
The Making of a President: Ellen G. White and A. G. Daniells in Australia

by Milton R. Hook

During the 1890s colonial Australia was the arena in which Mrs. White and Pastor Daniells pioneered together. Mrs. White was already a recognized church leader in America prior to her work in Australia. Daniells, whose leadership qualities were forged in New Zealand and Australia, was, by comparison, relatively unknown until his return to America, when he was elected General Conference president in 1901. During their years in Australasia they corresponded frequently, counseled together, confided in one another, established church institutions, and preached at the same conventions. Daniells was in his mid-thirties. Mrs. White was in her mid-sixties. Did Daniells see in her a mother-image? Were their dealings with each other always cordial? To what extent did Mrs. White foster the growth of leadership qualities in Daniells? Did Daniells influence the attitudes of Mrs. White? What was the nature and extent of the relationship between these two people who remain household names in Seventh-day Adventism?

It would appear to be a fruitful exercise to read the exchange of letters as the primary source of

Milton R. Hook, born in Western Australia, has been a teacher and minister in various states of Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, and the United States. He holds an M.A. and Ed.D. from Andrews University, and is a prolific writer whose articles and books have been published both in Australia and overseas. This essay first appeared in *Adventist History in the South Pacific, 1885-1918*, edited by Arthur J. Ferch.

information, noting the significant events in the developing scenario and how the two personalities related to each other. As far as we know, between 1892 and 1900 Daniells wrote 48 letters to Mrs. White. She wrote him 33 letters.

Arthur White wrote the most definitive source on the term of service in Australia of his grandmother, Ellen White (*The Australian Years: 1891-1900* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1983]) but his general biography did not analyze in depth the specific interaction between persons he discussed. Similarly, John J. Robertson's book on A. G. Daniells, while making use of Daniells' extensive letter collection from the 1890s to the 1920s, only occasionally made reference to the Ellen G. White collection. He apparently did not intend to study in depth the relationship between Ellen G. White and A. G. Daniells.

The farmlands of northeast Iowa provided Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, Sr. his childhood memories. He was born at West Union, September 28, 1858. Two years later, twins Charles and Jessie were added to the little family. His father, Dr. Thomas Grosvenor Daniells, a graduate of the University of Vermont, died in the American Civil War. Throughout his life Arthur carried little more than a genetic legacy from his natural father.

Poverty forced his mother, Mary Jane (McQuillian) Daniells, then only 28 years of age, to place her three little ones in a nearby orphanage until, in 1865, she remarried and the children were united with her once again. For Arthur, the

experience was undoubtedly not without its moments of trauma since he was such a tender age. The speech impediment of his prepreaching days may be attributed to adverse childhood circumstances.

Arthur's new home provided mixed happiness. In mid-life he reflected on those years saying, "My mother was a good woman but my stepfather was bad."¹ His stepfather was a local West Union farmer, a Mr. Lippincott. Arthur, Charles, and Jessie all retained the surname of Daniells.

Throughout his life Arthur held a deep respect for his mother. It was about the time of her remarriage that she became a Seventh-day Adventist. Not long after, Arthur, "at the tender age of ten. . . was converted to Christ." As a youth he did what he could to help his elderly and ailing stepfather work the farm, but he grew restless for some further education. At the age of 17 he left the farm home.

With the help of odd jobs and the little financing his mother could send, Arthur managed study for a spartan year or two, one being at Battle Creek College. At the age of 19 he married Mary Ellen Hoyt, whom he had known since childhood. They returned from Battle Creek College to teach public school for one year in hometown West Union.

At the end of his first year teaching public school, Daniells experienced the growing conviction he should enter denominational work. He applied to the Iowa Conference executive committee for ministerial work but was rejected, perhaps because of his speech impediment. Undeterred, he paid his fare to Texas in order to work as tentmaster for Elder R. M. Kilgore, who was preaching at Rockwall, just northeast of Dallas. His wife joined him a little later.

While engaged in the tent-mission work a significant experience, albeit brief, occurred in Daniells' life. In December 1878, James and Ellen White, with their helpers, joined the preaching team in Texas. Arthur and Mary lived in the White's home for six months, assisting where needed. It was the beginning of a close association between the two families. Fourteen years later Daniells recalled affectionately:

The fact is I would like to be back in that pleasant

time. I shall remember my pleasant stay with you always. I have not had a mother since I was a lad, and it seemed the most like having a mother and sisters of any experience since I was small. But there was a hallowed sacred influence that did not pervade my home when a child.²

Daniells' two-year stint in Texas was followed by a return to Iowa, where, this time, he was accepted as preacher and was ordained in 1882. Four years later, he and Mary sailed for New Zealand as pioneering evangelist-missionaries. Pastor Daniells' ill health prompted a transfer to Australia in 1891. He was at the Sydney dockside among the welcoming party when Mrs. White, her son W. C. White, and their assistants, arrived to supplement the missionary work force. The Whites stayed briefly in Daniells' Darlinghurst home before traveling on to Melbourne.

