# Bird in a Cage: The Presidency of Arthur Grosvenor Daniells

by John Grys, DMin

During the apparently contentious and political General Conference Session of 1922, outgoing president Arthur Grosvenor Daniells gave a deep sigh as two decades of leaded weights had been shed from his soul: “I feel like a bird let out of a cage.”[[1]](#footnote-1) [[2]](#footnote-2)

A brief glimpse of the issues faced during his administration provides a glimpse of the weighted challenges he faced:

* Explosive Global Evangelistic Growth
* The Seismic Shift from a North American Church to a Worldwide Institution
* The Debt Crisis
* The Emergence of the Colored Work
* Theological Crisis (Ballenger, the “daily,”)
* The Kellogg Crisis
* Institutional Reorganization
* Expanding Educational Institution
* Relocation of World HQ (or decentralization out of Battle Creek)
* Wider Fundamentalist-Modernist Debate
* Death of the Active Voice of God’s Spirit in the Midst of the Community
* Establishment of the White Estate
* Generational Transition (from pioneers to the children of pioneers)
* World War I

Yet, throughout these transitionally significant challenges, Daniels sustained a consistent organizational chord comprised of at least four notes. This chord might be revealed during the times when the expanding, globalizing world church came together for her general sessions. I examined what I have identified as over thirty occasions during his twenty-one years as de facto president where Daniells either preached, gave a Bible study, welcomed the delegates, or presented his “State of the Church” discourse to the audience. For the sake of brevity, this brief survey identifies four notes he consistently sounded while guiding the church during those volatile years. This paper attempts to allow Daniells’ voice to be heard through the years of his presidency.

#### Organization Efficiency

Possibly from the moment he disembarked in 1901, Daniells, from his experiences while in New Zealand and Australia, recognized that if the church were going to better pursue her mission, she had better re-organize. With the strong support of Ellen White, the path of reorganization opened during the 1901 Session. At the first official meeting of the 1901 Session, after a moving testimony by Ellen White, Daniells addressed the delegates regarding the motion to suspend the agenda in order to form a committee to examine the question of reorganization.

It seems to me that now is the time, brethren, to take hold of this matter of reorganization, and throw aside precedents, tradition, and everything that has so bound us, so we may get hold of the right thing. May God help us for his own name’s sake. [[3]](#footnote-3)

During this session, Daniells pled passionately all the while mindful of this question. While preaching from the text of John 4.35, he encouraged the delegates by speaking to the inevitable emotion of fear that accompanies organizational change:

I feel that if the steps which have begun to be taken here shall sweep out the unnecessary wheels, take off the unnecessary cranks in the machinery, and simplify the whole thing, so that there will not be friction, and so the energies of the great bulk of our laborers are not centered on the running of this machinery—if this shall be the result of the work done during this Conference, setting us free and saving us from confusion, O what a blessing will come to this cause and people![[4]](#footnote-4)

Let us not be afraid to let God put his hand in, and drag out the unnecessary wheels. He will not smash up things which do not need to be smashed. He will preserve everything that is necessary to do the work creditably to his name; but I believe, before God, that we have allowed form and unnecessary machinery and organization and institutional management to come in and rob the great field of men who ought to be out there giving the message.[[5]](#footnote-5)

We are endeavoring to put away some of these old principles that have hampered and bound our work. We are struggling to get away from these old things, into new things, in that which is better.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Pertinent to the issue of reorganization, Daniells pointed specifically to two elements hindering organizational efficiency: too many administrators, while the local field suffered, and too many workers in North America while distant fields suffered from a lack of workers. He addressed the administrator/local worker ratio when he suggested simplification:

We ought to simplify our machinery for transacting our business. It seems to many that we have multiplied organizations and boards and institutions until the talent of this denomination is to a large extent withdrawn from the field, and placed over the machinery to keep it running.[[7]](#footnote-7)

We must have as many laborers of this denomination in the field in personal contact with the masses, preaching the gospel to them, as we possibly can.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Daniells passion shone forth as he repurposed the call of God in relationship to the institution:

It seems to me we need to have more strong men among the masses of the people, preaching the gospel to them. It is not to fill offices, or to run machinery, that God calls for men to-day; it is not for our men to get hold of cranks and turn them. There are too many laborers coming in from the great, wide field, getting attached to machinery, turning cranks, and spending their energies in institutions. God calls upon us to get away from this, to get out among the masses, to come in personal touch with the dying world, look into their eyes, put our hands into their hands, and communicate to them the life of Jesus Christ.[[9]](#footnote-9)

