



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the Chair

OCTOBER 2018

Millions of people

today are trying to discover their identity. One way this is evidenced is through the booming business of digital genealogy and consumer genomics, including personalized DNA testing. Ancestry, the leading company in this field, posted \$1 billion in revenue in 2017, and hosts 11 billion connections. Clearly, people are searching for their roots.

Roots give us a sense of identity, a sense of belonging. When we know where we came from, we can more easily chart our future course with purpose.

Complementing the theme of the 2018 LEAD Conference, “The Past With a Future: Looking Back to Move Forward,” this issue of the *ECN* focuses on some of the godly, dedicated leaders of this movement and upon the importance of remembering their stories and following their examples.

As we gather together in Battle Creek, may it be said of us that “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).



W. A. Spicer speaks at the 1913 General Conference Session in Takoma Park, Maryland.

FEARLESS IN GOD'S NAME

ABRIDGED FROM A LEAD CONFERENCE PRESENTATION
OCTOBER 12, 2018

BY TED N. C. WILSON, PH.D.

What a privilege to be in Battle Creek, Michigan—the birthplace of the Seventh-day Adventist Church! Imagine what it must have been like for those faith-filled, forward-looking leaders to gather here 155 years ago, May 20-23, 1863, to officially organize this movement.

At that time, there were about 3,500 members scattered across the United States, with no more than thirty ministers.¹ Today, this is a worldwide movement with more

than 20 million members, and more than 300,000 denominational workers, including nearly 20,000 ordained ministers.

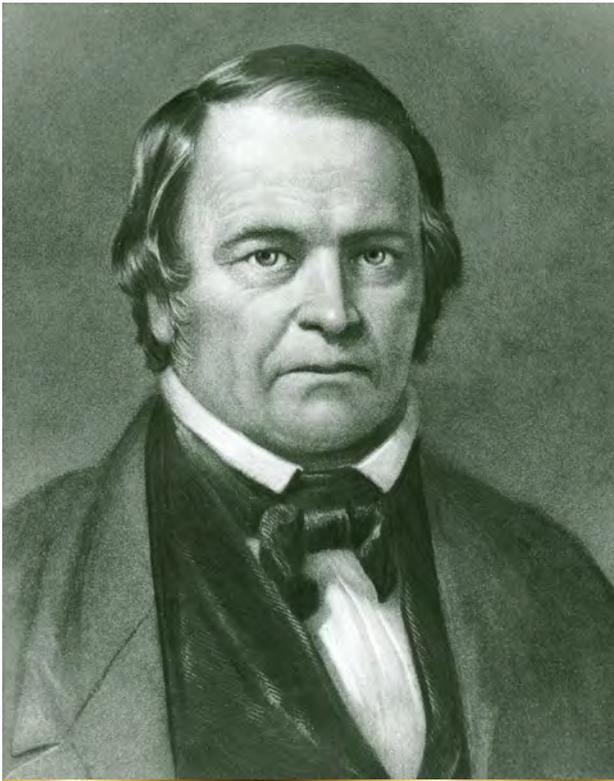
Clearly, only the blessing and guidance of God could have taken the small, humble beginnings of this prophetic, end-time movement and transformed it into what it is today! God has worked through countless lay members and leaders, missionaries and mothers, workers and retirees, men and women, young people and children—to

—continued, next page

SPECIALREPORT

“Issues Regarding the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its Leadership”

INSIDE • SEE PAGES 13-16



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IF YOU SEND
an invitation to
preach, then
I WILL GO.

bring this movement to where it is today.

Since we are at the LEAD conference, it is appropriate that we focus on church leadership. What does it mean to be a faithful leader in God’s church today? What are some of the leadership qualities that lead to success? How can we reflect Christlike, servant-leadership?

To answer these questions, let’s look at a few examples of faith-filled, fearless, yet humble leaders who followed God’s leading, and gain from their experiences wisdom and courage to move forward in our God-given mission today.

ANSWERING THE CALL

The knock on the door early one morning did not bring good news for William Miller. Having made a deal with God, he felt safe. Who would invite *him* to preach?