Throughout the following nine years their paths would cross many times in the Australian colonies, and they would frequently be brought together at church camp meetings and worship services. More often than not, however, they were living, working, and traveling in different localities. Letter communication bridged this gap. From the extant letters something of the relationship between the two personalities can be deduced.³

Scenarios: 1892-1900

When Daniells was elected president of the Australian Conference in 1892 he began to communicate regularly with Ellen G. White. Initially, this was not for the purpose of soliciting advice. It was simply to keep her informed of committee decisions and sundry news reports. After he returned home from his first council meeting he wrote, "As you are deeply interested in all the plans. . . I will tell you of our decision. . . ." There follows a detailed report of plans for the forthcoming week of prayer and conference sessions, together with the decision not to hold a camp meeting in the near future.⁴

In the plans for the week of prayer Daniells was appointed to go to Adelaide to lead in special

meetings. He first journeyed to Adelaide to organize the forthcoming program. On his return he wrote to Mrs. White, reporting snippets such as school principal L. J. Rousseau's eye malady caused by studying at night by lamplight, and the crowds on the Adelaide to Melbourne train who stood in the pouring rain the following day to watch the Melbourne Cup. More importantly, the letter contains a touch of diplomacy. Apparently it was Mrs. White's desire to have Pastor G. B. Starr transfer from his Bible teaching at the Melbourne School to pastor the Adelaide Church. Daniells reported he had shared these thoughts with W. C. White and Starr, but these two men thought Rousseau could not do without such help at the school. Instead, Starr remained at the school. Daniells felt he had discharged his obligations in the matter and the responsibility for the decision rested with the other two men themselves. Daniells concluded the letter with the affectionate words, "I hope and pray that you will be kept from harm and pain and that your heart will be full of the good Spirit of God. I would like to be with you."⁵

At the conclusion of the week of prayer meetings Daniells wrote from Adelaide to report they were well attended. Among other readings, he had read to them an article written by Mrs. White entitled, "The Source of the Church's Power." He lauded the merits of the article but then deplored the condition of the church members in relation to the standards established in it. "They don't truly repent of sin," he wrote.

They do not die to self. They cherish their darling idols and they are trying to exercise faith to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them while self lives and the heart is full of sin. But I do not believe God will cover anyone with his robe of righteousness while their hearts are corrupt . . . I know for a fact that the masses of our people are strangers of real Bible study and communion with God. Like most European Christians they depend on Sabbath sermons.⁶

In her reply Mrs. White chided him for striking such a gloomy note.

You are in danger of judging persons and things too strongly . . . Never carry the whip. Never try to drive. . . . Never leave in spirit, in word, in testimony, the impression that the Lord is not full of goodness, compassion, tenderness and love.⁷

A. G. Daniells—Adventism's Most Enduring and Influential President

by Gary Land

Arthur Grosvenor Daniells was, according to the *SDA Encyclopedia*, the son of a Union Army physician and surgeon who died in the Civil War. Arthur converted to Adventism at the age of 10 and entered Battle Creek College when he was 17. He left after one year, got married, and taught in public schools for a year. At the age of 20 he started his ministry in Texas, where James and Ellen White met him and for one year employed him as their secretary. Daniells then worked as an evangelist in Iowa, until going to New Zealand.

The following excerpt, explaining Daniells' enduring importance for the Adventist church, is taken from "Shaping the Modern Church 1906-1930," a chapter in *Adventism in America*, Gary Land, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986). Gary Land is professor of history at Andrews University and has

also edited *The World of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987.).

—The Editors

One man dominated the church from 1901 to 1922. Arthur G. Daniells, the General Conference president who led the church through the organizational and theological changes of that period, had greater influence on the Seventh-day Adventist church than had any other president, according to one student.¹ An Iowan born in 1858, Daniells had left the United States for New Zealand in 1886 as the first Adventist missionary to that country; he served in the New Zealand and Australian area for 14 years, 10 of them in administrative positions. This experience had considerable effect on Daniells and,

She suggested he speak kindly and lift up Jesus Christ.

On receipt of this letter Daniells was contrite. He immediately dashed off a page saying,

I am glad to receive any words of warning you may have for me. I know very well that my labours are defective and many times I fear that they are well nigh useless, but I desire to know where the fault is and correct it as far as it is possible.

He concluded by wishing her bon voyage for her journey to New Zealand.⁸

While Ellen G. White was in New Zealand throughout much of 1893, Daniells continued to communicate news items to her in his letters. He speaks of improving the spiritual tone among workers at the Echo Publishing Company by conducting midday prayer meetings in the print shop.⁹ He reports on church happenings in South Australia and Tasmania, and especially his own public meetings in Sydney, particularly those at Parramatta. He said he was holding Bible studies with new interests in the Newtown area, and kept busy assisting with Tract Society business and the ship mission work in Sydney harbor.¹⁰

In May 1893 he received a letter from Mrs. White that activated his self-defense. His assessment of his earlier work in New Zealand was that he ought to preach less and personally visit the people in their homes more frequently, rather than sending his wife or others adept at giving Bible studies. She wrote,

Here in New Zealand you, my brother, and others who have laboured here, have failed. We must get acquainted with the people in their homes. You can never supply this by proxy.¹¹

Daniells waited some weeks before he replied. "At first I hardly knew what to say," he began. He had read counsels of this nature in the *Testimonies*, but confessed "I have not carried this knowledge out as I should. . . . I have at times failed to do the visiting that I should have done and that I had a desire to do." He claimed he had made a self-examination of his work in New Zealand, saw his failures, and had already rectified the problem since transferring to Australia. Also, he felt the new light that had since come to him about the righteousness of Christ had given him fresh hope. He concluded the matter courteously by saying,

through him, on the development of the church. The administrative experience he gained in Australia included the presidency of the Australian Union Conference (later called the Australasian Division), the first union conference to be established by Seventh-day Adventists.²

It was also in Australia that Daniells was closely associated with Ellen White, whom he had previously served as a secretary, and with her son, William C. White.³ This relationship contributed to his emergence as a General Conference leader in 1901 and affected his position in the later dispute over the inspiration and authority of Ellen White's writings. Daniells and his associates—particularly William White and William A. Spicer—differed from most previous leaders of the General Conference primarily in that they had had significant foreign-mission experience. Daniells took the position of General Conference executive committee chairman, he said, "to get things in order here so as to benefit the weak fields. That is my hope. I can do more for Australia from here than from there."⁴ This interest in foreign missions was one of crucial importance to the Adventist church in the 20th century, for under Daniells the church shifted from its 19th-century emphasis on North America to its 20th-century worldwide emphasis on the

basis of Christ's gospel commission to go into all the world.