During the Sessions immediately following the historic 1901 Session, Daniells appears to utilize his presidential platform as a way of reporting the results of the ’01 decision upon the efficiency of the denomination. Reflecting during his presidential address at the 1909 Session, Daniells reinforced the justification for the reorganization,

There was no intimation that the general plan of organization adopted by our denomination was wrong, but it was pointed out that our plans of administration were too narrow—that the circle was too small, and that the responsibilities of the cause were resting upon the shoulders of too few. We were, therefore, counseled to enlarge the circle of administration, and to distribute the responsibilities of management among a large number.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

This update substantiates one of the basic principles of leadership Daniells and the 1901 Conference sought to implement: the distribution of power and authority to the local field as much as possible. [[11]](#footnote-11) He gave a statistical summary to demonstrate the significant growth produced by this principle:

Thus the reorganization that has been effected since the Conference of 1901 has drawn into the administrative circle more than five hundred persons who were not there before, and the results show that this change has greatly increased the efficiency of the management of the work.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Not only did the inefficient administrator/local-worker ratio need to be addressed, Daniells examined the question of geographic labor distribution. Daniells during the message from John 4, boldly underscored the existing inequality of distribution determined by geography.

I want to tell you, brethren, that out in some regions there are Conferences struggling with very little help, while in this country there are Conferences that are overburdened with men and employees.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Is there any equality in the distribution of these laborers in these fields?—None whatever, and I tell you before God we must change the situation, and destitute Conferences, that have millions of people, but few followers and no institutions, and with but five or six ministers to bear the message to the millions who have never heard that there is a message, must have our men and our money to aid their work for the people.[[14]](#footnote-14)

A lengthy discussion regarding the adoption of the emerging new structure raised questions in the minds of some. These questions, among other matters, included as well the issue of the labor distribution. Anxiety was expressed regarding the number of missionaries sent out vis-à-vis the home field. Both O.A. Olsen and Daniells emphasized the fact that Seventh-day Adventists have but one field, the world. Daniells then justified how the new structure would address an organizational reality:

We talk about the General Conference, but we have never had a *General* Conference. We have had a North American General Conference, or a North American Union Conference, but we have not had a *world’s* General Conference. In this new arrangement, it appears to me that we have the broadest, the most efficient, and the most workable General Conference Committee that this denomination has ever had.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Four years later, Daniells would maintain the inequity of geographic labor distribution by providing solid numbers. With a high debt load, increasing demand around the world for missionaries, and perhaps the sense that things were stalling out in North America, he appealed to the necessity of redeploying human assets to the places where the greatest demands were demonstrated:.

There surely must be a different, more equal and consistent distribution of laborers and means. Who can tell why seven hundred and twenty of our minsters should be located in America among one-twentieth of the world’s population, while only two hundred and forty of our ministers are sent forth to work for the other nineteen-twentieths?[[16]](#footnote-16)

This point would become poignant with the comparatively low growth rate experienced by the denomination in 1904. After briefly tracing the growth of the denomination from the years 1875-1903, “where records show a growth from 1,500 to 3,000 every year” (mostly in North America, he clarified), he revealed that the year 1904 was not a good year. While the membership, tithe, and institutional facilities had increased, Daniells bemoaned that the membership increase had been “only” 845. During that year, the denomination in North America had grown half as much as the lowest years over the past three decades. He then hypothesized a possible cause for this decrease:

Whatever the causes of this change may be, these facts call for serious reflection. It is my conviction that one of the principal causes is the gradual change of policy that has come into the conferences in North America. From twenty to forty years ago the one great aim of every State conference was to add new territory and new believers. The vision had long range, and there was a steady advance into unentered countries, States, and continents. Each new believer was taught not only to take care of himself, but to work for others.

But with the occupation of all the territory in the United States, with an increased membership and tithe, with the multiplication of local facilities, our vision has been shortened, our attention has been turned from the teeming millions beyond to ourselves at home. Like all who have preceded us, we have begun to nurse our churches, and to increase and foster local interests and facilities.

And like all other denominations, we have found enough at home and within to claim our attention, to occupy the time and energies of our preachers, and to absorb our funds. And further, like all others, we are finding that this is not the road to progress, to growth, and development. Truly the secret of the vitality, and of the triumphant march of the church of Christ through the world, lies in its missionary endeavor. As soon as the church turns its attention, its efforts, and its expenditures from the great perishing world to itself, it begins to lose its vitality and power. It will be a great calamity to our cause and to humanity if our union conferences lose sight of their high calling and great responsibilities, and settle down to use in their own borders the resources provided by the sturdy pioneers of former days.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Born out of this reality, Daniells appealed to the “large union conferences” to redirect their resources to “the great destitute mission fields of the world.” He then noted, “There are great unused resources in men and means in our North American union conferences for which a lost world is calling, and without which it must forever perish.”[[18]](#footnote-18)Within the framework of organizational efficiency, Daniells accentuated the necessity of putting boots on the ground. Plans were not to be devised by those distant from the field but created by those closest to the situation. Perhaps this became a first-hand experience from his time overseas. Without apology, Daniells forcefully confessed during the discussion regarding reorganization:

“I have no confidence in plans that leave the main decisions regarding the work in distant lands with a board in this country, the members of whom have never been on the ground. These men can not gather in an upper room here in Battle Creek, and intelligently plan the affairs of people in distant fields. It is not natural; it is not sensible. It must not be done.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

For Daniells, if the church were to move to a pathway of greater efficiency in the area of geographic labor distribution, this would require members of the “upper room” to actually go into those fields. Thus, when he gave a brief summary of the historic 1907 Biennial Council meeting held in Gland, Switzerland, Daniells could boast:

The visit of so many of our American brethren to Europe gave them an acquaintance with our people and their condition and needs, which has enabled them to co-operate more intelligently in the work in those fields than was possible before.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Daniells, therefore, from the opening sessions of 1901 throughout his administration consistently brought before the delegates the following organizational efficiency issues: more boots on the ground rather than in administrative roles, more workers in places where the message had not been proclaimed (even if it means less where the message has gone), and locating power and authority closer to the places where mission met need. The evidential success for this three-pronged organizational direction became apparent to Daniells through the last note I will examine below: Adventism’s Globalization. For Daniells, machinery served mission.

#### Personal Experience

Machinery, as little as might be necessary, would never by itself be sufficient. There was a deeper reality. As lean and mean as machinery may be, that machinery still operates through human agencies. To quote a famous leadership axiom, “speed of the leader, speed of the team.” Daniells would wholly concur. In his message taken from Peter and John at the gate following the ascension of Jesus, Daniells gets right to the point: “No man can impart that which he himself does not possess. We can only give what we have, and we are always giving that.” [[21]](#footnote-21)

This theme galvanized Daniells during his administration. In this particular talk he compared the experience of liberty with the spirit of bondage. Speaking to a room filled with credentialed employees, burning with passion, Daniells could say, “Do you know that no office that man can vote upon you can confer any honor upon you when God has given you the honor of ambassadorship?”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Other times he would refer to this personal experience in all its fullness as, “The Latter Rain.” In arguing for the conditions necessary to “finish the work,” he reminded his audience at the 1903 Session

that the people who have the closing work to do can not do it without the Spirit of God; they can not do this without the latter rain. So, in a word, the one supreme consideration, the one great requirement of the people of God to-day, is the presence, in its fulness, of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. That alone is our sufficiency.[[23]](#footnote-23)

This vein within the sphere of personal experience surfaced at these gatherings more and more throughout his administration. The significance of the Holy Spirit for mission became central to his call. At the 1913 Session he would remind his listeners:

“Having done all we know how to do to come into harmony with the Lord’s purpose, we should with all our hearts pray for the baptism and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. *This is more important than all else*. Without this all other efforts will fail…Learning, eloquence, long experience, material equipment, busy activity, cannot take the place of the Holy Spirit in the work of God.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

The significance of the Holy Spirit led Daniells to vulnerably share his own personal experience at the 1905 Session:

It has seemed to me at this meeting that I have caught an idea of brotherly love and brotherly unity that I never realized before. It seems to me there is a blending of hearts, and a binding together as brethren and sisters in one great family, with Christ as head, that I never saw manifested in any previous experience. I believe the Lord is coming wonderfully near to this people, and that he will begin a work the like of which nobody has seen in latter days.[[25]](#footnote-25)

By the 1909 Session, during the “The President’s Address” this issue of personal experience had become so crucial, that he included it as part of his “Important Measures Recommended.” “Perhaps,” he suggested, “the most important question of all for us to consider is the personal experience of our people. We know full well that that is the fundamental question with which each individual must reckon.”[[26]](#footnote-26) It is only when a person experiences “righteousness by faith,” that “God can use him somehow and somewhere in the finishing of his work.” This combination of righteousness by faith and the necessity of the person to experience it became a central theme for the remainder of his life.

In particular, during many of the sessions, Daniells would make an appeal. He shared a heartfelt compassion with those who especially experienced a darkness during session times, a session depression.

I know that delegates who come to General Conference, go all through the meeting, bound, held by the enemy, and go home weaker and more disheartened than when they came to the Conference. I have not forgotten them, and I feel sympathy for any brother who may be here under any kind of a cloud.

