

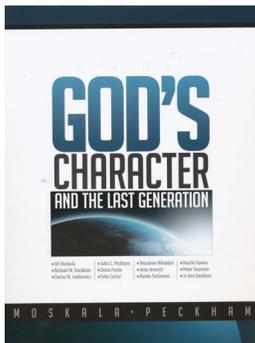
BOOK NOTES

Jiří Moskala and
John C. Peckham, eds.
**God's Character and the
Last Generation**

(Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018),

286 pp.

US\$29.99



Several critical responses to last generation theology (LGT) have recently come off the press within Seventh-day Adventist circles. Among them are Ángel Manuel Rodríguez's article, "Theology of the Last Generation and the Vindication of the Character of God: Overview and Evaluation,"¹ George R. Knight's book, *End-Time Events and the Last Generation*,² (and Rein-der Bruinsma's *In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology*.³ The work under consideration, *God's Character and the Last Generation*, is an academic critical analysis of LGT by a group of twelve theologians from Andrews University.

The main content of the book is divided into fourteen chapters. Chapter 1 not only sets the tone by questioning the LGT notion of an anthropocentric vindication of God's character by the last generation of *sinless* saints, but also provides the general outline of the book. Chapter 2 traces the late eighteenth-century historical roots of LGT (starting with Edward Irving) and provides a critical exposition of its main Adventist proponents (including E. J. Waggoner, M. L. Andreasen, Herbert E. Douglass, C. Mervyn Maxwell, Dennis Priebe, Kevin Paulson, and Larry Kirkpatrick). Chapter 3 deals with the biblical concept of sin, with special emphasis on the notion that human beings not only commit sinful acts, but indeed are sinners (condition), and that the sinful nature of God's people will be eradicated only at the second coming (1 Cor 15:50–54). It should be mentioned that all of the major LGT advocates identified in the book affirm this last point regarding the sinful nature being eradicated only through transformation of our sinful bodies at the return of Christ (Phil 3:21).

While chapter 4 forcefully stresses the forensic nature of justification, chapter 5 addresses sanctification as a lifelong process. As stated by Ellen G. White, "We cannot say, 'I am sinless,' till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body."⁴ The author of chapter 6 suggests that we should pay more attention to certain social values than to our own personal lifestyle matters. He gives the impression that to adopt the traditional Adventist lifestyle is not as important as to follow the postulates of Jürgen Moltmann's theology of hope. And chapter 7 exposes several psychological and emotional compulsions driving people towards religious

perfectionism.

Chapter 8 highlights Christ as our perfect Savior and example, stating that His humanity was "perfectly identical with our own nature, except without the taint of sin" and without "the propensities of sin".⁵ Chapter 9 reminds us that the cross was the solution to the problems that arose from the fall of Adam and Eve at the Garden of Eden. Then, chapter 10 differentiates between the "complete" atonement on the cross, available for all human beings, and the "completed" atonement with the eradication of evil from the universe, effective for those who truly accept Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Maintaining that both the 144,000 and the great multitude in Revelation 7 are one and the same group of God's people who "came out of the great tribulation" (Rev 7:14), chapter 11 argues that the last generation is not a group of "super saints" with a level of holiness never attained before. They will be tested in a unique way but will be saved in the same way as the redeemed of all ages. Chapter 12 responds by way of testimony to five "myths" that some Adventists, including the author, held at one time—misleading concepts built on false presuppositions. Chapter 13 reflects on the "delay" of the second coming, affirming that God never revealed the exact date when Jesus will come but only promised that that event will come "suddenly." Unfortunately, no reference is made to Ellen G. White's statements in *Evangelism*.⁶

Finally, chapter 14 summarizes the content of the book in a very didactical way. It points out, for instance, that "although we cannot become absolutely, sinlessly perfect until glorification, we can and should attain character perfection" (274). For the author, "perhaps the greatest problem with LGT is that it makes God's victory in the great controversy dependent upon the fidelity of mere creatures" (280). Undeniably, "it is not what we do as humans that provides the grounds to vindicate God's character." "God Himself provides the full and sufficient means and grounds to vindicate His character" (281).

The book combines both an academic style and an apologetic approach, with a well-organized sequence of topics. But with multi-authored content, the reader can easily notice a significant contrast of writing styles and some differences in theological emphases among the various chapters. A few chapters do not flow as

easily as others. A vast number of endnotes after each chapter provide not only support to its content but also a helpful bibliography for further research. Overall, the book provides a helpful response to some issues raised by LGT advocates and should be read by all those interested in this controversial topic. After all, in these challenging last days we need a much more Christ-centered (rather than anthropocentric) eschatology (Luke 21:28; Heb 12:1–2)!

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¹Included in Artur A. Steele, ed., *The Word: Searching, Living Teaching* (Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 205–228.

²Pacific Press, 2018.

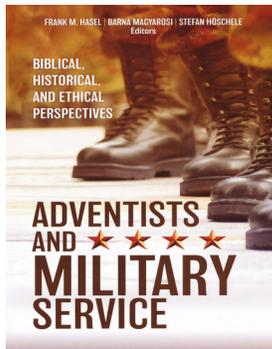
³Oak & Acorn, 2018.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 3:355.

