



Daniel Kress

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Kress, Daniel Hartman (1862–1956)

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Daniel H. Kress was a leading Seventh-day Adventist physician, medical missionary, sanitarium director, antismoking crusader, and health reformer.

Early Life

Daniel was born June 27, 1862, in St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada, to German parents, Anthony Kress and Eva Katherine Hartman, the youngest of ten children. His father, though not a member of any church, had a thorough knowledge of the Bible. His mother, a devout member of the German Evangelical Methodist Church, instilled Christian values in her children.¹

When Dan was ten, the family moved to Port Elgin, Ontario, where his older brother Philip was in the tannery business. Dan was called "Dutchy" or "Fatty" by other boys but kept up his reputation as a fearless competitor. After his mother died in 1880, he launched out on his own, leaving Canada for Detroit, then Chicago, where he worked in a button factory, then as a bartender, and traveled with a circus for a time. He also joined with other youth in such activities as drinking, smoking, and playing cards.²

Marriage and Baptist Ministry

Daniel married Laretta Eby, a school teacher and librarian from Michigan, on July 9, 1884.³ The couple began married life in Canada near his family but moved to Flint, Michigan, in December 1885 where Daniel opened a brush manufacturing business with his father-in-law, Aaron Eby. After hearing two evangelists associated with Charles H. Spurgeon preach and the nearby First Baptist Church, Daniel decided to become a Christian and gave up smoking, much to his wife's delight.⁴

The Kresses became very involved in the outreach of the church, establishing a mission on behalf of the poor. They "solicited among merchants for food, shoes, hats, stockings, stale bread and many articles of clothing and food" for distribution to those in need. Daniel proved to be an adept speaker and was urged to enter gospel ministry. He was given a license to preach and appointed pastor of the Baptist church in Davisonville, Michigan, in 1887.⁵

Prior to the move to Davisonville, Laretta began keeping the seventh-day Sabbath after studying the Bible with an Adventist woman, Emma Ferry. Daniel was strongly opposed, telling Laretta that she could keep the Sabbath, but she was not to mention the word "Sabbath" to him nor "go to any meetings of the seventh-day

people or to read any of their literature.”⁶ However, soon after he began his pastorate in Davisonville, Daniel, too, became convinced that the seventh day was the Sabbath after studying the matter with another Baptist minister. The Kresses kept their first Sabbath together on August 27, 1887. Less than two months into his Baptist pastorate in Davisonville, Daniel resigned and the couple, along with their daughter, Eva (b. 1885), returned to Flint to live with Laretta’s parents.

Adventist Ministry and Medical Education

At an Adventist camp meeting convened a few weeks later (September 27-October 4, 1887) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kress heard Dr. John Harvey Kellogg lecture on diet and its effect on health. Impressed, Kress decided to give up meat, and the use of tea, coffee and condiments as well. He attended Battle Creek College for a few months in 1888 to learn more about the principles of health reform. That summer Daniel and Laretta were baptized as members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.⁷ Later that year the Michigan Conference issued Daniel a ministerial license.⁸

In the Fall of 1888 the Kresses moved to Battle Creek where Daniel, whose first language was German, was placed in charge of a fledgling German and French School. Their second daughter, Ora Hannah, was born November 7, 1888. The school was moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, a year later but the Kresses remained in Battle Creek. Daniel attended the ministerial institute conducted from December 1889 to May 1890, while Laretta took a course in “scientific cookery.”⁹

During this time Dr. Kellogg encouraged Daniel and Laretta to study medicine. The Adventist church did not yet operate a medical school, but in an arrangement with the University of Michigan Medical School, the Kresses along with several other Adventists took their first year of study at Battle Creek Sanitarium in 1890-1891. The remaining three years would be at the university in Ann Arbor, where the church acquired a home to house the students. The Kresses were placed in charge of the house, with Daniel as chaplain and Laretta as matron.¹⁰

After their third year in medical school, Dan and Laretta went to Chicago to take charge of the exhibit for the Battle Creek Sanitarium exhibit at the World’s Fair. The sanitarium acquired a building at 33 Cottage Place where Laretta also assisted with treatment of patients from the sanitarium who wished to continue their diet and treatments while visiting the fair.¹¹ Daniel served in a treatment room for destitute men that was part of the Chicago Medical Mission established by Dr. Kellogg.¹² Returning to Ann Arbor, Daniel and Laretta graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1894.