Don’t let this matter rest, and go from this Conference unsatisfied.[[27]](#footnote-27)

 The concern Daniells had regarding the personal spiritual experience of delegates while at the actual session remained strong in him. At the age of almost 64, Daniells could sympathize with those who could come and leave discouraged:

So, dear friends, the success of this meeting, the value of this meeting, the worth of this meeting, will depend, to a very large extent, upon just what we get from it. And we are going to get out of this meeting just in proportion as we put into it. We shall get out of it what we put it.

I have had personal experience from away back in ’76 in our General Conference gatherings, and I can testify, from personal experience, that it is possible to attend a great meeting like this, where blessings hang over the heads of the people, and get positive harm from it.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The 1913 Session for Daniells held particular weight regarding this issue of personal experience. Ellen White, following the last session, suggested that great blessings had been present for the attendees but the session had failed to obtain them. He didn’t want a repeat. “We do not want,” he expressed, “any one to leave this Conference sorely disappointed. The message has come to us that we must not repeat the mistake of 1909—going away with showers of blessing just hanging over our heads, but never falling. They must fall on us.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

The burden of 1909’s failure hung heavy on the heart of the aging president. When he shared his steps to finishing the work, the first revealed his heart: “The development of a stronger and more efficient ministry.” Specifically he suggested:

This is all-important. A strong ministry means a strong, triumphant religious movement. The call in our work for strong, earnest, successful preachers is growing more imperative every day. It has become serious and this Conference should adopt some practical, effective measure for the immediate and steady development of strong, successful ministers.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Toward the end of the ’13 Session, concerned about what would happen when delegates and attendees would return to their homes, their places of work, and whether their experience of the session would bring joy or greater sorrow, Daniells asked:

When we return home, what will our husbands, our wives, our associates expect to see in us and to hear from us? Will they expect us to return home with drooping spirits, with downcast countenances? Will they expect to hear from us, about the first thing, some criticisms of somebody or of something we do not like?”[[31]](#footnote-31)

At the conclusion of the ’01 Conference, the newly selected de facto president would not let the attendees leave without an opportunity to get right before leaving. Early in the session, during his message on the truth setting people free, he made his appeal:

God has been drawing near; he has been approaching us, and he has come just as near to us, and just as fully into our hearts as we have let him. But there is much more for us. We have just touched the edge of the water. We need to walk into a river that is deep enough to swim in. I can not help but believe that this may be a real pentecostal season. Some time we must have it.

Now I want to open the way for anyone here to-night who may be under a cloud, or who may not feel free in God, or who is in trouble or perplexity about himself, to press this battle to the gates of the enemy. We will have an inquiry meeting. We will go to the east vestry, and meet anyone who wants to meet with us, to seek God for a better experience.[[32]](#footnote-32)

During the final days of The Great War at the gathering in 1918, Daniells echoed this thought again as he spoke to mostly North American delegates:

“You may look at our colleges, you may look at our well-equipped sanitariums, you may look at our splendid organization; you may count our means. There is not power in any of these things to finish the work of God among men. The power to use them must come from God. We may go through the form, we may turn the crank; we may have our program in the home field and in the mission fields, we may pass our resolutions, we may fix up our plans, they will prove abortive in the accomplishing of the great objective we have before us, unless the Spirit of Almighty God is in the wheels.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

This consideration gives us the greatest concern regarding the character and results of this conference. What does God want this important gathering to be? What has He in store for us? What personal blessings and victories does He want each one to receive? What great, important steps would He have us take that would lead to the speedy finishing of His work?

Reporting, recommendations, readjustments in our organization, distribution of laborers,--all these are important, yet they are of only secondary importance. But do we not all know that we are prone to give *first* place to matters of secondary importance? This is our danger, for it is according to nature. This is where Israel of old missed the way. It is where we have failed more than once.[[34]](#footnote-34)

The significance of the personal experience of the people, especially at the Sessions themselves, served as a powerful theme for Daniells. The leader knew that if the people, especially the paid people, were not constantly experiencing the Spirit of God anew in their own walk, all the programs, policies, and sessions would add little in advancing the mission.

#### Message Reinforcement

Another significant note for his fourfold chord centered on the surety of the Three Angel’s Message and the power that comes from that message. In the earlier sessions, Daniells did not speak much about this message, though he did refer to it and the influence it would have upon those who accept it. In his evening sermon on April 14, 1901, based upon Isaiah 62, Daniells connects the message with the mission:

He [God] has given us light and truth, has given us a grand system of Bible truth that will enable us to go to all the people of the world and prepare the way of the people.[[35]](#footnote-35)

In this same message he described how he had been in places where not another Seventh-day Adventist had spoken and set before the people the third angel’s message.

