



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

RICHARD B. FERRET

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OF IDENTITY TENSIONS

Ellen G. White and Dr. John H. Kellogg—The Battle for Seventh-day
Adventist Identity

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The Seventh-day Adventist church, formally organized in America in 1863, is today one of the fastest-growing Protestant movements in the world and defines itself as a prophetic remnant, raised up and commissioned by God to teach and preach a final message of warning to the world before the imminent return of Christ. From its beginnings, however, a sense of failure was built into the success of the fledgling movement. In order to preserve the message (the imminent return of Christ), Adventists had to erect institutions based on continuity and permanence. A dilemma emerged: medical institutions built to be conducive for separation from the world faced a this-worldly reality filled with requirements from various state entities: registration, approval, and so forth. Thus, Adventist medical institutions confronted constant challenges to their denominational and theological uniqueness. The emergence of this dilemma between aspirations of separateness and this-worldly reality was especially evident in the battle for Adventism's sectarian identity, ethos, and future at the turn of the twentieth century—between Ellen G. White (a cofounder of the movement) and Dr. John H. Kellogg (an Adventist administrator and surgeon who sought to desectarianize the movement).

"This is a fascinating study of two leading figures of nineteenth-century Adventism—Ellen White and John Kellogg. Richard Ferret outlines White's and Kellogg's radically different visions of the role of health in Adventism and, indeed, of the nature of the church itself. He provides tantalizing glimpses of where their trajectories may have led the church. If White's vision led to a biblicist, fundamentalist denomination, Kellogg's would have aligned the church more closely with liberal Christianity."

—**DAVID THIELE**, retired dean of theology, Pacific Adventist University

"Richard Ferret's work shines a new light on a dynamic and challenging era of Adventist history, viewing it through the lens of identity. He demonstrates the strongly divergent visions for Adventism's future between Ellen White and John Harvey Kellogg, thereby underscoring perhaps what was really at stake in the Kellogg controversy in the early twentieth century."

—**MARK J. P. PEARCE**, director, Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale University

RICHARD B. FERRET is a retired lecturer from Avondale University in New South Wales, Australia, and has a background in nursing, cross-cultural ministry, hospital chaplaincy, and administration. His major research discipline is sociology and religion. He is the author of *Charisma and Routinization in a Millennialist Community* (2008) and several journal articles.

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