He had been studying the Bible diligently, using only *Cruden’s Concordance*. Beginning with Genesis, “he let the Bible explain itself. One by one, most of its seemingly insoluble inconsistencies faded away.”²

Then one day Miller read Daniel 8:14: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Getting the prophetic timeline right, but assuming the “cleansing of the sanctuary” meant the end of the world, Miller occasionally shared his discoveries with friends. But the conviction grew that he must share publicly. Finally he prayed, “If You send an invitation to preach, then I will go.” Less than thirty minutes later, the invitation came—and a reluctant leader for God was called.

William Miller wasn’t the first to reluctantly accept God’s call. We think of Moses—born in slavery yet trained to lead. After an unfortunate misuse of his management skills, this adopted prince spent 40 years learning how to lead like a shepherd—rather than a king. Leaning upon His Deliverer, Moses went from fearful to fearless.

When God called Jeremiah, the young man responded, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth” (Jer. 1:6). But the Lord answered, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak” (vs. 7).

During the time of the judges, God spoke through His prophet Deborah to call Barak to deliver His people from their cruel oppressors. Even though God had assured Barak of victory, he refused to go unless Deborah went with him.

Unlike Barak, Deborah was a faith-filled leader. Ellen White describes her as “a woman illustrious for her piety, and through her the Lord chose to deliver His people. . . . She was known as a prophetess,” writes Ellen White,

“and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.”³ The Bible tells us that Deborah “would sit under the palm tree . . . between Ramah and Bethel . . . and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment” (Judges 4:5).

THE CALL OF ANOTHER PROPHET

Thousands of years later, the same God who raised up Deborah called another faithful woman to be His prophet during a critically important time.

Described as, “the weakest of the weak,” Ellen Gould Harmon’s call to serve as God’s prophet was confirmed by her willingness to accept and carry out the responsibilities He gave her, despite her weakness, and the ridicule, scorn, and misrepresentation that she knew would come.

Through God’s strength, Ellen (Harmon) White faithfully served as God’s last-day prophet for 70 years, helping guide this movement

from its infancy into a strong, worldwide denomination.

Toward the end of her life, at the 1901 General Conference Session, God used her in a remarkable way to bring revitalized organization and healing to the struggling church.

IN AUSTRALIA

The 1901 General Conference (GC) Session was not one that Ellen White looked forward to attending. Settled in her “Sunnyside” home near the newly established Avondale College, “she would have been pleased if she could have spent the rest of her life in Australia,” wrote her grandson, Arthur White.⁴

She had helped guide the work “down under,” and was instrumental in setting up a new college and a health retreat, in addition to writing what became some of her most beloved books focusing on the life and teachings of Jesus.

Nevertheless, by mid-1900, at the age of 72, Ellen White was

becoming more certain that she must return to the United States. She had seen in vision troubling situations that were developing there, leading to growing concern.⁵

While it was not her personal choice to leave Australia, she believed God was calling her back, in part, to attend the GC Session that was scheduled to be held in Battle Creek the following February.

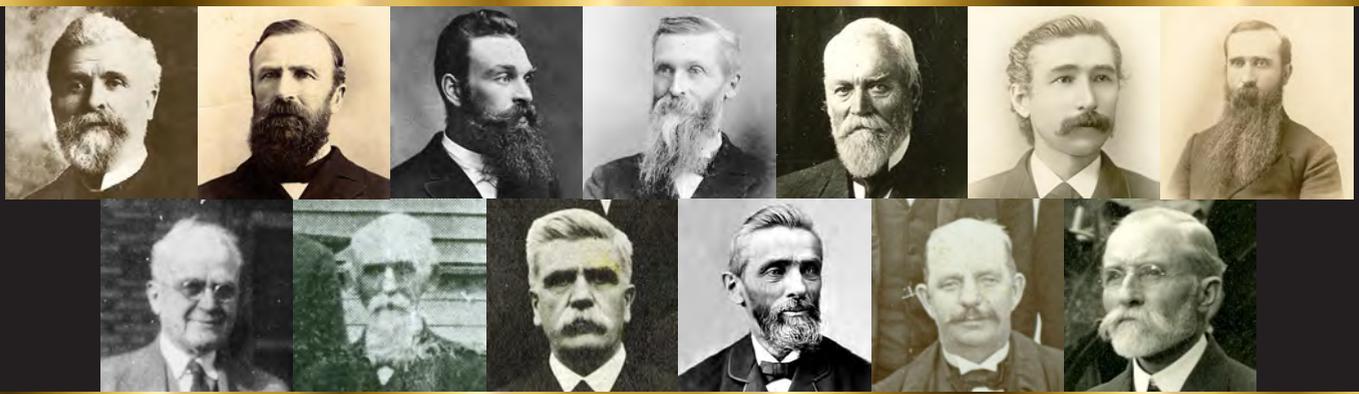
“The call comes in so decided and earnest a way that we dare not refuse,” she wrote to her son Edson. “We are to know the truth as it is in Jesus; then we are to practice it heartily, at any sacrifice. . . There is a great work to be done in a short period of time. . . We need to understand our work and do that work with fidelity.”⁶