The worldwide mission idea and Daniells' organizational ideas were separate yet connected influences, and together they shaped the church during the first third of the 20th century. The reorganization inaugurated in 1901 and carried out under Daniells' leadership provide the vehicle that made the missionary vision effective and permanent.

Notes

1. John J. Robertson, "Arthur Grosvenor Daniells: The Effect of Australasia Upon the Man and His Work as Revealed Through Correspondence With W. C. White and Ellen G. White" (M. A. thesis, Andrews University), 1966, p. 3.

2. For a brief biographical sketch on Daniells, see Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), s. v. "Daniells."

3. Robertson, *Daniells*, pp. 111-130.

4. Daniells to E. W. Farnsworth, April 3, 1901 (General Conference Publishing Department Historical Files, Daniells folder).

I am thankful for your interest in me and shall try to take kindly any reproofs the Lord may send me. While I cannot undo the past, I know that I can by God's help do a better work in the future.¹²

Mary Daniells, in her customary postscript, offered a further explanation of Daniells' poor work record. The illness that Daniells suffered in New Zealand was basically a dental problem. "I am glad to tell you that Arthur has not been so well in years as he is now," she wrote.

He found out it was his teeth that made his face ache and he had one filled and another pulled and now his face ache has all disappeared, and this climate up here [in Sydney] is building him up. He is of good courage all round, and so am I.¹³

For the following 12-month period, that is, from June 1893 to June 1894, there is only one

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extant letter from Daniells to Mrs. White. In it he shares news items, wishes he had some good advice about purchasing a suitable tract of land to establish a school (they were in the throes of a vast search for such), and mentions the upcoming camp meeting, the first held in Australia, which took place December 30, 1893 to January 15, 1894, at Brighton, Victoria. "If you have any light for us on this matter I shall be so glad to get it," he wrote.¹⁴ This is the first occasion he departs from his news writing to call for her advice on a specific problem. No advice was forthcoming because apparently there was no reply from Mrs. White prior to the camp meeting. Later, occasional advice did come for the 1897 camp meetings.

Mrs. White arrived back in Melbourne from New Zealand in time to attend the Brighton camp meeting and remained there until her transfer to Sydney, March 26, 1894. Just before leaving

Melbourne, while staying in the Bible School premises, she wrote three letters of criticism to Daniells and his wife, and Mrs. Emma Rousseau. Another in a similar vein was addressed to Daniells shortly after her arrival in Sydney. A total of 38 pages were dispatched on the subject in the space of a month.

The letters were prompted by the fact that during the Brighton camp meeting Mrs. White had apparently spotted some Adventist ladies inside and outside the main tent doing "common work" while the meetings were in progress. While staying at the school she had also become aware of friction between Mrs. Starr and her two contemporaries, Mrs. Daniells and Mrs. Rousseau. (Mrs. Starr, Pastor G. B. Starr's wife and formerly Nellie Sisley, had grown up in Battle Creek with Mrs. White's own children and was then acting as matron at the Melbourne Bible School.)

This group of letters was aimed especially at Mrs. Daniells and Mrs. Rousseau. Mrs. White did not spare her words in denouncing the conduct of these two women. She called on them to stop their criticisms of Mrs. Starr. She deplored the influence Mary had on Arthur's judgment and warned him of this. She spoke against the "idolatrous love" and "sickly sentimentalism" that Mary had toward her husband, Arthur. Once again, Mrs. White told Daniells himself not to be too critical of his fellow-workers, especially Joseph Rousseau, who was overburdened with work. She also lamented the fact that Mrs. Rousseau had, at times, not supported school discipline standards by advocating leniency in social relationships between the school youth.¹⁵

There is no known written response to this group of letters. The fact that Mary thereafter wrote no more postscripts on Arthur's letters to Mrs. White may be explained by the fact that Anna Ingels had by that stage largely taken over the secretarial work for Daniells. Daniells' June and July letters, immediately after these reproofs, carry merely news items from Melbourne and Adelaide churches and make no references to the reprimands. However, the reprimands may partly explain the negative attitudes Daniells and Rousseau adopted throughout the remainder of 1894.

Prior to Daniells' September 19, 1894, letter, Mrs. White had written another (not extant) to Arthur Daniells and Joseph Rousseau, but it was no doubt about a new issue—the choice of the Brettville (or Avondale) Estate for the permanent training school for church workers. Much of significance had occurred in the interim. Both Mrs. White and Daniells had visited the estate in May 1894. With some misgivings, aroused in part by a government agriculturalist's unfavorable soil report, the decision was nevertheless made to buy it.¹⁶ In a June 10, 1894, letter to the Foreign Mission Board in America, W. C. White shared his misgivings and triggered a negative response from the mission board. The response reached Australia in August and served to heighten the misgivings, especially those of Daniells and Rousseau.¹⁷ Plans were virtually thrown into neutral until the matter could be fully discussed at the Ashfield camp meeting in October/November 1894.¹⁸ Just before leaving for that meeting Daniells wrote to Mrs. White, "We are expecting to leave for Sydney early next week and we trust by that time we shall know better what to say with reference to the school question."¹⁹ The matter did receive extensive discussion at the camp meeting, resulting in a vote to go ahead and purchase the estate.²⁰ However, lingering doubts persisted as evidenced by the fact that in December 1894, Mrs. White herself, son W. C. White, Rousseau, and others were still searching for better land near Penrith.²¹ Three months later Daniells wrote:

Since the Ashfield campmeeting my mind has been exercised almost daily with reference to the matter you read to me on the camp ground, and which was forwarded to me by post a few weeks later. I have desired to write to you, but my reason for not doing so is that I have not known what to write. I have been tempted to feel that you have little confidence in me, and that anything I might say would lead to more severe criticism. But I believe that all this is from Satan, and I had desired to say nothing until the Lord had delivered me from wrong thoughts and put into my mind right views of this matter. . . .