Interestingly enough, in the same message, toward the end of the sermon, he appealed to the reality and power of righteousness by faith. He shared with the audience the response of people in Australia in 1891 as they read the printed messages in the *General Conference Bulletin*. He described how people hungered and thirsted for those bulletins and wept as they read the messages of righteousness by faith. He then gave this report: “I am glad to tell you, there are not two classes in Australia regarding this glorious message of righteousness by faith.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Was it possible that since his return stateside, he had experienced two classes?

In his sermon entitled, “Our Time, Our Work, and Opening Providences,” presented at the 1903 Session, Daniells rehearsed the prophetic moments from Scripture leading down to the rise of this movement. Because time is on her side, there is urgency to the work, he preached. And then Daniells contended:

We as a people believe that the hour has come for Christ to close His work and return to the earth for His church. We believe that the evidence is abundant, and clear, and unmistakable, and we believe that we are commissioned by God to take up this evidence and herald it to all the world. Are we right in this claim? (Voices, “Yes, sir.”)[[37]](#footnote-37)

After rehearsing the familiar prophecies, outlining their fulfillment leading to this time, Daniells defended the legitimacy of their interpretation:

By these prophecies we are brought to that definite time. No one can gainsay these lines of prophecy. I have preached many times, in many parts of the world, to many different congregations, and I have never had a man come forward to seriously question or disprove the position that we take regarding the termination of the sixth trumpet on the 11th day of August, 1840. I have never had a man seriously question our position regarding the opening of the seventh trumpet in 1844. Have you? (Voices, “No.”)[[38]](#footnote-38)

However, for Daniells, while many have “surrendered to the facts set forth in these prophecies,” many have headed the other direction.

But many of us have gone over to them [the belief in the three angel’s message], and have treated them indifferently and as common things, until they have lost, to a large extent, their thrilling and mighty power upon our hearts.[[39]](#footnote-39)

This message fueled Daniells in his mission pursuit. And as such, it was not time to doubt or abandon it. It was time to dig in and go after it.

This is not the time to trifle with mighty problems such as we have. This is not the time to go light-loaded. This is the time, in view of the message we have, that should weigh us down, and make us mightily in earnest, and very sincere and upright in our living.[[40]](#footnote-40)

In the next section of his sermon, Daniells eloquently binds the message with the means and the movement:

The threefold message of Revelation is more than a theory. It is a great system of truth, and a great body of believers, and a great gospel missionary movement. The system of truth is God’s message to the world, the body of people are those whom the truth saves, and the great missionary movement is the proclamation of the truth to the world by those whom it saves.[[41]](#footnote-41)

He points to the expansive growth of the church beyond the shores of North America as a demonstration of the legitimacy of this movement:

The message is a great message of truth to the world. It is a loyal church, proclaiming that truth. It is a people that goes forth throughout the length and breadth of the land to the uttermost parts of the earth, to take possession of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.[[42]](#footnote-42)

During the 1905 Session, he echoed the familiar tones from early sessions:

This is the time to finish the work; the threefold message is the message to finish the work; and the people brought out by the threefold message are the people to finish the work in the earth. This is the time, this is the message, this is the people; and we are now face to face with that tremendous problem.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Possibly with the residual from the Ballenger and Kellogg fallouts, Daniells at the first quadrennial session in 1909 preached a sermon entitled, “The Definite Message.” It is his final message to the gathering. It solidified the leading of God through the message and it’s preaching over the past six decades.

The point I wish to call your attention to is the position to which we have now come. Where are we to-night in this message? Sixty-five years it has been sounding. The message was to be finished in a single generation. Where is it to go?—It is to go to all the world, to every kindred, tongue, and people.[[44]](#footnote-44)

To demonstrate the expansive growth that has come to validate the power of the message, Daniells recited a recent experience.

Apparently, the US Government Census Bureau had asked the church to make a report of its activities. When the report came to the desk of the government agent, he asked to interview someone. The statistical secretary from the General Conference met with the government official. “Look here,” the official began, “you represent yourselves as carrying on missionary operations in about seventy countries. Do you mean that? (Daniells own comment, “I suppose he thought we meant *seven.*”) And the secretary responded, “Yes, sir; that is it.”

“Why,” said the official, “I did not know there were seventy countries to carry on missionary operations in!”

“When our secretary assured him there were, he said, ‘Would you mind giving me the names?’ So the names of all were given to him, and I tell you,” Daniells continued, “the man was astonished with the facts.”[[45]](#footnote-45) It is to this final thematic note utilized by Daniells that I now turn.