Two weeks later Ellen White was on the ship, *Moana*, starting a 7,200-mile journey across the Pacific Ocean. She arrived in San Francisco, California, on September 21, 1900.⁷

By October 16, Ellen White



1901 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION: ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE



The General Conference Executive Committee, 1899-1901: (Top row, from left) G. A. Irwin, O. A. Olson, A. G. Daniells, J. H. Morrison, A. J. Breed, A. T. Jones, R. M. Kilgore; (Bottom row, from left) I. H. Evans, N. W. Alee, Allen Moon, J. N. Loughborough, S. H. Lane, H.W. Cottrell (PHOTOS: GC ARCHIVES AND CENTER FOR ADVENTIST RESEARCH)

had purchased a home, soon to be known as “Elmshaven,” in northern California. Here she would live out the remaining 15 years of her life and ministry.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE 1901 SESSION

The 1901 General Conference Session was scheduled to be held in February in Battle Creek. Due to Ellen White’s age and delicate health, leaders decided to hold the Session in April, rather than during the cold Michigan winter.

Many were concerned about what would happen at the 1901 Session. It was clear the church had outgrown its structure. In addition, troubling developments were taking place under the direction of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg.

Other concerns included serious problems at the publishing house, the outbreak of fanaticism in Indiana, financial challenges in the southern States, and financial and administrative problems in the rapidly growing work overseas.

A LARGE GC SESSION

The 1901 General Conference Session was the largest held up to that point. The 267 delegates represented a church of 75,000

members, most of whom lived in the United States.

The basic structure of the church had remained unchanged since 1863—the local conference and the General Conference. Of the 45 local conferences, 31 were located in the United States.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ENLARGED

When the church organized in 1863, a General Conference Executive Committee was formed, consisting of three members. By the mid-1880s, that number increased to five, by 1887 to seven, and in 1889 to nine. Two more were added in 1893, and by 1899 the GC Executive Committee totaled thirteen members.

The defined work of the Executive Committee was “to carry out the plans of the body, and to direct the affairs of the denomination in all parts of the world when the conference is not in session.”⁸

That was a big task for only thirteen people. Worse yet, the group was widely scattered, and the full committee rarely met. Therefore, the administrative work of the church was often left to the four members who lived in Battle Creek, along with the GC secretary and treasurer,

who were not Executive Committee members at that time. With this very small group trying to direct the work of the entire church, serious challenges developed, and it was to this situation that Ellen White directed some of her most pointed counsel.

COUNSEL TO CHURCH LEADERS

In a special meeting held in the Battle Creek College library the day before the 1901 GC Session, Ellen White told church leaders:

“Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and say what plans shall be followed. The burden of the work in this broad field should not rest upon two or three men. We are not reaching the high standard which, with the great and important truth we are handling, God expects us to reach.”⁹

Speaking of how the General Conference was being operated at that time, she continued, “As the matter has been presented to me, there is a narrow compass, and within this narrow compass . . . are those who would like to exercise kingly power. But the work carried on all over the field demands an

entirely different course of action.”¹⁰

She then introduced the concept of reorganization and of greatly broadening the membership of the General Conference Executive Committee by declaring:

“There is need of the laying of a foundation different from the foundation which has been laid in the past. . . . There must be a committee, not composed of half a dozen men, but of representatives from all lines of our work, from our publishing houses, from our educational institutions, and from our sanitariums . . .”¹¹

Regarding leadership in the church and its institutions, Ellen White was very direct. “The interests of the General Conference and all that concerns the handling of the work require minds that are controlled by the Holy Spirit. Unless those who have charge of the work give evidence that they are controlled by the Holy Spirit, unless they give evidence that they receive power from God to impart to the responsibilities with which they are connected, a change should be made without delay.”¹²

MESSAGE TO THE SESSION

The next morning at the GC Session, Ellen White continued to press home her God-given message, explaining what leaders in God’s work are expected to be.

