

Apart from the question of whether the text of Leviticus reflects or prescribes actual ritual performance, the ritual portrayals are religious and therefore involve theology, which is often expressed in symbolic terms. To be persuasive, the texts require not only effective rhetoric; they also need to connect with the religious worldview of their hearers, who believe in their deity, their own moral and physical faultiness, possibilities for expiation and purification through ritual types that provide certain ranges of efficacy, and divine authorization of certain ritual practitioners. It is this combination of beliefs that would motivate a mother to follow directions by offering specific sacrifices following childbirth. Leviticus 12 does not establish or elaborate on these beliefs but draws on them. It is true that symbolic interpretive expressions and clues in biblical ritual texts are sparse and laconic, but they should be fully taken into account along with other textual aspects.

To conclude this review of *Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch*, the rich collection of data, interactions with scholarship, and numerous insights in this volume make it an important resource for serious students of pentateuchal ritual texts. I have raised criticisms of some aspects of the volume, but I am deeply grateful for the thought and effort that all of the authors and editors have invested in this fine project.

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[Plenc, Daniel O., Silvia C. Scholtus, Eugenio Di Dionisio, and Sergio Becerra. *Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism*. Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial UAR, 2020. 263 pp. eBook. USD 8.11.](#)

When the Foreign Mission Board of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists began planning to send missionaries to South America, this region of the world was considered a “neglected continent,” at least as far as evangelism was concerned (“Missionaries for South America,” *Review and Herald*, August 8, 1893, 502). In a way, the historiographical study of the South American Adventist mission was also neglected for too long. It was almost a hundred years after the arrival of the first Adventist missionary in South America before Héctor J. Peverini, a pastor and church administrator, published the first book on the history of the beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism in South America (see *En las huellas de la Providencia* [Buenos Aires: Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana, 1988]). The dissemination of South American Adventist history to an international English-speaking audience also took time. In 2011, Floyd Greenleaf published *A Land of Hope: The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2011). This book became the first historiographical work in English to recount the history of the Adventist Church in South America. Although the doctoral dissertations of Walton J. Brown

(“A Historical Study of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Austral South America” [University of Southern California, 1953]) and Juan Carlos Viera (“Seventh-day Adventists in Latin America: Their Beginnings, Their Growth, Their Challenges” [Fuller Theological Seminary, 1993]) had already explored this topic in English, these works were never published.

Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism is the first book in English solely devoted to narrating the lives and work of pioneer missionaries, ministers, and administrators during the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America. Unlike the books previously mentioned, its focus is not on exploring the historical beginnings of Adventism in South America but on addressing the lives of the most notable pioneers.

The book consists of fifteen chapters plus a bibliography. Chapters 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, and 15 were written by Daniel O. Plenc, the current director of the Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office at the Universidad Adventista del Plata. Chapters 3 and 7 were prepared by Sergio Becerra, who currently serves as dean of the School of Theology at the Universidad Adventista del Plata. Meanwhile, chs. 4, 5, 12, and 13 were composed by Eugenio Di Dionisio, who, although currently retired, worked as an Adventist minister and history professor. Finally, chs. 6, 9, and 14 were written by Silvia C. Scholtus, now retired but formerly director of the Centro Histórico Adventista at the Universidad Adventista del Plata.

The first chapter, which functions simply as the introduction, explains the purpose of the book and mentions the sources used and the *status quaestionis* of the topic under study. Chapter 2, entitled “A Space for Memory” (although a better translation perhaps would have been “A *Place* for Memory”), reviews the historical evidence to determine the location of the first Adventist worship service in South America, in what was the home of Reinhardt Hetze, the first convert to Adventism baptized in this region of the world. Chapters 3 through 14 are each dedicated to a missionary, pastor, or administrator whose work was instrumental in the foundation of South American Adventism. The third chapter focuses on the life of Geörg Riffel (1850–1917), the first missionary to reach South America. His work as a self-supporting lay worker was vital to the organization of the first South American Adventist Church, in what came to be known as the Crespo Campo Church.

Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to Frank (1858–1944) and Joseph Westphal (1891–1949), the first ordained pastor and the first president of the South American Union Mission respectively. These two brothers, through their evangelistic and administrative work, laid the ecclesiastical foundations of what is now the administrative territory of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Chapter 6 is dedicated to Robert Habenicht (1866–1925), the founder of the current *Sanatorio Adventista del Plata*, the first Adventist health institution established in South America. Then follows the story of colporteur Thomas Davis (1866–1911), the first mission-

ary to enter Ecuador and the first worker to die fulfilling his evangelistic duty. Chapter 8 narrates the life of Eduardo Thomann (1874–1955), who “probably was the first [native] ordained minister in South America” (110) and founder of the *Revista Adventista*, the South American version of the *Review and Herald*. The ninth chapter focuses on Luis Ernst (1874–1952), one of Uruguay’s first converts, the first student of the current Universidad Adventista del Plata, and a successful evangelist.

The following sections of the book are dedicated to two missionary couples: Ferdinand Stahl (ch. 10) and Anna Carlson Stahl (ch. 11), and Pedro Kalbermatter (ch. 12) and Guillermina Deggeller de Kalbermatter (ch. 13). These four individuals focused on evangelizing the native peoples of Peru and Bolivia. In addition to their successful labor as missionaries, they carried out important medical and educational work. Chapter 14 recounts the life of Walter Schubert (1896–1980), an influential and successful evangelist who served as associate director of the General Conference Ministerial Association between 1954 and 1962. Finally, the book ends with a reflection on the importance of remembering the lives and work of these pioneers as examples of self-denial, effort, and service.

It is important to note that this work is the translation of a Spanish original published in 2012 (and reedited in 2014 and 2016). Both the original publication and the English translation have the merit of being the first work (in their respective languages) to present the biographies of these pioneers. It is true that some of them, such as Frank Westphal, Ferdinand Stahl, and Pedro Kalbermatter, wrote autobiographies or memoirs. However, *Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism* presents their lives using a historiographical rigor usually absent in autobiographical works.

The main objective of this book is to reach an international audience by presenting the lives of the main South American pioneers in the world’s lingua franca. Despite the commendation of this purpose, three obstacles seem to hamper its fulfillment. First of all, the translation is far from fluid. Although the ideas are understandable and the text is easy to read, the syntax is clumsy and the translation technique overly literal. A more dynamic and flexible translation would have allowed me to better enjoy the reading of the lives of these great pioneers. Second, researchers and historians who approach the book will find that the final bibliography is incomplete. Not only are there dozens of bibliographic references missing, but sometimes the footnotes themselves include incomplete references that make it difficult to identify and access sources. This is particularly regrettable because it is clear that each chapter is the product of careful historical research that made use of a variety of primary sources, including personal files, letters, magazine articles, church reports, and so forth. The same level of historical carefulness that is manifested in each chapter should also have been applied to the correct registration of the bibliographic and documentary sources used.

Finally, it would have been helpful if the translation had also incorporated additional commentaries or explanatory notes for those readers who are unfamiliar with the geography and history of South America. While the original Spanish book was aimed at an audience more familiar with the South American regions, the broader international audience to which this translation is aimed could hardly identify many of the geographical, cultural, and historical references present throughout the book. Explanatory comments or notes from the translator would have been enough to make up for this deficiency.

In addition to these three points, it is necessary to mention two general observations about the content. First, it is regrettable that the translation was not used to update the information in the book and incorporate the most recent historical discoveries. For example, ch. 3 states that George Riffel “arrived at the port of Buenos Aires in February of 1890” (20). However, in 2019, retired pastor and amateur historical researcher Roland Bernhardt Hetze discovered that the ship carrying him arrived at the port of Buenos Aires on May 29 (*Crespo Campo, Iglesia Madre* [Author’s Edition, 2019], 41–43). Although it is a minor detail, it is unfortunate that the information was not updated. In other cases, a lack of exhaustiveness in the analysis of sources is revealed. For example, ch. 4 states that Frank Westphal preached three continuous sermons in a meeting the very night he arrived in Crespo, Entre Ríos, where a small group of Sabbath-keepers was living. This was indeed told by Westphal in a memoir written in his old age (*Pioneering in the Neglected Continent* [Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1927], 5–6). However, Westphal himself also stated in a letter sent to the *Review and Herald* a few days after the event that this three-sermon marathon occurred six days after his arrival and not in Crespo but in a neighboring village (“Argentine Republic,” *Review and Herald*, October 30, 1894, 678). Priority should be given to a source near the event over a testimony written decades later based on the memory of an old man.

Despite these observations on the content and translation technique, it should be remembered that *Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism* is still the most important work on the life of these pioneers. Despite its flaws, it is a must-have reference book for those seeking this biographical information. Missiologists and historians will certainly benefit from having this book on their shelves.

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