

chapters with interesting mathematical demonstrations. However, the frustration of math phobics in not being able to enjoy the savor of mathematical discussions will be fully compensated by the clear explanations and applications in selected chapters recommended by the author in the introduction of the book. The valid philosophical arguments and historical examples make the study really agreeable to a large audience.

Is there any theological value in the book? At the beginning, the author states that "it is not my aim to force a religious doctrine of creation upon science" (3). Even the references to God are minimal in the study. However, those contemporary theologians who are in a large measure influenced by scientific theories and who have manifested an easy willingness to incorporate scientific claims in their theological edifice need to take a careful look at the on-going dialogue between naturalists and advocates of intelligent design. When Dembski considers that a paradigm shift is necessary in conceptual science, theologians may take it as a warning to not ground their work on a shifting base. The need is not for a new compass reading according to the wind trajectories of cutting-edge scientific dialogue, but a new look at the old Scriptures that are able to provide a more solid ground for an enduring theological understanding.

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ERNŐ GYÉRESI

Dundes, Allan. *Holy Writ as Oral Lit: The Bible as Folklore*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. xii + 129 pp. Paper, \$15.90.

Can one consider the Bible as folklore and still revere it as "holy" writ? This is the question Allan Dundes, Professor of Folklore at the University of California, Berkeley and one of the world's leading folklorists, attempts to answer in his well-researched and fascinating book.

In his Acknowledgment, Dundes claims: "This book combines a lifelong love of the Bible with a career in the study of folklore." In the Conclusion, he reiterates his main thesis: "1. Folklore is characterized by multiple existence and variation. 2. The Bible is permeated by multiple existence and variation. 3. The Bible is folklore." He underlines his conviction that the Bible indeed is folklore by assuring the reader of his belief that "Jesus would have understood my arguments."

In spite of all these assurances the question remains, can anyone who takes the Bible to be the infallible Word of God go along with calling the "Book of Books" "folklore"? The answer, of course, lies primarily in definitions of folklore, oral literature, and written folklore. Isn't the term "oral literature" an oxymoron? What happens when folklore is written down? Does it retain flexibility to be molded by its environment? Does labeling the Bible "folklore" say anything about its truth value? Didn't God write the Ten Commandments with his own hand? Dundes grapples with these questions.

In his discussion "What is Folklore?" Dundes puts to death the phrase "that's just folklore" by contending that folklore "is not synonymous with error or fallacy." In this context he develops his thesis about the nature of folklore and the biblical accounts, contending that all genres of folklore, whether oral or written, "are characteristic of multiple existence and variation which may be reflected in

such details as different names, different numbers, or different sequences of lines." All three of these types of variations are, of course, found in the Bible and people are often puzzled by them. Dundes compares a large number of examples from the OT and NT. For instance, he compares the account of Jesus' healing the blind man/men in Matt 20: 29-34 with Luke 18: 35-43 and Mark 10:46-52. Matthew refers to two blind men but Luke and Mark to one. There is also a discrepancy between the accounts as to whether Jesus was entering or leaving the city of Jericho. What does one make of these differences? The answer is simple. The accounts are folklore. The stories have been handed down from generation to generation and some details have changed. When they were written down, they were considered sacred and the writers did not dare to adjust them.

Speaking about the "infallibility" of the Bible as seen by Christian critics, Dundes summarizes the discussion with "the governing paradigmatic syllogism" by Geisler and Howe (1992): "God Cannot Err. The Bible Is the Word of God. Therefore, the Bible Cannot Err."

He then proceeds with an enlightening discussion of duplicate texts in the OT, "harmonizing" the Gospels, and the "authentic words of Jesus" in the NT. Researchers of the "authentic words of Jesus" formed the so-called Jesus Seminar in 1985 and tried to distinguish between what Jesus said from what they term "common lore" in their book entitled *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. In their volume *Acts of Jesus*, they try to separate the acts Jesus actually performed from fictitious ones. According to Dundes, these researchers continue in the footsteps "of the 'folklore in the Bible' tradition," from which he distances himself. Rather than separate the goats from the sheep, i.e. separate the folkloristic elements from the nonfolkloristic ones in Scripture, he "takes the bull by the horns" and claims that "the Bible is folklore"; it is "codified oral tradition."