⁵*Ibid.*, 13:18.

⁶Ellen G. White, “*The Reason for the Delay*,” in *Evangelism* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 694–697.

Frank M. Hasel, Barna Magyarosi,
Stefan Höschele eds.
**Adventists and Military
Service: Biblical,
Historical and
Ethical Perspectives**
(Madrid: Editorial Safeliz 2019),
225 pages,
USD 12.99



War is an everyday reality that no longer happens remotely: it is played out in our living rooms and over the breakfast table, thanks to embedded reporters, smartphones, and the Internet. Adventists and Military Service, an initiative of the Inter-European Division Biblical Research Committee, is an ambitious project. Its stated aim is to “give guidance, especially to our young people who are increasingly faced with issues about military service and our engagement in war and the bearing of arms.”¹

Previous Adventist publications have tended to concentrate on one aspect of the question, or tell the story of faithful service in the face of the carnage of war. In contrast, this book brings together a unique mix of theology, history, current events, practical experiences, ethical implications, and a look toward what happens after the shooting stops. With such an ambitious remit, one might be tempted to dismiss it as lacking depth, but that would be a mistake.

The series of papers begins with examining violence and war in the Old Testament, followed by an examination of war and non-violence in the New Testament. The compact nature of the book does not allow for expansive discussion; however, the authors build their case clearly and concisely, setting out the arguments for and against their position. In discussing the Old Testament concept of holy war, Barna Magyarosi shows that God’s original intention was not for His people to go to war. Rather, holy wars were fought under tight theocratic control, during the very limited period of the conquest. This cannot and should not be used as justification for modern warfare. Johannes Kovar’s

exposition of the New Testament position on the Christian life, which emulates Jesus’ non-violent, self-sacrificing life of service for others, provides a solid theological foundation for the coming chapters.

An overview of the development of Christian thought and attitudes from the early church to the present helps the reader understand the various strands of Christianity related to war, and how this influences modern thinking. Invaluable for those wanting a better understanding of the development of Adventist thought is Douglas Morgan’s analysis of the Adventist journey from pacifism as reflected in its first statement of 1867, through noncombatancy and combatant co-operation up to the current loss of clarity, which this book seeks to address.

This theological foundation and historical framework provide the setting for the more challenging and contentious chapters, which stimulate our thinking and touch on some sensitive issues. Daniel Heinz gives the question of military service a human face as he documents some of the heart-wrenching, lesser-known stories of those who followed their conscience and did not carry arms. Kwabena Donkor illumines from an African perspective the modern challenges and carnage of genocide, adding richness and diversity to the text.

The heart of the question is dealt with in Frank M. Hasel’s chapter on the ethical challenges of the military. It poses questions that have been alluded to throughout the earlier chapters. Regardless of where the reader is on the continuum from pacifism to full support of military service, this chapter spells out the practical challenges he or she may face with such clarity that they cannot be denied. It discusses not just the obvious questions of killing and Sabbath keeping

(although these are dealt with), but also the subjects of patriotism, allegiance, lifestyle, and training for military service. The clear logic leads the reader to face the unpalatable practicalities and realities of military service and war and to make a personal decision. For some, when the physical war is over their personal war is just beginning as they deal with the psychological aftermath. Andreas Bochmann highlights the need for appropriate pastoral care and the responsibility to care for and minister to those who come home. Although the book has a clear bias towards no war being justified—hence that Christians should not be in the military—the argument is presented in a fair-minded way, with enough of the contrary perspective to provide a balanced picture. For those who want to read or reflect more on the subject, there are three very useful appendices: a listing of all official Seventh-day Adventist statements on noncombatancy, war, and peace; a bibliography of Seventh-day Adventist literature on war, peace, and military service; and a selected bibliography and annotated literature list on books dealing with war, peace, military service, and non-

violence.

The book delivers on its stated aim to “give guidance, especially to our young people who are increasingly faced with issues about military service and our engagement in war and the bearing of arms.” It is concise, informative, comprehensive, and a must-read for anyone who wants a deeper understanding of Adventists and their relationship to military service. However, keep in mind that it will challenge you, as it challenges all Adventists—young and old, pastors, chaplains, and leaders as well as church members—to think more critically and reflect more deeply about our choices as individuals and as a church.

Reviewed by
Audrey Andersson

¹ Frank M. Hasel, “Introduction,” in *Adventists and Military Service*, 8.

The book *Adventists and Military Service: Biblical, Historical, and Ethical Perspectives* can be ordered in Europe through:

The SDA Publishing House Safeliz in Spain: <https://publicacionesadventistas.com/index.php?route=product/search&search=Adventists%20and%20military%20service>

or

The Adventist Book Center: <https://www.adventistbookcenter.de/adventists-and-military-service-biblical-historical-and-ethical-perspectives.html>

In North America books can be ordered through the BRI: biblicalresearch@gc.adventist.org