“The principles of heaven are to be carried out in every family, in the discipline of every church, in every establishment, in every institution, in every school, and in everything that shall be managed. You have no right to manage,” she said, “unless you manage in God’s order. Are you under the control of God? Do you see your responsibility to Him? The word of God is to be our guide. Have you given heed to the Word?”

“God wants you to be converted, and may He help, that this work may

go forward. He is a power for His people when they come into order.

. . . If we will take hold of the Master, take hold of all the power He has given us, the salvation of God will be revealed.”¹³

A WATERSHED MOMENT

The 1901 General Conference Session was a watershed moment for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Leaders humbly submitted to the divine counsel, and a vast reorganization of the church took place. No longer would the entire church be governed by just a handful of men in Battle Creek. The GC Executive Committee was expanded to include leaders from around the world.

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The interests of the General Conference and all that concerns the handling of the work require minds that are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

In addition, the 87 conferences and missions of the General Conference, comprising 75,767 church members, were formed into union conferences to more efficiently direct the church’s work within their geographic territories.

Leading up to this move was increasing frustration, particularly on the part of leaders living outside of the United States, to have to wait *several months* for an answer to arrive by letter from the General Conference before moving ahead in addressing specific needs in the field.

CREATION OF UNION CONFERENCES

Because of these challenges, the first union of local conferences—the Australasian Union Conference—was created in 1894. Ellen White, who was living in Australia, heartily endorsed this development. Four years later, Europe’s nine local conferences and missions formed the “European Union Conference.” But no union conferences were formed in North America until the 1901 GC Session.

The creation of union conferences changed the structure of the General Conference. Instead of it being composed of numerous local conferences, the General Conference now consisted of union conferences. In addition, each union president became an *ex officio* member of the GC Executive Committee.

The GC Executive Committee’s authority was increased, and the union conferences were given some operational autonomy, although the unions were subordinate to the General Conference Executive Committee—the body that created them.

Several other items were addressed at the 1901 Session, including the establishment of GC departments, a call to move the college out of Battle Creek, and confronting the “Holy Flesh” fanaticism movement.

PEACEABLE AND PRODUCTIVE

From all accounts, the 1901 GC Session was remarkable for its peaceable yet productive action, and all acknowledged the Lord’s miraculous working.

J. N. Loughborough, one of the pioneers present in 1863 when the General Conference was first organized, observed at the close of

the 1901 Session: “When we have heeded the light that He [God] has given, the cause has gone straight every time; and the difficulties in the way have been when we have not strictly heeded the instruction that God has given.”¹⁴

During her closing remarks, Ellen White stated, “Wrongs—serious wrongs—have been committed in Battle Creek. I did not know how we would get along at this meeting. The Lord gave me instruction regarding this. I was referred to an incident in the life of the prophet Elisha.” Recounting the appearance of angels in fiery chariots at Dothan, she continued:

“God presented this to me, and I did not know what it meant. . . . and then, as the lesson was fulfilled, I began to grasp its meaning. . . .

ANGELS PRESENT

“Who do you suppose has been among us since this conference began? Who has kept away the objectionable features that generally appear in such a meeting? Who has walked up and down the aisles of this Tabernacle? The God of heaven and His angels.

“And they did not come here to tear you in pieces, but to give you right and peaceable minds. They have been among us to work the works of God, to keep back the powers of darkness, that the work God designed should be done should not be hindered. The angels of God have been working among us . . . telling us how to carry the work forward. . . . This is not our work. God has brought it about. . . . God’s angels have been walking up and down in this congregation. . . . God has said that He will heal the wounds of His people.

“Press together, press together,” she urged. “Let us be united in Christ. God is dishonored by disunion.”¹⁵

Many rose to share testimonies of how God had wrought at the Session, and it was decided that the final meeting would continue into the evening of April 23, where many more testimonies were shared. Finally, newly elected GC president, A. G. Daniells spoke:

“God has answered the thousands of prayers that have gone up to Him during the past six months, that this might be a conference of peace,” he said. “God has answered those prayers in a signal manner. Praise His holy name. I sincerely pray that this harmony and union may continue forever.”¹⁶

A GODLY LEADER

The 1901 General Conference Session required bold, decisive, humble, godly leadership. It required leaders who were as true to duty as the needle to the pole.

