

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

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Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists, by Gary Land, 2nd edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. 380 pp. + 6 pp. chronology + 88 pp. Bibliography. ISBN 978-0-8010-3964-5. Hardcover, US\$110.00.

Gary Land has had a profound impact on Adventist historiography. Aside from his thirty years of teaching history at Andrews University, leadership in professional organizations, and prolific literary output, one of his lesser-known accomplishments bears mentioning. Land was one of three founding editors of *Adventist Heritage*, a journal that appeared in 1974 and ran up through 1998.

Land was a prolific author right up to his unfortunate passing on April 26, 2014. Several books appeared within weeks of his death: *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, co-edited by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Ronald Numbers, and Land, was published by Oxford University Press as well as Land's *Uriah Smith: Apologist and Biblical Commentator*. In October 2014 the second edition of *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* came off the press. This last posthumous offering from Land is under review here.

The first edition of Land's *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* was published in 2005, the 23rd volume in Rowman & Littlefield's series of Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements. Covering an impressive range of subjects from Taoism to Organized Labor to Utopianism, the object of the series is to "present essential information on a broad range of subjects," and to feature "entries [that] describe the main people, events, politics, social issues, institutions, and policies that make

the topic unique." As series editor Jon Woronoff wrote in his foreword, "it would be hard to think of anyone better placed [than Land] to produce a historical dictionary" of Seventh-day Adventists (p. xii).

The second edition of *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* contains approximately 80 new entries and occasional edits to entries from the first edition. However, the reader should expect extensive overlap not only from the first edition of this volume, but from Land's *The A to Z of the Seventh-day Adventists*, which Scarecrow Press (a subsidiary of Rowman & Littlefield) published in 2009. Land also states that in preparing the *Historical Dictionary* he relied on the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. For a reader on a budget who already owns one or both of Land's previous reference works and the 1996 SDA *Encyclopedia*, purchasing the second edition of *Historical Dictionary* for \$100 or more may be unnecessary.

Those looking for information on Adventism in Asia may be also disappointed with *Historical Dictionary*. Land admits that "at this point in time, North American and European names and institutions dominate the entries, but with dramatically changed membership patterns of the past half century, a work such as this written 50 years from now will show a much more international cast of characters" (p. xv). One has to wonder why the *present* volume doesn't reflect the changed membership patterns. This is one of its main shortcomings. As it stands, because of the same bias of the 1996 SDA *Encyclopedia* and Land's previous reference works, the "developing countries," whose members now comprise the vast majority of global Adventism, are not well-represented in any Adventist reference work. An additional shortcoming is the aforementioned reliance on the 1996 SDA *Encyclopedia*, which, as good as it is, was produced just before the revolution in Adventist historiography brought on by the Internet, the major membership and paradigm shift, and the coming of age of Adventist historiography (which Land was integral in ushering in).

Nevertheless, being one of the most recent (and only) reference works on Seventh-day Adventists, the *Historical Dictionary* is very welcome. The Chronology and Introduction provide a grounding in the basics of Adventist history to Adventist and non-Adventist alike. The 369 pages of entries treat on significant Seventh-day Adventist people, practices, themes, institutions, administrative structures, entities, and doctrines, as well as the history of the work in major countries. The mostly one to two paragraph articles are succinct and information-driven, with language that is non-Adventist friendly. The entries also steer clear of biases and controversies that historians often find themselves enmeshed in, simply stating the agreed-upon facts in neutral language. A testament to Land's life in Adventist historiography, this is a fine display of the vastness of his accumulated knowledge tempered by a matured and measured outlook. One should not expect, neither does Land claim, that *Historical Dictionary* is comprehensive.

As stated above, Land is concerned herewith the major and significant of Adventism, and although his inclusions are, of course, debatable, the range is impressive.

It is no secret that Seventh-day Adventists have always grappled with the way the public has perceived them. A concern of Adventists in this age of transparency and accountability is how to be open and honest about the past while still being sensitive to public perception. This series of historical dictionaries by Rowman & Littlefield has provided an opportunity for authors of diverse philosophical and religious persuasions to present their histories as they see fit, to speak instead of being spoken about. In writing this book, Gary Land does Adventism a service.

Benjamin Baker

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, USA

Methodism in the American Forest, by Russell E. Richey, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 230 pp. ISBN 9-780-1993-5962-2. Hardcover, US\$55.00.

Russell E. Richey is currently dean emeritus of Candler School of Theology and William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Emeritus at Emory University. His eminent career is characterized by his passion and love for early Methodist history. Richey is a research fellow of the Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, author of seven books on Methodism, and edited the *Methodist Review*. In addition to his many accomplishments, Richey is currently working on a new book, titled, *Methodists in America*, for Columbia University Press. His profound knowledge of early Methodist history and acute grasp of its spiritual ethos deeply characterizes the work herein reviewed: *Methodism in the American Forest*.

The purpose of *Methodism in the American Forest* is to offer “yet another look at Methodist ministry, its hallmark pattern of itinerancy, and ministerial dimensions of ecclesiology” (p. 10). Richey achieves this goal by focusing on Methodist preaching in sylvan settings. Though Methodist ministers usually preached in homes, chapels, or other buildings, the author demonstrates that the woodlands provided meaningful and significant spiritual experiences for many as they witnessed for Christ on America’s frontier (cf. p. 6). Since these experiences provided “theologically potent images of Methodism” (p. 28), Richey highlights some important aspects of the denomination’s early self-understanding.