England and Australia

After graduation, the Kresses returned to Battle Creek where Daniel, who specialized in gastro-intestinal disorders, was a physician at the sanitarium. During their five years there, they took several children into their

home. They adopted one of them, named Paul, who was part of the family for the move to England in 1899 where the doctors Kress were sent to open medical missionary work.¹³

Daniel became medical director of a new sanitarium that opened near London at Meadvale, Surrey Hill, on September 2, 1899. He also launched a new health journal, *Life and Health*. Tragedy struck soon afterwards when the Kresses' 14-year-old daughter Eva died on October 16, 1899, after a relapse of endocarditis, initially diagnosed a few years before in Battle Creek. Two weeks later, Daniel Kress collapsed under the weight of overwork and grief. After recuperating in France, he briefly resumed work, but then was diagnosed with pernicious anemia – a life-threatening condition that was untreatable prior to discovery of Vitamin B-12. Upon Dr. Kellogg's advice, he returned to the United States in June 1900.¹⁴

After tests indicating Daniel's red blood cell count to be in the normal range, the Kresses again ventured overseas in the interests of the medical missionary cause, this time to Australia, where they arrived on November 13, 1900. Kress was slated to be the chief physician at a new sanitarium in Sydney, but while it was still under construction, he again became ill with pernicious anemia.¹⁵ While he was being treated at the Avondale Health Retreat in Cooranbong, he received a letter from Ellen White warning him that he was "in danger of taking too radical a view of health reform, and of prescribing for yourself a diet that will not sustain you." Her counsel:

When you see that you are becoming weak physically, it is essential for you to make changes, and at once. Put into your diet something you have left out. It is your duty to do this. Get eggs of healthy fowls. Use these eggs cooked or raw. Drop them uncooked into the best unfermented wine you can find. This will supply that which is necessary to your system. Do not for a moment suppose that it will not be right to do this.¹⁶

After being anointed by church elders and following White's advice he was able to resume work two weeks later.¹⁷ He worked with church leaders in promoting the Adventist health message, giving public lectures throughout Australia and New Zealand. The Sydney Sanitarium opened on January 1, 1903, with Daniel Kress as medical director for its first four years.¹⁸ When he learned that Kress was returning to the United States in 1907, the health commissioner of New South Wales commended him for doing "more to help the people of Australia than any other man that has ever visited this country."¹⁹

Washington Sanitarium and Medical Department Leadership

Dr. Kress' new assignment was to serve as medical director of the Washington Sanitarium soon to open in Takoma Park, Maryland, the suburban Washington, D.C. community in which the General Conference office and the Review and Herald Publishing Association relocated after departing from Battle Creek in 1903. The Kress family, now including a son, John, born in Australia in May 1902, along with Ora and Paul, arrived in Washington, D.C., on May 2, 1907.

A large display advertisement in the *Washington Post* announcing the Washington Sanitarium's opening on June 12, 1907, stated that the institution's aim was "to restore to health by the employment of all the rational means known to medical science" and that "massage, water and sun baths, electricity, physical culture, and a corrected aseptic dietary are the agencies chiefly used in aiding nature in her efforts in health restoration."²⁰ In his address for the opening ceremonies, Dr. Kress declared: "Vigor and long life depend upon the correction of physical habits which are responsible for physical degeneracy."²¹

