

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

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|---|---------|
| Brian C. Wilson, <i>Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living</i> (Edward Allen) | 191-194 |
| Robert F. Rea, <i>Why Church History Matters: An Invitation to Love and Learn from Our Past</i> (Michael W. Campbell) | 195-196 |
| Carrie Doehring, <i>The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach</i> (Erick C. Carter) | 196-198 |
| Gary Land, <i>Uriah Smith: Apologist and Biblical Commentator</i> (Donny Chrissutianto) | 198-201 |
| Yang Huilin, <i>China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture</i> (Liang Chuanshan) | 201-204 |
| Fouad Masri, <i>Connecting with Muslims: A Guide to Communicating Effectively</i> (Abner P. Dizon) | 204-205 |
| Gerald Bray, <i>God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology</i> (Denis Fortin) | 205-208 |
| Roger E. Olson, <i>The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction</i> (Roy E. Graf Maiorov) | 208-211 |
| Jeremy R. Treat, <i>The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology</i> (Norman R. Gulley) | 211-213 |
| John B. Carman and Chilkuri Vasantha Rao, <i>Christians in South Indian Villages, 1959-2009: Decline and Revival in Telangana</i> (Koberson Langhu) | 213-216 |
| Simon Chan, <i>Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up</i> (Kyungho Song) | 216-218 |
| Stephen C. Meyer, <i>Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design</i> (Timothy G. Standish) | 218-221 |

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living, by Brian C. Wilson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. xix + 240 pp. ISBN 978-0-253-01447-4. Hardcover, US\$35.00.

One of the mysteries in Seventh-day Adventist history has been the nature and source of John Harvey Kellogg's theological deviation. He was accused of being a pantheist but stoutly denied it. Yet his theological ideas were clearly aberrant. In a biography entitled *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and*

the Religion of Biologic Living, Brian C. Wilson, professor of American religious history at Western Michigan University, has contributed to a better understanding of this mystery.

Wilson begins by sketching the history of Seventh-day Adventists and their relationship to Battle Creek, Michigan. The Sabbath keeping Adventists were still an unorganized group when they chose the small village of Battle Creek for the location of their publishing enterprise. Wilson describes this relationship through the lens of the Kellogg family which played important roles in the growth of both the church and the city. The emphasis on both the "sacred" history of the church and its interaction with the "secular" city becomes a useful paradigm for the entire book. Wilson's success in detailing that interaction is one of the great strengths of this book. For example, he begins his discussion of John Harvey Kellogg's intellectual development by describing how he was inspired by the Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller (p. 13). Throughout the rest of the book, Wilson traces Kellogg's encounters with a multitude of other important nineteenth century intellectual figures and his appropriation and rejection of their ideas.

Kellogg's interactions with the hydrotherapy of Jackson and Trall are well known as is his training in mainstream medicine at the University of Michigan and at Bellevue Hospital in New York. What Wilson succeeds in doing is relating both of these types of training to the development of Kellogg's ideas. In fact, Kellogg's theory of biologic living was a combination of the unconventional "Christian physiology" of men like Sylvester Graham and the conventional ideas of "rational medicine" advocated by Dr. James Bigelow and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. To both the unconventional and the conventional ideas Kellogg added his own religious concepts which included the idea that the laws of health were just as important as the laws of God.

Kellogg was probably the first Seventh-day Adventist to interact with the serious intellectual ideas of the late nineteenth century. During his medical training he encountered the evolutionary theories of the German biologist Ernst Haeckel, an evolutionary naturalist who taught that nature was merely another name for an impersonal god (p. 71). It seemed to Kellogg that the world had idolized Haeckel. How was Kellogg to reconcile the seemingly crass human-like conceptions of God from his Bible believing background with Haeckel's ideas of nature? Kellogg took his concerns to Ellen White, who was a sort of surrogate mother to him. Ellen White wrote to him in 1882 rejecting a purely materialistic view of nature in favor of a view where God was perpetually working in nature. She spoke of how every breath was a continual evidence of the power of an ever-present God (p. 71). Kellogg accepted the testimony with great joy, seeing in it a divine explanation that all the wonders of nature were the result of

“the presence of the great Creative Intelligence, the infinite personality, Jehovah” (p. 72). Based on his understanding of Haeckel and Ellen White, Kellogg set out to construct a theology that Wilson says is not classic pantheism but more correctly labeled “immanent theism” (p. 72). Ultimately, Kellogg came to teach that God is in man, and that “matter is nothing but an expression of God” (p. 73).