I have read the testimony which you send me many times, and have endeavoured to do so with a prayerful heart. Some portions I do not as yet understand. Other parts are plain. I do not cast any of it aside, but pray the

Lord to help me to be admonished by it all. Some of the points I would like to write about, but I do not know as it would be right to do so. I am sorry that I have not counselled with you more about the perplexities of my

These are the words of a man groping his way back from a fractured relationship. Previous reprimands had shaken him. He admits his uncertainty, his despondency, his struggling within his own soul.

work, but at first I thought you would not care to be troubled with me. But I feel that my course had increased your burdens, and now if you are willing I feel that I should like to write you freely with reference to the plans we are trying to carry.²²

These are the words of a man groping his way back from a fractured relationship. Previous reprimands had shaken him. He admits his uncertainty, his despondency, his struggling within his own soul. And the words, "Some portions I do not as yet understand," could even be a euphemism for his feelings that some of the criticisms were unjustified. We can only guess the exact nature of these criticisms. The immediate contention, of course, concerned the choice for school land, but that may only have been the capstone in a build-up of previous issues. Not for another two years did Daniells seek reconciliation on the school land issue, and in the interim there was another period of almost 12 months (April 1895 to March 1896) when apparently no communications were exchanged between them, Daniells preferring instead to write news reports to W. C. White and assuming these letters would be passed on to Mrs. White.²³

Finally, while Daniells and S. N. Haskell were in Adelaide in 1897, dealing with the defection of two ministers, Daniells wrote to Mrs. White:

I have felt for a long time that I would like to tell you of the change in my feelings with reference to some features of the school. At the Adelaide camp meeting [October 1896] I was led to see that my attitude on this question had not been right in all respects. I have reviewed the matter from time to time. I have seen more

and more that I have not viewed things in their true light. This had opened my mind to doubts and fears about the outcome, and this had weakened my hands, and this again has prevented me from being the help to you and Brother White that I should have been in the past trying times. It has thrown heavier burdens on each of you, and increased the perplexities. I feel very sorry about this,

Daniells' reply in the next mail was defensive, explaining the circumstances and justifying his conduct of the matter. "I sincerely wish we had heard from you earlier," he lamented.

and have asked to be forgiven. But as I feel that I have injured you, the Lord's servant, I ask your forgiveness.²⁴

The June 1, 1896, letter of Mrs. White broke a 15-month silence in her letters to Daniells. A crisis at the Echo Publishing Company in Melbourne prompted her to write to Daniells and two other members of the company's board condemning them for their treatment of W. H. B. Miller and J. H. Woods, leading printers in the establishment.

Apparently the previous eight months of business showed a loss. The manager, W. D. Salisbury, had called everyone together to explain the financial difficulties. Miller and Woods were led to believe it was largely their poor handling of things and so they offered to leave. They, together with two other workers, did leave and began to set up their own printing business.²⁵

Mrs. White, who had donated £50 toward Miller's fare to America in order for him to learn more of the church's printing operations, felt keenly about the loss. To Daniells and W. A. Colcord she wrote, "If, when cramped for means, you let your competent workers go, to set up business for themselves, you will in a short time wish you had them back." It would be better, she advised, to persuade all the workers to accept less wages rather than let key workers go.²⁶

Daniells' reply in the next mail was defensive, explaining the circumstances and justifying his conduct of the matter. "I sincerely wish we had heard from you earlier," he lamented. It was his conviction that printing jobs accepted from out-

side the church were the non-profitable ones, and they also crowded out the church work. He explained that Miller and Woods' suggestion to leave was really held in abeyance by the board until advice from Mrs. White and her son could be received. Then Daniells and Salisbury had dashed off to Adelaide and while there they both agreed to offer the two men other church work, but when they returned to Melbourne they found the men had already set up their own printing business. Daniells scrambled to repair the problem, but without success.²⁷

Later, Mrs. White wrote that all parties were at fault in the fiasco—Miller and Woods robbed God of their talents by leaving church employ, the company's manager was wrong for not suggesting lower wages all round, and executives such as Daniells were wrong for relinquishing the printers without offering some better alternatives.²⁸

Six months after it all began Mrs. White wrote again to Miller and Woods asking them to return, outlining steps and conditions for their reemployment. Daniells was skeptical about a favorable response²⁹ but was delighted when the two men wrote asking to come back.³⁰ They returned on February 8, 1897.³¹ Additional men had already been engaged to fill the gap left by Miller and Woods. To avoid discharging them, Daniells, who had previously highlighted the unprofitable nature of "outside" printing jobs, suggested to Mrs. White that a city branch office be opened to handle these kinds of jobs. She agreed to this suggestion. Daniells wrote of the whole ordeal:

I think it will teach me a lesson that I shall not soon forget. I thank you most heartily for the warning and admonition that you have sent to us, and to me especially.³²

Interwoven throughout this drama were other issues of perhaps less significance but all illustrative of Daniells' occasional requests of advice. He sought and received her counsel on the operation of camp meetings.³³ He grew anxious about the potential stir from other church groups in Victoria when a young Wesleyan minister, C. R. Hawkins, became a Seventh-day Adventist.³⁴

Mrs. White, preferring to leave probabilities alone, sought simply to rectify realities and sent word not to damn the Roman Catholics in the

Echo magazine because its pages were meant to soften Catholic prejudice.³⁵

Glancing at the list of correspondence between Mrs. White and Daniells during the 1890s one cannot help but notice the bulk occurs in 1897. No doubt the reason for this was the absence of W. C. White, who spent a large proportion of that year in America attending, among other work, the General Conference session. Daniells, therefore, is led to consult directly with Mrs. White rather than via her son. And Mrs. White's directions regarding church matters in Australia are channeled through Daniells.