#### Adventism’s Globalization

This thematic note in Daniells’ administration, I originally included under the heading of, “Organizational Efficiency.” However, as I continued to study and examine his presentations throughout the twenty-one years, there was no way possible for me to allow this element to be subsumed under another category. This thematic element appears to have passionately driven his presidency. As demonstrated above, the message, the movement, and the people of the movement were all now responsible for going beyond their own shores into the places where there was no witness. His passion can be detected from the very onset of his involvement at the 1901 Session, where, in his message entitled, “The Field,” he clarified, “No class of people has a monopoly of the message. It is confined to no country, to no nation or people, but it is for the whole world alike.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

As I pointed out in the section on organizational efficiency, Daniells was excited about the re-organization because it would allow the General Conference Committee to remove its eyes from the work in America and begin shifting all energy toward lands abroad. This is why he could say, “I do not believe it is right for these thousands of believers to stick together in this country. I believe that God calls us forth into other lands and to other people.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Perhaps Daniells had taken the message regarding consolidation in Battle Creek and applied it to North America. As if this weren’t enough, Daniells reminded the delegates in 1901, “…every minute that we sit here in this Conference sixty heathen die without hope in God…It is simply appalling when we stop to look at it.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

As a suggested practice, not just for the sake of organizational pliability but so that Adventism’s globalization could rapidly expand, Daniells at the ’01 Session proposed:

The General Conference Committee should send a man to South America as a representative, authorizing him to meet all the workers, study the needs of the field, outline a policy, and agree on it with those workers. Then the Committee should stand by the decisions come to, and furnish both men and means required in the field.[[49]](#footnote-49)

While the 1905 Session brought with it some particularly troubling news to the delegates, during his presidential address, Daniells could joyfully report two positive developments over the past two years:

The most important feature of our denominational policy during the last two years is our foreign mission policy. Our duty is to press on to the ends of the earth. Not a single country should be without a representative of this message.[[50]](#footnote-50)

This change in policy would facilitate an easier process for missionaries to be sent.

Secondly, “In no part of the great harvest-field have such large results been produced from the expenditure of labor and means as in the new, unworked mission fields.”[[51]](#footnote-51)

Indeed, even at the Session itself, the progress of Adventism’s globalization had been palpable: “We rejoice that we have so many representatives at this meeting from our widely separated mission fields.”[[52]](#footnote-52) But it went beyond session attendance and representative figures. During his lengthy report, Daniells drew upon financial statistical data demonstrating how giving from abroad almost equaled, and in the case of tithe, outpaced, the per capita giving of North America.

And then, as if to reinforce what had happened over the past two years, when Daniells proposed recommended measures, he began with this globalization theme:

Give new, earnest, intelligent study to the unentered territory in both the home and foreign fields, and arouse both ministers and people to press on into the places where this message has never been proclaimed. This is a vital feature of the movement…[[53]](#footnote-53)

In fact, Daniells’ passion for Adventism’s globalization wouldn’t be satisfied by just the work abroad. What was suggested in his recommended measure above came to reality by the end of the Session. The delegates voted to create “The Foreign Department.” As Daniells reported following the close of the session, the purpose of the department was to “develop organized work in behalf of the foreign peoples of the United States.”[[54]](#footnote-54)

At the outset of the ’09 Session, Daniells made it a point to introduce some of the nearly 350 delegates who had come from lands abroad. This would become more and more frequent as the organization of the church developed around the world in the ensuing years. With the expanded structure of the church, reports became more and more the norm during the sessions as delegates got to hear the exciting events from their brothers and sisters around the world. Also, visual representations such as lighted globes and maps became part of the session décor.

All this is to say that the theme of Adventism’s globalization was even at this point shifting from not just something over there, in another land (though this was the preponderance of energy, resources, and focus) but it had begun to take on more specific target groups in places where the three angel’s message had already taken strong root. [[55]](#footnote-55)

By 1913, as the session opened, Daniells could boast, “we greet the largest number of delegates from our world-wide field every assembled in the history of our cause.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Daniells revealed to the delegates that he would in this presidential address forego the “usual review of the work in general” to make room for more reports. The variety of these reports, especially within the North American context, can be exemplified by reports such as, “The German Work in the Western Division of North America,” “The Swedish Work in North America,” “The Danish-Norwegian Work in North America,” and “The Jewish Work.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

The work from 1909-1913 advanced more than it ever had during a similar four-year period in history. From the various reports that would be offered during this session, Daniells affirmed:

From these we shall see that this movement has taken firm root in all parts of the world, and that in the foreign countries where it has been established the longest, it is making great strides.[[58]](#footnote-58)

As a result of both this broad and specialized growth, an additional layer of responsibility was added: the Divisions. Globalization exploded and this necessitated the growth of diffused responsibility. This global and local growth, however, would face a great challenge after the delegates returned home from this Session.