In 1909, Kress was appointed the medical secretary of the General Conference. Laretta joined him in presenting health lectures throughout the northeast region of the United States during the summer and fall of 1910. When Daniel was not reappointed to his General Conference position at the Annual Council in 1910, the family faced a period of uncertainty and financial stress. Loans from fellow believers enabled them to continue supporting their daughter Ora as she completed her medical degree at the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia and continue payments on the house they had just acquired.²²

Then, new opportunities led to a rapid series of moves. In the summer of 1911, following Ora's graduation from medical school, the Kresses moved to southern California to join the faculty of the College of Medical Evangelists at Loma Linda (later Loma Linda University School of Medicine), Daniel in dietetics and pathology of narcotics and Laretta in pediatrics and gynecology. Daniel also served as medical secretary for the Pacific Union Conference.²³

In 1912 they moved on to the Chicago area where Laretta took a fill-in position at Hinsdale Sanitarium and Daniel became an instructor in the Chicago Training School for Medical Missionary Workers that offered a six-month course for city medical missionaries. The couple also established a medical office of their own in the city and developed a good clientele.²⁴ Soon, though, another change came when Daniel accepted a call to serve as the medical secretary for the Atlantic Union Conference, headquartered in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. He focused on health reform education in the large cities of the northeast located in the union's territory.²⁵

Takoma Park Years

Then, in the summer of 1915, four years after their departure in 1911, a fourth move brought the Kresses back to Takoma Park. Here they remained for the next 24 years. Daniel became Columbia Union Conference medical secretary in 1915, and in subsequent years continued involvement in the church's medical and health work. Throughout most of the 1920s and 1930s, he was a staff physician at Washington Sanitarium and a member of its board of directors. He also stepped in to serve once again as medical director for a year (1937-1938).²⁶ Laretta developed a thriving practice in obstetrics and gynecology.

One of Daniel's foremost interests was bringing to light the evils of cigarette smoking. In Chicago he had lectured in conjunction with the Anti-Cigarette League and later served as the organization's vice president.²⁷ Difficulties experienced by his son, Paul, added a personal dimension to the concern prompting Daniel to give particular

study to the impact of cigarette smoking on youth and to speak frequently on the topic at junior and senior high schools. Paul began smoking at the age of 12 and his parents believed that this contributed to other troubling behavior, including an arrest for stealing a car after the family's return to Takoma Park. A few years later Paul developed thromboangitis obliterans, a smoking-related disease of the blood vessels and died of heart failure in 1934 at the age of 39.²⁸

Dr. Kress's widely distributed pamphlet *The Cigarette as a Physician Sees It* (Pacific Press, 1931) devoted chapters to young boys, women, and athletes. Kress also spoke out against the exemption of tobacco from regulation under the Pure Food and Drug Act and the evils of tobacco companies' advertisement of the product. As a cure, he advocated immediate cessation—no gradual reduction, a natural diet heavy with fruit, no highly seasoned food or stimulating drinks and the aid of faith in God.²⁹

Later Life and Legacy

In 1939 Daniel and Laretta retired in the Orlando, Florida, area. They anticipated working at a leisurely pace in the community and in the local Winter Park church. But World War II changed those plans. Due to a shortage of civilian doctors, they put on their professional hats for two years of full-time service at Florida Sanitarium in Orlando.³⁰ After the war they kept active with charitable work.

The Kress Memorial Foundation was established in 1947 to take further the research that Dr. Kress pioneered on the effects of tobacco and narcotics. The foundation's work contributed to the development of the first "stop smoking" programs offered the public by the Adventist church.³¹ In 1954 the new church constructed in Winter Park was dedicated as Kress Memorial Church in honor of the doctors.³²

Laretta was in the hospital when the couple celebrated their 70th anniversary in 1954, with Daniel vowing to take his wife home when she was better. She died at home on June 28, 1955, at age 92. Daniel died on November 2, 1956, at age 94.³³ Few if any have more fully personified the Adventist medical missionary spirit and values.

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