Over the Christmas/New Year period of 1896-1897 there was a crisis on the Avondale Estate. An employee, L. N. Lawrence, was suggested as a candidate for local church elder. Mrs. White regarded him as disloyal and dishonest.³⁶ Matters were brought to a head when she called a special meeting on the banks of Dora Creek to air the problem. Lawrence was not elected and soon after left the estate. Arising out of this trauma was Mrs. White's request to Daniells for Pastor S. N. Haskell to transfer to Avondale and take a supporting role with her in the establishment of the new school.³⁷ Daniells acted on the request immediately, calling for Haskell to come from New Zealand.³⁸ What Mrs. White had not told Daniells was that she had earlier written to the South African mission field requesting that Hetty Hurd transfer to Australia. (Haskell had confided in Mrs. White that he and Miss Hurd wished to marry.) Daniells was taken by surprise when, immediately after Miss Hurd's arrival in Australia, the marriage took place in Sydney. He had plans for Miss Hurd to go as a Bible worker to Adelaide, but, on learning of her marriage, was quite happy for the couple to work at Avondale as Mrs. White had requested.³⁹

Just as the Miller and Woods crisis was being resolved and frantic efforts were being made to have Avondale College open on schedule, Pastor A. S. Hickox, who was canvassing in the Riverina, left with his wife (formerly Carrie Gribble) and child for New Zealand without consulting with Daniells or anyone else. Hickox owed

Daniells £20, the tract society £75, and members in Adelaide various amounts. While canvassing he hoped to pay these off. His sales were good but then suddenly he decided to use much of his earnings to pay passage to New Zealand. Daniells wrote him a forthright five-page letter expressing dismay and calling for him to retrace his steps and meet his obligations.⁴⁰

When Mrs. White heard about these facts two months later she defended Hickox by writing to Daniells, again instructing him to treat kindly those who had made mistakes in church work. "You have managed this case, from first to last, in an evidently faithless manner. Take your hands off your brother. He is God's property. He is in God's service," she said. "No man whom God has chosen to do His work is to be under the control of any other man's mind. . . . When a man is educated and trained to do as another man tells him to do, he ceases to rely on Christ." She also accused Daniells of persuading other workers in New Zealand to ignore Hickox. In her spirited protest against

Daniells explored ways of financially assisting Avondale students. One proposal was to use the tithe from the student-aid fund.

what she called "Pharisaism" she asked, "How do you know if it was not God's Spirit which prompted Hickox to think he could serve in New Zealand?"⁴¹

A month later Daniells replied with a masterly defense of his case, including with his letter a copy of the one he had originally written to Hickox. Referring to a testimony Mrs. White herself had written about the responsibilities of canvassers he said, "I did not dare to speak anything like as pointedly as you had written." He admitted sending to the man in charge in New Zealand a copy of his letter to Hickox, adding, "I thought it proper to let him know how he stood with us. I did not ask them to prohibit him from working in that field."⁴² Daniells' defense was apparently acceptable because the whole matter was immediately dropped.

One other matter on which Daniells received a

reprimand, and justifiably so, was arranging for teacher Herbert Lacey to travel by train from Melbourne to Sydney while ill with typhoid fever. Worse still, as a penny-pinching measure, Lacey was placed in a second-class compartment with smokers and drinkers. He was near death on arrival. A. W. Semmens desperately nursed him back to health with hydrotherapy in Sydney.⁴³

At the same time Daniells was exploring ways for financially assisting students to attend Avondale. One proposal was to use some of the tithe

from the student-aid fund, but before making a final decision Daniells sought Mrs. White's counsel on the issue. She replied in the negative, suggesting instead that the conference loan students their fees, which could then be repaid after their graduation and during their employment by the church. However, the suggestion of the tract society treasurer, E. M. Graham, was followed instead—for local churches to sponsor their own young people with systematic offerings.⁴⁴

Daniells was busy. Another problem had

Willie White and A. G. Daniells Start Union Conferences

This excerpt is taken from "A. G. Daniells, Administrator, and the Development of Conference Organization in Australia," a chapter in *Adventist History in the South Pacific, 1885-1918*, edited by Arthur J. Ferch.

by Gilbert Valentine

It is a commonly held misunderstanding that A. G. Daniells was the architect of the Union Conference organization in the Adventist Church. It is often assumed that he introduced it in Australia, and then in 1901 implemented the concept throughout the church. The basis for this misunderstanding probably lies in the leading role that Daniells played in the 1901 reorganization. His frequent use of the collective "we" and "our" in his explanation to the 1901 session of how the system worked in Australia could leave one with the impression that he was largely responsible for the idea.¹ In fact, the originator of the idea was W. C. White. Daniells acknowledged him as the "father of that new departure."² The story of how this new development came about is worth noting.

Up until 1893 Australia and New Zealand functioned as two separate conferences directly responsible to the General Conference. The only move to coordinate the activities of the two fields was by the creation of an advisory committee to the Foreign Mission Board in July 1892. The multiplicity of church organizations which included the General Conference, the local conferences, the Tract Society, the Sabbath School, the Medical Association, and the Foreign Mission Board (each with their own constitutions,

annual meetings, appointed officers, and committees), made coordinating the work of the church quite complicated. Given the slowness of mails and the fact that the executive bodies of the major employing organizations were in America the local planning and administration of the work of the two conferences in Australasia was made even more complex.

When White arrived in Australia he quickly saw the need for some intermediate constitutional body in the Australasian area that could officially coordinate the work of the separate conferences. As early as December 1892, just one year after his arrival, he suggested the idea to O. A. Olsen, president of the General Conference.³

I would like to propose . . . the organization of some ecclesiastical body to stand half-way between state and colonial conferences, and the General Conference. . . . Would it not be well for the General Conference to take this matter into consideration now, and see if some plans cannot be devised for Europe which could afterwards be adopted by us here? If some day we should have five conferences each meeting annually, it would be desirable for us to have an Australian General Conference once in two years. . . . The same Australian council could appoint the trustees of our various institutions and take general control of the work here.