One such leader was William Ambrose Spicer. Spicer was a dedicated, mission-minded, selfless leader who would one day become General Conference secretary and later serve as GC president.



W. A. Spicer (seated, center) with the first ministers in India to be ordained. (ADVENTIST REVIEW)

When Spicer was a teen, someone gave him *The Great Controversy*. He read the book eagerly, and it greatly influenced his decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist.

He had a heart for mission and later served in England, India, and as secretary of the Foreign Mission Board.

A BIBLICAL APPROACH

During his report given to the 1901 GC Session regarding the work in India, Spicer explained his simple yet biblical approach:

“The Indians have a complicated philosophy, founded upon principles that they call scientific,” he said. “That need not trouble us at all, for we can give the third angel’s message to India without having more than the remotest idea of all of their philosophic discussions and questions. In fact, it is the study of a lifetime to find out what the Hindu religion is, and anyone who goes there to work will find that he has very little time to study darkness.

“The work in India is simply to let the light shine. . . all that is needed is to tell the simple, saving truth of the third angel’s message.”¹⁷

Explaining the effectiveness of this simple approach,

Spicer stated, “Many Hindus have been struck with the difference between preaching the word of God and preaching *about* the word of God. And they appreciate the word of God, and it appeals to their hearts. I am glad that we need not feel . . . that we must give them some argument of our own about the word of God, in order to impress them with the fact that the word is God’s, but we have only to open the word to them, and let God’s voice speak to their hearts; and there is a power in God’s voice to speak to the hearts of the heathen,” he said, using the nomenclature of the time.¹⁸

Then, revealing his humble yet straightforward way that endeared Spicer to so many, he confessed, “The heathen man is not so different from ourselves. I have been a heathen myself, and the Lord saved me by His grace. And in heathenism you can see manifested your own disposition, the natural man; you can see in heathenism just what you would be yourself, did not the grace of God save you from your own ways, for heathenism is nothing more nor less than a religion of having your own way.”¹⁹

Known for his great love for people, mission, and God, Spicer served the Seventh-day Adventist Church for seventy years in various capacities, but always with faithfulness and humility.

A HUMBLE LEADER

“He was happy to sit up all night on the train to save money that he would have spent for a sleeping berth,” wrote historians Richard



William Ambrose Spicer, 1865-1952 (ADVENTIST REVIEW)

Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf. “He often did his own laundry and slept in cheap hotel rooms. He spent little on food, frequently eating from a bag of peanuts all day instead of eating regular meals. . . . Spicer was the glue that held the growing mission work together, traveling broadly and always ready with helpful counsel and encouragement to the world community of Adventists. . . .”²⁰

Spicer also wrote regularly for *The Review and Herald* and authored numerous books. “His writing had the charm of simplicity, directness of expression, and apt illustration,” wrote F. D. Nichol in an editorial following Spicer’s death.²¹

SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

W. A. Spicer’s lifelong friend James Lamar McElhany in a personal tribute published in the *Review*, gives us a real sense of who he was and what made his leadership so successful.

“He was a man of the people.

He had the common touch. Regardless of where he served or the position he held, he was always a man of humble attitudes. He often said that it was not the position or office that man held that mattered, but that any office or phase of service to which one was called was simply a means of helping to finish God’s work.”²²

Those who worked with W. A. Spicer knew him to be a man of clear and definite convictions, and yet always ready to include others in seeking solutions to problems.

“He placed tremendous emphasis on the Word of God, and the power of that Word to change the lives of men,” McElhany wrote.

“His familiarity with the Bible had a marked effect on his style of preaching. He was always simple and direct. Even children delighted to listen to him.”²³

In closing his tribute, McElhany ruminated, “As I think back over the years I have known this man of God and attempt to appraise his work, I realize the inadequacy of my own words. But I know that when the records are thrown open it will be seen that he had fully dedicated his long life, all his talents and gifts and his influence, to the cause and service of God for the saving of men and women for the kingdom.”²⁴

LEADERSHIP TODAY

What a testimony of godly leadership! As leaders in God’s church today, could the same be said of us? Are we dedicating all of our talents, gifts, and influence to the cause and service of God? Are we focused on our God-given mission to



I believe the same angels, and the same God, who were present and actively involved at the Battle Creek Tabernacle in 1901 are here with us throughout this Annual Council.

seek and save the lost?

