

or refuses, the gifts that other traditions have. *Every* Christian tradition must be as ready to receive as to give” (167).

Andrews University

DENIS FORTIN

McArthur, Benjamin. *A. G. Daniells: Shaper of Twentieth-Century Adventism*. Adventist Pioneer Series. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015. 464 pp. Hardcover. USD 29.99.

Arthur Grosvenor Daniells (1858–1935) served the Seventh-day Adventist Church as president for twenty-one years (1901–1922), arguably its most influential president since James White. Add to such a subject a seasoned historical biographer, Benjamin McArthur of Southern Adventist University, and you have the makings of a great life story. McArthur’s experience as an associate editor of the magisterial twenty-four volume *American National Biography* gives evidence of his recognized expertise in historical biography (8).

This is the tenth volume in the Adventist Pioneer Series, of which George R. Knight is the series editor. The work includes a foreword by Knight, an introduction by McArthur, a table of abbreviations, extensive endnotes after each chapter, and an index of almost 1,000 entries.

McArthur makes a strong case for his thesis that “Daniells’s gift to the Adventist Church was his wedding of missionary passion to organizational genius” (88). In one of many historical parallels between Adventist history and that of the United States, he observes that “like General George Marshall, who during World War II had to surrender his desire to be field commander in Europe in order to coordinate the war effort from Washington, Daniells found that his essential tasks of coordination and oversight required similar sacrifices of him” (280). Although “Daniells was tethered to America because of his position as a denominational leader,” he saw himself “as ‘a recruiting officer’ for the world field” (271, cf. 270).

McArthur divides the story into twelve chapters. Chapter one traces Daniells’s beginnings to Iowa, USA, where, because of ill-health and a stammer, he was pointedly rejected as an applicant for ministry. He eventually found a mentor in R. M. Kilgore, who left Iowa for Texas and accepted Daniells as an evangelistic assistant.

Chapter two spans the fourteen momentous years during which Daniells rose from a young evangelist in New Zealand to president of the Australasian Union Conference. Chapters three to eleven examine, in depth, his twenty-one years as General Conference president. Chapter twelve sketches thirteen post-presidential years, during which he grew the General Conference Ministerial Association, founded *Ministry*, chaired the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, and authored two important books. The first of these, *Christ Our Righteousness* (1926), sought to call the church back to the “opportunity for spiritual transformation offered by the 1888 message” (422). *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (1936) sought “to illustrate how God had bestowed the prophetic gift through the ages, from patriarchal times through the Christian era, and culminating with the work of Ellen

White” (441). The latter manuscript was completed under great time pressure during the closing five weeks of Daniells’s life, between a diagnosis of cancer in mid-February and his death on 22 March 1935 (449–450, 454n72).

I notice four major strengths of McArthur’s work. First, his writing is lively and colorful, a pleasure to read. See how aptly he characterizes the challenge Daniells faced in late 1901: “Not only a new century, but a new organizational form had been birthed the previous spring, one that needed Daniells’s attentive care if it was to step forward on spindly young legs” (139). McArthur excels at concise characterization, the ability to epitomize an era or a major event in a few words. In two sentences, he captures the essence of the conflict between Daniells and John Harvey Kellogg: It was “the most bitter leadership feud in Adventist Church history. Two antagonistic camps—ministerial and medical—were headed by two of the most strong-willed individuals the denomination has seen” (208).

A second strength is that clear, vivid writing is united with a strong commitment to historical objectivity. McArthur admires Daniells, but does not hesitate to identify his flaws when they are significant to the story. For instance, in the conflict with Kellogg, by 1904, Daniells had all but given up hope of reconciliation, because he “had lost confidence in Kellogg’s sincerity, finding him ‘devious, misleading, and confusing.’ Although Daniells continued to protest that there was nothing personal ‘between the Doctor and me,’ that posture was now hard to credit. Too much roiling water had gone under the bridge” (201).

Another example of historical objectivity might surprise some readers, given Daniells’s lifelong history of staunch support for Ellen G. White. More than thirty years later, in *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, Daniells recounted “with vividness and passion” his side of the conflict with Kellogg, as an example of God’s leading through the gift of prophecy. What Daniells left out of the published account was a “crisis of faith” during which he nearly succumbed to Kellogg’s philosophical attack. In 1904, Daniells confided to W. C. White that during those years, “I was once on the very verge of ruin,” had not “God in His great mercy” delivered him from “the insinuations of doubt that man had sowed in my mind” (207–208). The historian’s summation: “It was a remarkable moment of confession from the emotionally self-controlled and unswervingly orthodox Daniells. Which of Kellogg’s many words tempted him? Pantheism? Doubtful. More likely it had to do with Ellen White’s inspiration and authority. Fifteen years later [1919] he faced accusations of insufficient confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy. This would explain why in his latest recollection [1935] of this episode he could not admit to any vacillation on her inspiration. His legacy, as well as Ellen White’s, was at stake” (208).

