

EDITORIAL

CRISTIAN DUMITRESCU

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

Welcome to a special issue of *JAAS*. It is my pleasure to introduce the authors and their scholarly contributions to you.

Let me begin with Zdravko Stefanovic who invites us to revisit the concept of Advent in the Hebrew Bible. Using Mowinckel's work on the Advent in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in the prophetic books, Stefanovic notices that the Jewish messianic expectations were rooted in the royal ideology of the ANE. Based on this ideology, the Messiah was expected to be a ruler, the adopted son of God, in contrast with the Son of Man and the Servant title that was considered incompatible with the ANE picture. Stefanovic shows that the coming of a liberator in the OT begins in Genesis, and that the concept of Advent should be broader than strictly that of the coming of Jesus the Messiah. At the same time, he argues that the four Isaianic chapters describing the work of the suffering servant are placed between the Book of Judgment and the beautiful description of a restored earth, actions that could be performed only by a divine savior, not by the Israelites. Stefanovic recognizes the same pattern in Dan 7 where the messianic Son of Man stands between the judgment and the liberation of God's people.

Edwin Reynolds, who teaches at Southern Adventist University, explores the use of Gen 1 and 2, the biblical record of origins, by Jesus and the apostles in the NT, as well as in the rest of the Scripture. Reynolds states his assumption that the Bible is its own interpreter in order to discover the proper hermeneutic necessary to correctly understand Gen 1 and 2. He shows that Jesus referred to Gen 1 and 2 as to a literal record, as subsequently did his disciples. Reynolds brings to our attention not only the hermeneutics used to refer to Gen 1 and 2, but also some of the theological discussions surrounding the NT references to Genesis. This is a wider topic that needs more attention especially to the context in which such theological arguments and conclusions are born. Hermeneutics is more than textual analysis; it depends crucially on the context that often is missing and that requires much more effort to uncover.

Another article, written by Gheorghe Razmerita, addresses hermeneutics when reading history. It is crucial for him to see the way early Christians received and perceived Paul, the apostle. Razmerita attempts to discover a more integrated understanding of Paul in Early Christianity as an argument against the picture of Paul proposed by the Tübingen school, the New Perspective, and the Jesus Seminar. He cannot agree that Paul was poorly or wrongly understood by his original audience and followers as these three schools claim. Razmerita looks for answers in the writings of the apostolic fathers, in the works of Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, as well as in the documents of the heretical movements of the second century, such as the Gnostics and the Marcionites. Razmerita highlights the context that helps us integrate historical and theological statements of the first centuries about Paul.

JAAS includes, again, several contributions to the Seventh-day History, especially on the African church history and mission. Emmanuel Orihntare Eregare brings to our attention the Nigerian development of mission in his qualitative study. Eregare focuses on the European missionaries' contribution to planting the Seventh-day Adventist churches and message, highlighting the challenges to convert Nigerians (especially Islam and the African Traditional Religions) and the strategies used in their arduous enterprise. He reminds us that the Adventist message in West Africa was planted by Hannah More, a lay person turned missionary, while the message took hold mainly in rural areas. Strategies, such as education, Dorcas societies, and literature printing and distribution are among the ones used in Nigeria at the beginning of the century. Eregare concludes that American missionaries' strategies were based on a centripetal approach, while European missionaries preferred centrifugal strategies.

Gabriel Masfa continues his research on Seventh-day Adventism in Africa by looking at one of the most sensitive missionary issues, the encounter with the African Traditional Religions and its impact on African Adventist identity today. He reminds us how the lack of knowledge about African religions, and the assumptions that Africa had no previous religion, led to the neglect to address the issue that disappeared from view but remained alive and well in people's worldview. Masfa looks at how Africans relate to traditional medicine, to magic, sorcery, and divination, and to witchcraft practices. He also shows the resulting damage of such beliefs and practices on Seventh-day Adventist communities. Masfa surveys the church's responses to these challenges in the past, and makes broad recommendations.

I take this opportunity to thank you, our readers, for your interest in the scholarly work published in JAAS. This issue of the journal marks the end

of my editorial responsibilities at JAAS. I am deeply indebted to my associate editors, to our reviewers, to the copy editors, and to the assistants and secretaries for the diligent work, time, and skills devoted to producing each issue of this fine journal. At the same time, it is my pleasure to introduce my colleague, Dr. Kenneth Bergland, as the new editor of JAAS. I am convinced he will not only continue the sound scholarship developed by previous editors of the journal, but will make it more attractive and enriching for you. And for the Glory of God. *Mabuhay!*