Although the General Conference met in session two months later White was "disappointed." The session failed to act on his suggestion.⁴

What W. C. White did learn from the 1893 bulletin was that the Australasian area had been designated as a separate General Conference district (No. 7) and that he had been formally appointed by the executive committee as district superintendent.

The formalizing of the district superintendency in Aus-

Gilbert Valentine, president of Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College, received his M.A. and Ph.D from Andrews University. He was working in his native Australia when he wrote on Daniells' experience there.

arisen in Western Australia. A ministerial worker, J. E. Collins, had apostatized and been disfellowshipped by the members. Pastor Robert Hare, in Perth, requested that Daniells visit the West to stabilize the church. Mrs. White advised Daniells to stay, believing Hare was capable of handling the situation by himself.⁴⁵ Further, Mrs. White asked why she was not consulted before Daniells organized a petition regarding the Australian constitution then in process of formation. Daniells pleaded urgency. "It was sprung upon us in a moment," he replied. Daniells acquiesced on

the matter of his suggestion to delay the opening of the Avondale School one month, leaving the final decision to those in charge at Cooranbong.⁴⁶

In 1897 a further crisis arose in Adelaide. Two ministers, S. McCullagh and C. F. Hawkins, handed Daniells their resignations, denounced Adventism at the tent mission they were conducting, and began independent meetings against the church. "Their main trouble," Daniells wrote to Mrs. White, "is the Spirit of Prophecy. They utterly reject your claims to inspiration." Daniells and Colcord hurried to Adelaide from Melbourne.

tralia and the delegating of larger powers did not solve many problems. As 1893 wore on, an increasing number of conflicts began to develop between Daniells, then president of the local Australian Conference, and W. C. White, particularly over the calling of workers. With the stress mounting considerably, White wrote to the Foreign Mission Board in September of 1893 suggesting again the urgent need for an "Advisory Conference or Union Conference."⁵

Among other reasons, White argued that the international character of the Ship Mission work in Sydney meant that it should be handled by an intercolonial body or by the Foreign Mission Board itself, not just the Australian Conference.⁶

White's protestations to the Foreign Mission Board apparently bore fruit. Several months later, in January of 1894, White announced in a general report to the churches that an "intercolonial conference" would be formed at a meeting of the Australasian District Conference to be held later that month in Melbourne. O. A. Olsen, president of the General Conference, visited Australia to be present at the landmark meeting. Two hundred and fifty church members, of whom 40 were delegates, were in attendance. Olsen acted as chairman. Daniells was appointed to chair the committee assigned the task of drawing up the constitution. On January 19, 1895, Daniells' committee submitted its report. It was adopted by unanimous vote. The union conference was a reality.

President of the new conference was White. Daniells was vice-president and a committee of nine was chosen. Its role included coordinating calls and transfers from the General Conference and the Foreign Mission Board, taking responsibility for the publication and circulation of the *Bible Echo*, and managing the school.

Eighteen months' experience as president convinced White that his talents were not in administration. In June 1896 he wrote the Foreign Mission Board, "It seems to me that personally it would do me good to have a change of field and work. I think that I am much better fitted to work as

someone's assistant, than as Supt. The responsibility which leads some to do their best, confuses me, and I lose heart." He felt that he could hail with pleasure a proposal to go to some other field but thought it was more important for him to take up editorial work with his mother. "You are aware that I have some care in connection with mother's work. She wishes me to devote my whole time to it, if you will free me from the General work."⁷

W. C. White still represented Australasia at the 1897 Conference⁸ session held during February at Union College in Nebraska. Finally, in early March, White was able to write home to his new Australian wife, May, informing her that he had a new job, working for his mother. To A. G. Daniells, he wrote congratulating him on his election by the General Conference as president of the Australasian Union.⁹ The appointment was ratified in October by the Australasian Union Conference in session. For the next three years Daniells directed the work in Australia.¹⁰

Notes

1. Seventh-day Adventist Church, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, p. 89.
2. A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 23 March 1905.
3. W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, 21 December 1892.
4. W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, 8 May 1893.
5. W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, 27 September, 1893.
6. *Ibid.*
7. W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, 3 June 1896; W. C. White to Foreign Mission Board, 10 June 1896.
8. W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, 25 October 1896; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 4 December 1896.
9. W. C. White to May White, 8 March 1897; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 8 March 1897.
10. Minutes, Australasian Union Conference, 26 October 1897.

Daniells expressed the wish that Haskell be dispatched from Cooranbong too, which he was. Daniells reported that the two men were preaching perfection, the corruptions among Adventists in Melbourne and Cooranbong, and inveighing against health and temperance, Mrs. White, and the Third Angel's Message. No doubt Daniells had in mind Mrs. White's criticisms of his handling of some previous cases because he wrote reassuringly, "I am fully resolved to manifest a tender Christian spirit." Mrs. White had little advice for Daniells in this case, apparently trust-

Davis confessed that for 10 years he had been under the control of a lying spirit who had a white beard, wore a turban, and claimed to be an Oriental from Tibet. That evening, after dinner, Daniells prayed earnestly with Davis and his wife and the spirit left Davis.

ing Haskell's wisdom and experience to steer a proper course.⁴⁷

In retrospect we are left to wonder whether the embarrassment caused by McCullagh's defection was one reason why the miraculous healing he received at Avondale in May 1894 did not feature in the reminiscing about the choice of the site for the Avondale School.