A third strength is multi-faceted contextualization. McArthur’s academic specialty is nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American history and culture—precisely the milieu of Daniells’s life and of the formative years of Adventism—and he excels at placing complex ideas and events in the overlapping contexts of American history and culture, world history, and church history. For example, McArthur suggests that the 1901 General

Conference session “offers a nearly perfect case study of the larger trends toward rationalized bureaucratization occurring in American society.” Daniells’s advice that multiplying “organizations and boards and institutions . . . does not necessarily or naturally increase the efficiency of our management,” shows that “the ‘Progressive Era’ (as the early twentieth century is often called) is as appropriate a term for Adventist history as for anything happening in American government or business” (105).

Similar examples of historical contextualization occur with refreshing frequency. After listing the well-known points of conflict between Daniells and Kellogg, the author observes that “underlying all these conflicts was a social cleavage that stole unawares over the church. Adventism had from its beginnings been a movement of modest farmers and tradesmen. Literate, certainly, even given to deep study of Scripture; but not learned (with the occasional exception of a J. N. Andrews or the Dartmouth-educated Prescott). . . . Kellogg and his Adventist medical brethren represented a new professional class in the church” (185).

Again, in the debates of the 1903 General Conference session, McArthur detects reflections of American national politics of the time. “The call for control by ‘the people’ reflected a central theme of the Populist Movement in the 1890s.” Kellogg accused his opponents of “communism”—a term that in 1903 was “a typical smear against any perceived radicalism” (198, cf. 194). However, McArthur’s sensitivity to the political and economic context of Adventist history is not limited to North America. Accounting for Daniells’s evangelistic success in his early years in New Zealand, the historian draws multiple clues from the social, cultural, and economic context there (42–44).

A later example of historical context highlights Daniells’s editorial in the beginning issue of *Ministry* magazine (January 1928). Daniells declared that “a steady, growing efficiency in our ministry has been the constant aim of the [Ministerial] Association during the five years of its existence.” The historian provides the background: this focus on “efficiency as a prime measure of pastoral work was a peculiar, though not surprising, reflection of an age that elevated business values. Efficiency experts sought to help industries become as productive as possible.” Challenging ministers to excel in both spirituality and productivity, Daniells wrote: “It [efficiency] stands for the power to produce maximum results with minimum effort or cost. It aims at the elimination of waste or loss in labor, time, and money, in obtaining intended results.” McArthur notes, “This sentiment could have come straight from the pen of the father of the efficiency movement, Frederick Winslow Taylor. Ministers, implicitly, were put on notice that they might be evaluated on the basis of their success in soul winning” (421–422).

A fourth strength of this biography is penetrating, insightful interpretation. Uniting the skills of a historian to the perspective of a denominational insider enables McArthur to more fully illuminate the implications of the events he reports. During the night before the famous “washroom confrontation” with Kellogg in 1902, Daniells reported that “a voice seemed to be speaking to my conscience telling me that I must not surrender to wrong principles, and

thus bring serious troubles to the cause of God.” In his perplexity he “cried [to God] for understanding.” On awakening, “the warning voice still sounded. But before reaching London, I received light.” The light was that he must maintain the no-debt policy, which would mean resisting Kellogg. McArthur observes that “this quasi-revelation . . . may strike some as presumptuous—or at least odd in an age when Adventism had a designated prophet. But it was not so unusual.” By placing this experience in the context of other Adventists and Christians in general who “spoke of dreams, apprehensions, or impressions,” McArthur clarifies an incident that might otherwise remain quite opaque to some twenty-first-century readers (187). He also clearly distinguishes such private guidance from the prophetic messages that Ellen White received for the whole church or its leaders.

Another interesting example of historian-plus-insider interpretation concerns the April 1903 meeting of the International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association that took place in Battle Creek just after the General Conference session in Oakland. The meeting focused on reconciliation, and at its close, Kellogg and Daniells made a joint public pronouncement that their differences had been resolved. The historian observes that “Adventist leadership suffered from a naïve view of conflict resolution. Bring the contending parties together; read a testimony; pray; profess a changed heart; the formula was standard. But the underlying differences persisted, and the truces would be short-lived. In this case, the April *rapprochement* lasted but a few months before the animosities resumed” (198–199).

Such analysis and interpretation occasionally leads to speculation about the future. Accounting for the fact that the 1901 reorganization has succeeded for more than a century, McArthur explains: “Its resilience and utility lay in the fine balance its creators achieved between centralized and dispersed administrative authority.” The author expects, however, that “new efficiencies created by advances in transportation and communication—and unceasing pressures on budgets—will likely lead to overhaul of the 1901 system in the near future” (105).

These four qualities—vivid, concise writing; a commitment to historical objectivity; multi-faceted contextualization; and penetrating interpretation—make this a book worth investing in for both reading pleasure and scholarly reference.

In 450 pages of text, I rarely detected typographical errors, but one is misleading. Regarding the 1901 Iowa camp meeting, Daniells reported that the Lord “set the seal of *His* approval upon it” [not “the seal of *disapproval*”] (122).

In sum, the book is a fascinating read with profound insights. I highly recommend it to all who desire an in-depth historical understanding of the history and polity of present-day Adventism.