

## Book Review

**Richard B. Ferret.** *Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform – A Crucible of Identity Tensions: Ellen G. White and Dr. John H. Kellogg – The Battle for Seventh-day Adventist Identity.* Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023. 162 pp.

*Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform – A Crucible of Identity Tensions* by Richard Bowen Ferret offers a comprehensive examination of Seventh-day Adventist health reform and the emergent identity crisis, presenting a nuanced analysis of proposed policy perspectives, opposition to those perspectives, and their potential impact on the Seventh-day Adventist organisation worldwide. With a blend of scholarly rigour and accessible language, Ferret delves into the complex exchange between Dr Kellogg and the church administrators, clergy, and Ellen White, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential opportunities facing organisational policymakers, health practitioners, patients, the health institution, and the church organisation alike.

One of the book's strengths lies in its balanced approach to examining the policy proposals in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement's inception, that is, the pre-formalisation years with the Millerite Adventists and the Great Awakening fever, as well as the context of health reform itself. By exploring the undergirding currents driving each side of the dialogue, Ferret encourages readers to critically evaluate the interchanges involved in discussing the trajectory of the health reform policy – a policy that would be reflected in the name of the health reform institution. Moreover, he provides a comprehensive exploration of the principles and practices that underpin Seventh-day Adventist health reform, offering valuable insights into its origins, philosophy, and historical as well as future relevance. Accordingly, this gives the reader an in-depth awareness of the multifaceted aspect of the broader Adventist polity and praxis. The work has done well in emphasising the incorporation of diverse stakeholder perspectives in the reform process, thus highlighting the need for and the willingness of all parties to engender inclusive and participatory decision-making.

In terms of structure, the book begins with a literature review of the health reform discourse, highlighting the tension between the two parties, namely, Dr Kellogg versus the organisation's administrators, clergy, and Ellen G. White. Furthermore, he explains the rationale for the resulting name change, from "The Seventh-day Adventist Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association," to "The International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association." Fittingly, he skilfully navigates the complex healthcare issues, from access and delivery to organisational identity and mission.

The author subsequently provides a comprehensive contextual and chronological overview of the health reform, from its inception within the wider community to the Seventh-day Adventist organisation's adoption and unique approach to the phenomenon. This contextual and chronological overview allows the reader to understand Ellen White's basic presuppositions and theological orientation, both of which are helpful for understanding why she later insisted on her operational model. The book then gives the reader Dr Kellogg's perspective and point of departure for his less favourable view of a sectarian approach, particularly as it relates to his public persona, and passion for professional contact and dialogue with fellow doctors and scientists. The author advances deeper into Ellen White's points of departure and orientation for her health reform emphases and drive, by introducing the reader to the Great Controversy theme that is embedded in her understanding, and thus, the connection between health reform and the gospel commission.

Correspondingly, he provides a comparative analysis of Ellen White's and Dr Kellogg's health reform models, emphasising the fundamental difference in the two models. For Dr Kellogg, what mattered most was not one's theology, but one's state of health. His overriding concern, which was the essence of biological living, was making sick people better and keeping them well when they attained good health. For Ellen White, health reform must remain secondary to primary theological principles.

The final section of the book appropriately focuses on tensions in a maturing millennialist movement, and medicalisation, modernisation and change in Adventist institutionalised health care. One of the most compelling aspects of "Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform – A Crucible of Identity Tensions" is its aim to present a balanced perspective without masking the tension. On the one hand, the author was apt to leave the reader with a sense of the legacy of both White and Kellogg, namely, "If Ellen White had the greatest influence

on the consciousness of Adventists, on the basis of her prophetic utterances, in many respects, Dr. J.H. Kellogg was Adventism's social gospel advocate. There can be little doubt that Kellogg's contribution towards changing the lifestyle habits of the American population was both profound and arguably unsurpassed" (p. 103). On the other hand, "both White and Kellogg considered health reform as a vital element to the betterment of humankind and as part of the salvation process, however, by the late 1890s, the foundations from which those reforms emanated were fundamentally different" (pp. 104–105), because their philosophies were different.

Overall, the book offers a compelling synthesis of Seventh-day Adventist health reform, blending theological insights with scientific and philosophical perspectives to present a comprehensive picture of the health reform initiative. It is a timely and thought-provoking contribution to the general discussion on health reform within Seventh-day Adventism. Besides presenting a substantive analysis, the book is well-organised and engaging, making it accessible to both scholars and general readers interested in the historic nature of the health message, and the challenges inherent in shaping the trajectory of its message to result in the impact, including continued tensions for today's church membership. Accordingly, the book fulfilled its objective in presenting the essence of its title, "Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform – A Crucible of Identity Tensions: Ellen G. White and Dr. John H. Kellogg – The Battle for Seventh-day Adventist Identity." It is a clear yet not over-simplified account of the Seventh-day Adventist health reform.

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