The 1918 Session came about as a result of this Adventist Globalization but not in a way expected by the end of the last Session. The War to End All Wars had occurred in the intervening years. Only a few delegates attended from overseas as the War still ravaged Europe. The session, originally planned for 1917, had to shift to 1918. While this shift became an unintended consequence of Adventism’s globalization, it also revealed how strong the globalization now had upon the Session rhythm itself. This problem of shifting meetings because of the War had already changed “The Biennial Council.” Originally scheduled to be held in Europe in 1915, the full ravages of the War had shifted it to Loma Linda where only two members from Europe and “three or four from Asia” had been able to attend.

This 1918 Session became the first where the newly minted Division presidents gave their reports to the world delegates. In places where there still were not divisions, union presidents gave the reports. Thus, Adventism’s Globalization had now impacted the order of the General Conference Sessions as well.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of a new day in the reshaping of a globalizing Adventism came at the end of the 1918 Session. Faced with the reality that a budget that had been set for Adventism’s Globalization had fallen far short of actual dollars received, Daniells used his platform as president to close the session with an appeal. During his sermon entitled, “Facing the Situation,” the president announced:

We have come to you, dear friends, to make a *special* appeal to you this morning, to see if we cannot do something out of the ordinary to meet the unprecedented and unparalleled situation that we face to-day.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Looking out over the vast throng attending the final Sabbath session in the West Coast city of San Francisco, after telling compelling stories of need and desire from abroad, Daniells implored the delegates:

I appeal to every believer here on this ground floor and in these galleries, wherever you are from, think with tremendous seriousness at this hour as to what is possible for you to-day to relieve our situation and put into our treasury the means needed to step into openings that are pressing us hard.[[60]](#footnote-60)

People came forward with checks, cash, gifts and altogether a collection of $237,000 was gathered by the globalized Adventist church.

Placed in a prominent position of the 1922 Session, Daniells again brought a visualization of Adventism’s globalization by placing before the body a map that “everybody in every part of the hall” could see. To introduce many of the delegates in attendance, he used the map to point out the location of their home country.

As mentioned above, many delegates were unable to attend the prior quadrennial session. Now, Daniells made it a point to welcome those who were present:

To-day we thank God with glad hearts for the measure of peace and tranquility that has come to the world and for the presence at this conference of so many from lands outside of North America.

I know that I express the feelings of every delegate from North America when I say to *all* who have come to this conference from other lands, that we welcome you with all our hearts.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Again, as he had done in prior sessions, Daniells issued a statement about how Adventism’s Globalization had impacted the reporting during the sessions:

The thorough organization of our territory and our work, and the efficient system of reporting we have developed, have transferred the burden of reporting to the General Conference sessions from the president to the territorial and departmental leaders…These reports are so clear, and cover the whole range of our activities and progress so fully, that I deem it unnecessary to give the general survey that has usually appeared in the president’s address.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Probably more than any message given by Daniells during his time as president, his final sermon on Sabbath, May 27, 1922 may best capture the four notes of the single chord he sang during his twenty-one years. Regarding the growth of organizational efficiency and locating responsibility and authority at the local level, Daniells shared how they are compelled to work on a “Budget plan.” “We say to every [su]perintendent abroad, Make out a budget, telling us how much you need.”[[63]](#footnote-63) He then shared with those present how the budget came to sixty cents a week but they had only received twenty-seven cents. He then described how he had to bring the leaders in and identify which budgets would be cut. This impacted him deeply:

This has put a sadness, a depression, into my heart, that I have not risen above yet. I can hardly sleep. I have been awake since about three o’clock, thinking about this awful thing, and praying God to teach us the meaning of it here to-day.[[64]](#footnote-64)

The organizational efficiency of budget planning and budget reality hit up against the rocks of movement actuality. Daniells realized the challenge was greater than merely appealing to better machinery. He appealed to two distinctive notes of his organizational chord that he had pursued during his administration: the power of the message and the necessity of personal experience. In his message he quickly summarized the history of God’s leading over the past seven decades. He concluded with a wispy longing, “How I wish the pioneers could be here today to see what the movement has become!”[[65]](#footnote-65)

Passionately, he appealed to the personal experience of those attending:

You are giving yourselves, your sins, your waywardness, your selfishness. Oh, let us give them all to God! The things that are wrong are not worth holding, and we should turn them over. And that which is good, that which God can use, we should give it up to Him with glad hearts to-day; and I believe you do it.[[66]](#footnote-66)

 It is with this ending that the new president, W.A. Spicer stepped forward and prayed. The bird had been let out of his cage. The four notes of his organizational chord guided the people of God through the uncertain transitional years. Organizational efficiency diffusing authority and re-organizing, the certainty of the message of the third angel, the dynamic movement of a personal experience with this God who guides, and the continued expansion of this movement into all sectors of a world given to alienation and anger—these four notes remind us that the single-chord of this caged bird still sings today!