Do we recognize and utilize the simplicity and power of the three angels' messages, as did Spicer? Do we teach and preach *the Bible*, or do we just talk philosophically *about* the Bible? Do we listen to, and follow, the counsel given in the Spirit of Prophecy? As leaders, do we come close to the people we serve, or stand aloof, wrapping the cloak of position and influence about us? Are we responsibly frugal with the means God has entrusted with us to do His work? What is the most important thing, the most important goal in your life; in my life; right now?

FACING CHALLENGES

It is no secret that today as leaders we face serious challenges, not only from outside, but from within. This shouldn't surprise us, as we read in Revelation 12:17: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

For centuries Satan has fought against God's faithful people, seeking to foster disharmony, discord, and division. He sows seeds of doubt, discouragement, and disunion among God's remnant, knowing that "if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25, NKJV).

So today we have returned to Battle Creek, not to turn the clock back 100 years—no, not at all! We have returned to this historic place to remember that we have a "past with a future," and in looking back we will be encouraged to move forward, knowing that God is at the helm.

STEERING THE SHIP

It has been said, "God can't steer a ship that isn't moving," and as we consider the fearless, godly, courageous leaders of the past, may their examples inspire us to faithfully move forward in our calling.

I believe the same angels, and the same God, who were present and actively involved at the Battle Creek Tabernacle in 1901 are here today, and will be with us throughout this Annual Council, unseen, yet working among us, walking along the aisles, directing our activities toward heaven's instruction, urging us to "press together, press together," and to be united in Christ.

Now is the time to submit ourselves fully to God, to lean into His power, to remember how He has led His people in the past, to plead for the wisdom and indwelling of His Spirit, then in His name move boldly, fearlessly ahead, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

ENDNOTES

¹ Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Pacific Press: Nampa, ID, 1979, p. 94.

² *Ibid.*

³ Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*, p. 37, egwwritings.org/?ref=en_DG.37.2¶=27.169

⁴ Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Volume 5—The Early Elmshaven Years, 1900-1905*, p. 13, egwwritings.org/?ref=en_5BIO.9.5¶=675.14

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ellen G. White, Letter to J. E. White and Emma White, Lt 123, 1900, egwwritings.org/?ref=en_Lt123-1900¶=9134.6

⁷ Arthur L. White, p. 15.

⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1889, p. 4.

⁹ "Talk by Mrs. E. G. White in College Library, April 1, 1901," Manuscript 43, 1901, egwwritings.org/?ref=en_Ms43-1901.3¶=9289.9

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, p. 25, documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/GCSessionBulletins/GCB1901-01ex01.pdf

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 460, documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/GCSessionBulletins/GCB1901-01ex20.pdf

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 464.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

¹⁷ *General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, p. 432, documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/GCSessionBulletins/GCB1901-01ex20.pdf

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Schwarz and Greenleaf, p. 273.

²¹ F. D. Nichol, "The Death of W. A. Spicer," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 30, 1952, p. 13.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

BATTLE CREEK TRIVIA

How much about this Michigan town do you know?

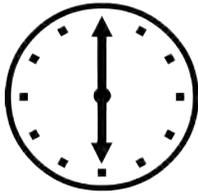


Breathing exercises at the Battle Creek Sanitarium

1859

Battle Creek incorporated as a village

In 1855, the time Sabbath began and ended in Battle Creek changed from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. to sunset to sunset.



1,000

Estimated number of fugitive slaves assisted to freedom by Battle Creek resident Erastus Hussey

Number of Adventist pioneers and some of those associated with them buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek

61



40
Number of seats in the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Battle Creek

3,200
Number of seats in the Battle Creek Dime Tabernacle in 1879

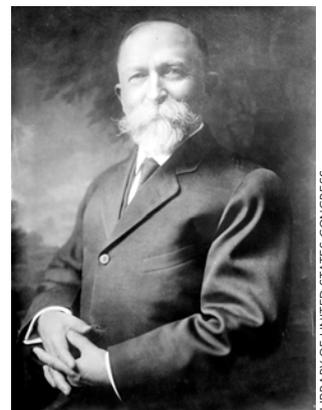
300

Number of card-carrying members in the "Sinners Club," a group organized by Battle Creek Sanitarium patients who didn't like Kellogg's no coffee, alcohol, or cigarettes rules



1892

First baptistry installed in the Dime Tabernacle (previous baptisms were in the Battle Creek or Kalamazoo rivers including Henry and Edson White in the cold month of January)



5 foot 3 inches
The height of John Harvey Kellogg

U.S. President William Howard Taft was the 100,000th guest of the Battle Creek Sanitarium in 1911.



