

Editorial

This issue of *Spes Christiana* offers the readers articles on a number of widely diverging topics. I trust that our readers have a wide-ranging interest and will enjoy reading most, if not all, of these contributions. Besides, I am confident that many will in the near – or perhaps in the somewhat more distant – future consult a specific article in the course of their own research.

What the five articles in this spring 2022 issue have in common is a distinct Seventh-day Adventist perspective. The authors are accomplished academics with expertise in one or more disciplines, who have demonstrated an enduring commitment to the Adventist Church. However, as scholars they do not just applaud the positive aspects of the history and current activities of their faith community, but they want to help their church and its leadership to critically evaluate important trends in their church, including theological developments, interchurch relationships and social interactions.

When I wrote “God and Pandemics,” the Corona-pandemic was still dominating the headlines of the media. At the moment of the publication of this issue the events in Ukraine have taken its place. However, it must be feared that this pandemic may cause further havoc in future Covid-outburst, and that other zoonotic plagues will follow rather sooner than later. The theme of my article has, therefore, not lost any of its actuality. Much is being written on the impact of the Corona-pandemic on various domains of life, and it is to be expected that a lot of research will follow in the coming years. My article on the impact of “pestilences” on Christian believers, and, specifically, on Seventh-day Adventist Christians may inspire others to pursue in more depth a number of aspects that I could only touch upon very briefly.

The next in-depth article explores interchurch relations of the largest Christian denomination: the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout its history, Adventism has had a rather problematic relationship with Roman-Catholicism. Based on a historicist approach to the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation, Catholicism has traditionally been identified by Adventist Bible interpreters as a spiritual power – often with significant political influence – that was at odds with true Bible-based Christianity. The former widespread anti-Catholic attitude in much of Protestantism has in recent times, to a large extent and at many levels, been replaced with a fruitful Catholic-Protestant dialogue.

Dr. Radiša Antić, who has a background as a systematic theologian as well as a church administrator, assesses Roman Catholic dialogue from the days of the Second Vatican Council until recent times. Although he believes that changes in Catholic teachings would be desirable (as one would expect from a Seventh-day Adventist theologian), Antić points to some developments which he characterizes as positive.

Dr. Laurence A. Turner, an Old Testament specialist, is known in Adventism as a gifted lecturer and preacher. His influence does, however, extend further, through several highly acclaimed publications, especially focusing on the book of Genesis. In 2021, Turner responded positively to a request from his church to investigate the claim of an author/lecturer at the fringes of the church that Christ's Second Coming may be expected around the year 2027. This view is largely based on the so-called *cosmic week concept*, which holds that the six creation days of Genesis 1 correspond with a period of 6,000 years between the creation of the world and the return of Christ. Turner provides a brief historical summary of the cosmic week theory which, for some time in the past, was rather popular in Adventist circles, but was subsequently explicitly rejected. It has been, however, recently been revived by some internet ministries. Turner's criticism of the hermeneutical and exegetical methods used to support the (approximate) 2027 date on the basis the cosmic week theory is an important, well-argued response, which will be widely appreciated.

Dr. László Szabó teaches missiology and related subjects at Friedensau Adventist University (near Magdeburg, Germany). His article reflects his recent research in the area of Adventist church growth in Germany and Austria. The negative growth pattern shows strong similarities with those in other denominations. The retention of its members is particularly problematic for the German and Austrian Adventist Church, while this situation is significantly aggravated by the demographic structure of the church. Szabó proposes a series of measures church leaders might consider in their attempts to reduce membership losses and to provide stronger pastoral support for specific membership segments. Most articles in *Spes Christiana* are in the English language, but manuscripts in French and German are also accepted. Since Szabó's article deals with issues in two German-speaking countries, it is perhaps extra appropriate to publish it in German. László Szabó recently published his doctoral research in his book *Mission: Concept in Context: Post-*

Communism Religious Revival in Eastern Central Europe Experienced in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Regnum Studies in Mission, 2021).

Dr. John Webster's contribution "Advent Hope: Movements of Embodied Hope and the Common Good" resulted from a paper that he presented in 2021 as a response to the keynote address of Sally Haslanger, the Ford Professor of Philosophy at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at the 2021 annual meeting of the Society of Adventist Philosophers. John Webster hails originally from South Africa, but currently teaches theology and the history of Christianity at La Sierra University – one of several Adventist institutions of higher learning in California. Reading Webster's beautifully drafted response to the key note address of professor Haslanger will perhaps wet the appetite of some readers to look for some of her influential writings. Webster's thesis, in his response, is that agencies that do not share a *common ground* may, nonetheless, cooperate for the *common good*. This is the basis for his assertion that a movement of "Advent Hope" may cooperate with other, quite dissimilar, movements in the struggle against the structural and systemic injustice that Sallanger seeks to combat.

As has become common practice, this issue contains a number of reviews of important books about themes that correspond with the academic realm our journal is dedicated to. We welcome suggestions for future book reviews and trust that members of our society (the European Adventist Society of Theology and Religious Studies) who publish a book will send the book review editor a complimentary copy, so that it can be reviewed.

On a final note, we are saying goodbye to Dr. Kerstin Maiwald as the Managing Editor and Book Review Editor of *Spes Christiana*. In past years she has played a major role in the production of our journal. It has been a pleasure to work with her and her expertise will be missed. Dr. Maiwald is a scholar in her own right. She holds a Dr. phil. in Assyriology. Her teaching load and other assignments as a Research Associate postdoc at Friedensau Adventist University have recently been increased, which made it necessary for her to review her other commitments. As indicated in the previous issue we are happy that Mr. John Okpechi, a pastor and MTS graduate student at Friedensau Adventist University, will assume a more extensive role in the copy-editing process of the next issue.

Reinder Bruinsma, General Editor