One intriguing sidelight that emerged from the crisis was the relationship between McCullagh and W. C. White. Daniells wrote, "I am not altogether surprised that Brother McCullagh has taken this turn. He has been at war with Brother W. C. White for a long time."⁴⁸ Mrs. White picked up this point. Lest this unresolved antagonism be blamed on W. C. White and he be thought to have hastened McCullagh's apostasy, she replied that, in reality, Daniells himself might be to blame. She said, when the purchasing of the Brettville Estate was discussed at the 1894 Ashfield camp meeting, Daniells showed partiality for Rousseau. McCullagh had complained about it to W. C. White, who, in turn, tried to pacify McCullagh. McCullagh had then turned his frustration and

anger on W. C. White. Mrs. White made the point that if Daniells and Rousseau had not been such buddies to the exclusion of McCullagh and others, then the antagonism would not have arisen in the first place.⁴⁹

Once the Avondale school started functioning in 1897 there arose some strained relationships between the Haskells and other members of the staff. The Haskells were not trained teachers, and this apparently led to an air of nonacceptance by other teachers. Haskell was, of course, really appointed principally on the recommendation of Mrs. White who envisaged him as the ideal spiritual leader for the enterprise. But the school board, while they waited for the Hughes to arrive from America to take the principalship, had appointed Lacey as the principal. Mrs. White increasingly despaired of the way Lacey handled matters. She complained of him rushing in without forethought and showing "a manifest lack of good judgment." He was far too "free and easy-going," "a boy among boys," and even proposed to live off campus. Haskell, too, apparently despaired at times and spoke of leaving. Mrs. White finally complained to Daniells and E. R. Palmer.

From the time Brother Lacey came the Board made their decision for him to be principal of the school. Not one of these Board thought to counsel with me. . . . Brother Haskell, with his grey hairs and his long connection with the work, was not once referred to. . . . No more attention or reference was made to Brother Haskell or Sister Haskell as matron than if they were blocks of wood; not one reference made to me or my judgment or my opinion. . . . I have not wanted you to know these things, but as sure as Elder Haskell leaves I shall leave also.⁵⁰

This matter was not resolved readily. Finally, in 1899, Daniells, and then Palmer, were asked to be principals at the school to smooth the situation.

Another matter arose in 1897 that occupied Daniells in an incident for which he relied heavily on Mrs. White's advice. She wrote to him about a canvasser, N. A. Davis (the letter is not extant), asking Daniells to deal kindly with him. Daniells promised to help him, knowing something of his activities since the 1894 Ashfield camp meeting. He explained to Mrs. White that recent reports about Davis borrowing money forced him to believe he was a swindler, but, wrote Daniells, "I

feel I must have more counsel from you before I can take another step in his case.”⁵¹ She wrote a letter to Davis, sent it to Daniells and asked him to read it to Davis. On his return from Adelaide Daniells broke his journey at Ballarat and read the letter to Davis while they took a walk together. Davis confessed that for 10 years he had been under the control of a lying spirit who had a white beard, wore a turban, and claimed to be an Oriental from Tibet. The spirit, he said, would often terrorize him at night and threaten to kill him. That evening, after dinner, Daniells prayed earnestly with Davis and his wife and the spirit left Davis. Later, in his letter of explanation and thanks to Mrs. White, Daniells said:

I am very glad for the instruction you gave me to deal very kindly and patiently with him. I am glad you referred me to the statements of Jude 21-25. . . . The experience was of great value to me. I have always shrunk from meeting the devil in that form, and have dreaded the idea of having to rebuke Satan. But when I saw how the mention of the name of Christ in living faith broke the power of the enemy. . . . I received new impressions in regard to meeting the power of the enemy. . . . How glad I am that we have a Saviour, who has met Satan and conquered him. In Christ we need not fear.⁵³

One more issue troubled Daniells in 1897. It concerned his public advertising for the Victorian camp meeting in Balaclava in November. Earlier he had received some advice regarding follow-up work at camp meetings, and he had read Mrs. White’s advice to those who were advertising the Stanmore camp meeting to be held a month previously. She had advised no advertising until the tents were erected and the meetings were virtually underway.⁵⁴ To Daniells this seemed a strange manner of operation. He explained at length how the Melbourne public were favorable to Adventists because of the positions they took concerning the Australian constitution and the teaching of religion in public schools. He thought it would be advantageous to advertise widely well before the meetings started. Three times he wrote asking whether her advice regarding Stanmore applied also to Balaclava,⁵⁵ but she did not clarify it for him in the two letters she sent in reply.⁵⁶ She tired at the Stanmore camp meetings, so, in her Novem-

ber letter she seemed depressed, writing at length of troubles at headquarters in Battle Creek and using Daniells as a sounding board for her distress of mind.⁵⁷

There are no 1898 letters of Daniells to White that are extant. However, he had asked her (whether by letter, face to face, or via W. C. White perhaps, it is not known) a question regarding a 100£ donation. “Should it be given to the school enterprise, health food business, or medical institutions?” he asked. She replied, “It should help to defray the school debt.” The health food and medical work were to be self-supporting.⁵⁸

With W. C. White back in Australia, direct interchange of letters became less frequent be-

He reported that the Ballarat mission was spoiled by rain but there was a good interest. “I urged the workers to hold fewer public meetings, and to do more house to house work,” he wrote, reminiscent of the same advice Mrs. White had earlier given him.

tween Daniells and Mrs. White. Those that were written were largely composed of news snippets about their mutual friends. Daniells reported Davis was working as the evangelist for their Helping Hand Mission in Melbourne, Mrs. Collins was in Adelaide with her three children while Mr. Collins was living with another woman in Broken Hill, and McCullagh was in Ballarat, repentant, and wishing to rejoin the church. McCullagh’s daughter, Crystobel, was attending Avondale. Daniells said the parents were anxious about their daughter and did not approve of her bad attitude toward Mrs. White. (Crystobel was dismissed from Avondale a week later.) He also reported that the Ballarat mission was spoiled by rain but there was a good interest. “I urged the workers to hold fewer public meetings, and to do more house to house work,” he wrote. This was similar to earlier advice from Mrs. White.⁵⁹