John Grys, DMin.
Cell: 707.332.3874

Email: johngrys@gmail.com

1. “General Conference Proceedings,” *GCB*, Vol. 9, No. 10, May 24, 1922, p. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *GCB* refers to, *General Conference Bulletin*, and shall be used throughout paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “General Conference Proceedings, First Meeting, Tuesday, April 2,” *GCB*, Vol. IV, Extra No.1, April 3, 1901, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “The Field,” *GCB*, Vol. IV, Extra No. 2, April 4, 1901, p.50. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Sermon,” *GCB*, Vol. IV, Extra No. 6, April 9, 1901, p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “General Proceedings, Sixteenth Meeting,” *GCB*, Vol. IV, Extra No. 11, April 15, 1901, p. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “The Field,” 1901, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. “The President’s Address,” *GCB*, Vol. 6, No. 1, May 14, 1909, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the tension between increased distributive authority, the necessity of more workers locally, and organizational funding during these transitional years. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. “The Field,” 1901, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. “General Proceedings,” 1901, p. 228, 229. His emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. “The President’s Address,” *GCB*, Vol. 82, No. 19, May 11, 1905, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “General Proceedings,” 1901, p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. “The President’s Address,” *GCB*, Vol. 6, No 1, May 14, 1909, p. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. “Sermon,” 1901, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. “Sermon,” *GCB*, Vol. IV, Extra No. 12, April 16, 1901, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. “Conditions Necessary to the Finishing of the Work,” *GCB*, Vol. 5, No. 7, April 7, 1903, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “A Review of the Quadrennial Term: Necessary Preparation for the Finishing of the Work,” *GCB*, Vol. 7, No. 1, May 16, 1913, p. 8. Emphasis mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. “Finishing the Work,” *GCB*, Vol. 82, No. 22, June 1, 1905, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. “The President’s Address,” 1909, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. “Sermon,” 1901, p. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “Devotional Services,” *GCB*, Vol. 9, No. 1, May 14, 1922, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. “Freedom in Christ,” *GCB*, Vol. 7, No. 10, May 27, 1913, p. 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “A Review of the Quadrennial Term,” 1913, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. “Behold Jesus!” *GCB*, Vol. 7, No. 21, June 9, 1913, p. 321. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. “Sermon,” April 7, 1901, p. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. “The Finishing of this Work: The Sermon,” *GCB*, Vol. 8, No. 1, April 1, 1918, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. “The President’s Address,” *GCB*, Vol. 8, No. 1, April 1, 1918, pp. 4, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. “Sermon,” *GCB*, Vol. IV, Extra No. 12, April 16, 1901, p. 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., p. 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “Our Time, Our Work, and Opening Providences,” *GCB*, Vol. 5, No. 2, March 31,1903, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid., p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. “Finishing the Work,” *GCB*, Vol. 82. No. 22, June 1, 1905, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. “The Definite Message,” *GCB*, Vol. 6, No 3, May 17, 1909, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. “The Field,” 1901, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid., p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. “General Proceedings,” 1901, p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. “The President’s Address,” 1905, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ibid., p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. “The General Conference,” *GCB*, Vol. 82, No. 23, June 8, 1905, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. One brief aside. During the 1907 Biennial Council in Gland the decision was made to create the Young People’s Department. The North American Negro Department was created in 1909. With the creation of the Foreign Department, Young People’s Department, and the Negro Department it can be argued that Daniells was possibly the first administrator to structuralize what is now known as “niche marketing.” This would be tested during his administration as well when rumors were abound that there was the possibility of creating separate conferences by languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. “A Review of the Quadrennial Term,” *GCB*, Vol. 7, No. 1, May 16, 1913, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid., pp.55-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. “Facing the Situation,” *GCB*, Vol. 8, No. 12, April 15, 1918, p. 181. Emphasis his. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “Report of the General Conference President,” *GCB*, Vol. 9, No. 1, May 14, 1922, p. 14. Emphasis his. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. “Sabbath Morning’s Sermon by Elder A.G. Daniells,” *GCB*, Vol. 9, No. 13, May 28, 1922, p. 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., p. 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., p. 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)