In the process of his investigation, the author provides ample examples of different genres of folklore, so that the reader receives a crash course on the nature of folklore. Most of his examples are not only amusing, but also give the reader an idea of how sayings are slanted to make them "politically correct" for socialistic, communistic, fascistic, and many other forms of government.

The chapter entitled "Previous Studies of Folklore and the Bible" reviews the most important research done so far on the Bible and folklore and shows that scholars have tried to keep the two apart by attempting to prove that Scripture is not folklore. Dundes sympathizes with biblical scholars who dare to "recognize or acknowledge its folkloristic nature" by citing a large number of them who lost their credibility and jobs for being too *avant garde* in their writings.

Dundes boldly contradicts these scholars, however, by making a clear case for the Bible as folklore because of its basis in oral literature. He substantiates this with many examples of different numbers, names, sequences and repetitions of events in the accounts of the Bible. At no point does he question the truth value of Scripture.

The one disappointment that I have is the author's affirmation that "all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16)," yet nowhere does the author discuss or qualify this point. Granted, his book is not a theological discussion. Its strength lies rather in his evaluation of folklore. But given such a

subtitle, the reader—at least this reader—expects some reference to it.

In summary, *The Holy Writ as Oral Lit* is a worthwhile book. It is enlightening, convincing, entertaining, and familiarizes the reader with the most important research on Scripture and folklore. In addition, it gives the reader a bird's-eye view of the nature and genres of folklore. The "stumbling block" for the Christian reader might be the subtitle—"The Bible as Folklore"—due to the fact that everyone has his or her own preconceived notion of the meaning of "folklore."

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MARGARETHE SPARING-CHAVEZ

Dybdahl, Jon L., ed. *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century: The Joys and Challenges of Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999. 314 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

As the third Christian millennium approached, interest in missiological issues surged, resulting in the publication of numerous works. Perhaps inspired by this trend, Adventist mission practitioners took the opportunity to reflect upon the status of Adventist missions. *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century* is the latest of four recent anthologies to examine current missiological issues and propose strategies to meet the challenge of "presenting Jesus to a diverse world." The first of the three are: *Adventist Missions Facing the 21st Century: A Reader* (Hugh I. Dunton, Balduf Ed. Pfeiffer, and Borge Schantz, eds. [Frankfort am Main: Peter Lang, 1990]), *Cast the Net on the Right Side: Seventh-day Adventists Face the Isms* (Richard Lehmann, Jack Mahon, and Borge Schantz, eds. [Berks: European Institute of World Mission, 1993]), and *Re-Visioning Adventist Mission in Europe* (Erich W. Baumgartner, ed. [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998]).

Jon L. Dybdahl, former Chair of the Department of World Mission at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, has recently accepted appointment as President of Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington. The book was written not only for scholars, but to "appeal to the heart and head of *mainstream Adventism*" (14). This anthology has two objectives: to provide an overview of Adventist achievements in mission while not neglecting honest and critical analysis of the current challenges and mission practice in the light of new opportunities, and to stimulate Adventists to "an ongoing, fervent, intelligent commitment to missions" as the twenty-first century dawns (14).

Dybdahl felt that these objectives could not be met by a single author. Thus he engaged a wide spectrum of contributors: scholars, administrators, pastors, teachers, missionaries, and lay people, with personal involvement in cross-cultural missions as a common denominator. The book has thirty-five brief chapters by thirty authors and is divided into four sections: backgrounds, biblical and theological issues, strategies and methods, and case studies.

The first section sets the stage. In chapter 1, the editor introduces current trends in Adventist missions, identifying both successes and challenges. The second chapter provides a brief historical overview of Adventist mission from the 1880s to the present.

The second section is theoretical, discussing biblical and theological issues