Mrs. White’s letters contained similar news snippets. She spoke of seeing the Hickox family

at church services in Parramatta, said that Elder Irwin was urging her to return to America, and she felt it was a pity Daniells had to leave for America just as the plans for the Wahroonga Sanitarium were coming to fruition.⁶⁰

Mrs. White returned to America in August 1900. Daniells had left earlier that same year. He traveled via South Africa with John Wessels who was in a quandary about whether he should enter into his own family's business enterprises or return to Australia and take a leading role in the Wahroonga Sanitarium as Mrs. White urged him to do. Daniells wrote to Mrs. White from South Africa saying:

I reviewed my experience in Australia during the last nine years. I told him [John Wessels] where I had promptly responded to the light and been blessed. I also told him when and where I had swerved, and how it had hurt me and the cause. I could honestly state that in all that time—nine years—the Spirit of Prophecy had never once led me into trouble, but that I had got myself in trouble by failing to obey promptly.⁶¹

Conclusions

When researching collections of personal letters one naturally tends to learn more about the writers—their interests, attitudes, opinions, tendencies, and manner of relating to problems and other people. The writers are often seen in times of frustration, jubilation, or despondency; unguarded moments; or when taking others into confidence. For this reason there exists a proportion of sensitive material—sensitive because it deals with the emotions and reputations of people with foibles as plentiful as our own. Nevertheless, in the interest of achieving some degree of objectivity a researcher is obliged to present an unvarnished account if the exercise is to be worthwhile. The letters of Ellen G. White and A. G. Daniells are no exception. They are a tableau of news interspersed with keyhole views into the emotions, attitudes, foibles, and strengths of themselves and others.

At times Daniells craved and pleaded for Mrs.

White's advice, for example, with reference to the Davis case and also the proper manner of conducting camp meetings. On other occasions Daniells apparently set aside her advice, for instance, her suggestion regarding financial assistance for Avondale students. There were times when their relationship was cordial and he thought of her as his adopted mother. But in the wake of reprimands to his wife and himself he seemed to reel, the relationship languished and became fragile. Time, however, strengthened what had been strained. In retrospect Daniells could only sing her praises.

Did Daniells influence Mrs. White in any way? There does not appear to be any significant influence. Nowhere in these letters does she ask for Daniells' advice. She does agree to a few suggestions that Daniells brings forward, such as the city branch office for the Echo Publishing Company, but she makes no requests of him for advice. Occasionally she uses him as a listening post for her concerns, but this simply suggests a confidence in him or an appreciation of his friendship. She always adopts the position of giving advice rather than seeking it. Daniells, for his part, provides information and appeals to her experience and spiritual gifts to give him direction.

Despite Mrs. White's frankness and her forthright rebukes, Daniells repeatedly expresses appreciation for her counsel. On occasion he is slow to accept it, but at other times he acts swiftly and dutifully. There is, however, no indication that he regarded her words as infallible. This is noticeable particularly in the Hickox affair. He did not cower and grovel as a lapdog, but came to his own defense on this and other occasions. It is also noticeable that Daniells' appreciation of her counsel developed with time. His early letters are newsy and friendly, but in time Daniells turns more and more to Mrs. White for counsel. Often, he is apologetic for seeking her out so much, taking her time and energies in communicating with him, and so he resorts to W. C. White as a conduit. But in the absence of W. C. White there is a heavy dependence on her counsel directly.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. *Ibid.*
3. The introduction is based on Percy T. Magan, "Life Sketch of Arthur Grosvenor Daniells," *AUCR*, 3 June 1935; and John J. Robertson, *A. G. Daniells: The Making of a General Conference President, 1901* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1977) pp. 13-23, 99.
4. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 7 November 1892.
5. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 22 November 1892.
6. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 30 December 1892.
7. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 30 January 1893.
8. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 2 February 1893.
9. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 4 March 1893.
10. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1893.
11. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 11 May 1893.
12. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 26 June 1893.
13. *Ibid.*
14. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 10 October 1893.
15. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells and Mary Daniells, 6 March 1894; Ellen G. White to Mary Daniells and Emma Rousseau, 7 March 1894; Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 11 March 1894; Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 4 April 1894.
16. Ellen G. White to C. H. Jones, 9 May 1894.
17. Ellen G. White Diary, Manuscript 77, 1894.
18. W. C. White to E. H. Gates, 2 September 1894.
19. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 19 September 1894.
20. "Report of the Thirty-third Meeting of the Australasian Union Conference," 20 November 1894; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 21 November 1894.
21. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 69, 1894; Ellen G. White to J. E. and E. L. White, 13 December 1894; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 9 December 1894; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 14 December 1894.
22. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 3 March 1895.
23. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 8 March 1896.
24. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 15 April 1897.
25. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 2 June 1896.
26. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells and W. A. Colcord, 1 June 1896.
27. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 2 June 1896.
28. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, W. A. Colcord, N. D. Faulkhead, and W. D. Salisbury, 20 September 1896.
- Note: This letter was not sent until 13 January 1897.
29. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 5 January 1897.
30. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 11 January 1897.
31. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 8 February 1897.
32. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 19 January 1897; Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells and W. D. Salisbury, 21 January 1897.
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34. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 15 July 1896.
35. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 25 August 1896.
36. Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 14 January 1897; Ellen G. White, Manuscripts 2, 3, and 12, 1897.
37. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 1 January 1897.
38. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 5 January 1897.
39. S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, 18 December 1897; A. G. Daniells to S. N. Haskell and Ellen G. White, 24 February 1897.
40. A. G. Daniells to A. S. Hickox, 15 January 1897; A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 18 April 1897.
41. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, E. R. Palmer and W. A. Colcord, 12 March 1897.
42. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 18 April 1897.
43. Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 16 March 1897.
44. A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, 12 March 1897; Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 16 March 1897; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 6 May 1897.
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