through 7, respectively, deal in parallel fashion with the loss of idealism and the growth of cynicism; the propagation of cynicism among pastoral cohorts; and the contributions made by bureaucrats, scholars, and friends to a pastor’s choice to leave.

Chapter 8 in many ways is the heart of the book. It contrasts the impact of Ford on the pastors versus the impact of bureaucratic procedures. Ballis argues forcefully that Ford’s charisma played a part but “only a part” (152) in pastors’ decisions to exit, since many of the pastors were not in harmony with Ford. The lion’s share of the influence is attributed by the pastors to the way administrators handled both the Ford situation and their own problems. In short, Ford and his theology alone would not have stimulated the mass exodus.

The final two chapters are necessary but in many ways anticlimactic. Chapter 9 deals with the role of wives in pastoral exiting, while the tenth deals with the mechanics of separation.

*Leaving the Adventist Ministry* sets forth some powerful arguments and provides some very helpful analysis. Ballis enables the reader to begin to see the complexity of emotions, ideas, and relationships that enter into exiting decisions. All in all, it is important reading for administrators, theological educators, concerned pastors, and sociologists investigating the process of exiting.

On the other hand, it is almost impossible not to wonder about the impact the author’s insider status had on the study. Ballis was not only an ex-pastor in general, but he was an ex-pastor caught up in the vortex of a major theological/administrative crisis. An independent investigation might have asked different questions or supplied different emphases. These comments are not so much to discredit Ballis’s study as to wish out loud for a replication from a different perspective.

Then again, this study almost calls for a third study, one of pastors like myself who went through the stressful exiting process *before* the Ford crisis. I say before, because most exits since the 1980s, at least in English-speaking Adventism, have been conditioned by the fallout from the Ford episode. Such studies would definitely enrich, and perhaps balance out, the findings presented by Ballis. In the meantime, the church both inside and outside of Adventism can profitably learn important lessons from *Leaving the Adventist Ministry*.