Kellogg’s personal struggles with scientific ideas led him to spend the rest of his life seeking to harmonize science and religion. As early as 1878 he was accused of having unorthodox views and was asked to give a presentation to the General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Battle Creek, clarifying his ideas. He was so pleased with the results that he published the address in a pamphlet entitled *Harmony of Science and the Bible*. It included a defense of the Adventist understanding of the nature of the soul and the resurrection. It apparently satisfied the church leadership.

However, by 1903 with the publication of *The Living Temple* Kellogg moved beyond mere affirmations of God’s immanence to the place where he wrote of God actually being in nature as the immediate cause of life. What led him to this position? Wilson refers to two solutions Seventh-day Adventist scholars have suggested in the past. One solution is that Kellogg’s ideas resulted from theological developments in the denomination related to the Holy Spirit. Early Adventists were non-trinitarians who taught that the Holy Spirit was a force that pervaded the cosmos. The other solution is that his ideas were influenced by Adventism’s embrace of trinitarianism. It has been suggested that an emphasis on the personhood of the Holy Spirit in Adventist circles in the 1890s influenced Kellogg (p. 94). Wilson convincingly refutes both of these ideas. In their place he demonstrates that Kellogg himself refers to English philosopher Herbert Spencer as the authority for his doctrine of divine immanence (p. 95). He shows how Kellogg quoted Spencer repeatedly in the 1880s and 1890s (p. 96). Like Kellogg, other theological radicals of his day were also enamored with Spencer, including Henry Ward Beecher and Henry Drummond. Kellogg actually attended the sermons of Beecher while he was in New York in 1875 and he was well aware of other writers advocating Spencer’s ideas (p. 97). Kellogg’s relationship with Beecher’s successor, Lyman Abbott, is even more revealing. Wilson documents how Kellogg quotes Abbott’s immanentist ideas approvingly. He argues that Abbott was at least an acquaintance of Kellogg’s and that Abbott’s book, *The Temple* (1909), appears to contain some of the same ideas as Kellogg’s *Living Temple*, suggesting the possibility that Abbott was familiar with Kellogg’s book (p. 99).

Wilson describes other possible theological influences on Kellogg, including Reed Stuart, Battle Creek’s most famous minister, and Kellogg’s

older brother Merritt. Intriguingly, Wilson suggests that one of the most important conduits for immanentist ideas was his wife, Ella Eaton, who remained a Seventh Day Baptist all her life (pp. 99-101). Ella grew up in the shadow of the Seventh Day Baptist Alfred University, attended there as a student from 1869-1872, and was mentored by its leading theologians, Jonathan Allen and A. H. Lewis, both of whom were advocates of immanentist theology. Lewis visited the Kelloggs in 1895 as house guests, and Arthur White, in his biography of his grandmother, suggests that Lewis shared his pantheistic views with Kellogg and they did not fall on deaf ears (p. 101). It is likely that there was no single influence that was decisively important for Kellogg. Immanentist ideas were in the theological air of the time, but Wilson's documentation of Kellogg's acquaintance with and appropriation of a significant variety of thinkers has put to rest the idea that Kellogg's aberrant ideas came solely from within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The latter chapters of Wilson's book describe Kellogg's break with the Seventh-day Adventist Church and his heavy involvement in the eugenics movement during the last thirty years of his life. Theologically, Kellogg gradually moved away from his Adventist roots, eventually embracing evolution and questioning both the reality of heaven and the idea of a personal God. Wilson perceptively notes that Kellogg never abandoned the Adventist idea that the world was headed for catastrophe, even if he redefined that catastrophe as the extinction of humanity due to race degeneracy and unbiologic living. Kellogg came to see salvation in terms of a remnant of the white race that could be saved by preserving themselves eugenically from what Kellogg considered to be the degenerate African and Asian races. To accomplish this, he applied the kind of breeding that horse and cattle owners use to human beings.

Wilson's book is well written and easy to read. It makes extensive use of primary sources from the numerous archives where Kellogg's papers came to rest. In addition to archival materials, Wilson has ably mined Kellogg's massive published material. Informed historians will find themselves consulting the end notes many times in each chapter, discovering new sources for information about Kellogg and his times.

Wilson's work not only tells the story of Kellogg's life and legacy, it also convincingly places Kellogg in the medical and theological climate of his times. As such, Wilson has added an immense amount of information to our knowledge of John Harvey Kellogg and to our understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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