23

Age of Uriah Smith who was listed as editor in the first *Review and Herald* printed in Battle Creek in 1855



THE PAST: A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

By Markus Kutzschbach, Executive Director, Adventist Heritage Ministry

Many people have an interest in their roots and heritage. An understanding of our past—no matter if it is our own past or that of our ancestors—gives us a sense of identity. Understanding our past helps us to know who we are. If we do not know where we come from, how will we know where we are going? Understanding one's identity is crucial for knowing one's destiny. A sense of our identity gives us a sense of our future.

Every person has a specific worldview and we interpret reality and the things we experience through the lens of that worldview. Further, the stories that we experience, hear, read, and watch become part of our collective memory and thus inform our worldview.

Whenever we encounter specific events and information that have a link to information in our collective memory, these stories come back to our memory and interpret those events and information through that lens. Thus, stories are powerful.

We remember our lives in the form of episodes. What students usually remember best from a class is not abstract information, but the stories that the teacher told. This is because stories come in the framework of reality.



Grandparents with their grandchildren in Battle Creek, Michigan. (Adventist Digital Library)

THE PAST: A FOREIGN COUNTRY?

We often think that the past is a foreign country because things were done differently there. However, we overlook that the past is populated with people that are not much different from us. They struggled with similar issues. We can relate to them. Their stories inspire us. We may learn from their mistakes and from their successes. We may want to follow their footsteps, or we may want to avoid emulating their decisions and errors.

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is populated with people who loved searching the Bible and who loved God. Their struggles are our struggles. We can relate to them. Their fervor, commitment, and sacrifice inspire and motivates us to

commit our lives to God.

While we tend to forget abstract information that we were told or read, we remember things that we actively experience.

ADVENTIST HERITAGE — A MINISTRY

In 1981, a small group of laymen and church officers, convicted of the urgent need to preserve the heritage of the Adventist Church, united to form a non-profit organization that became known as Adventist Heritage Ministry (AHM).

The purpose of this ministry is to:

- Confirm the confidence of people already acquainted with the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Arouse the interest of visitors who are not acquainted with Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.
- Develop among young and old a spirit of consecration to the fulfillment of the church's mission.

AHM seeks to accomplish these objectives through, (a) the purchase, restoration, and where appropriate, replication of properties significant to the founding and development of Seventh-day Adventism and (b) through operating these properties as educational and evangelistic centers.

EFFECTIVE WITNESSES FOR MISSION

Through these intervening years, God has blessed AHM with several 18th- and 19th-century historic Adventist sites that are proving to be effective witnesses for the worldwide mission of God's last-day church as many thousands of people visit each year and are led to prepare to meet Jesus when He returns.

At the 1815 home of William Miller, visitors hear the story of a farmer who became a preacher as he systematically studied his Bible, verse by verse, accepted Jesus as his Friend, discovered the Bible prophecies detailing the expected time of His Second Coming, and shared that vital information with the whole world!

At the 1840s Edson Farm, visitors learn about Hiram Edson, the man to whom God revealed the work of Jesus who is now in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

At the 1742 boyhood home of Joseph Bates, visitors follow the young sailor through his adventurous life, his conscientious acceptance of

—continued, next page

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN WHITE

THE PROPHET SPEAKS ON ADVENTIST HISTORY



Why is it important to dedicate a ministry to telling old pioneer stories?

The past history of the cause of God needs to be brought before our people, young and old, that they may be familiar with it. How frequently were the waymarks set up by the Lord in dealing with ancient Israel, lest they should forget the history of their past.¹

The experiences of William Miller and his associates, of Captain Joseph Bates and of other pioneers of the Advent Message, should be kept before our people.²

Who is responsible for seeing that this work is done?

There is a work of sacred importance for ministers and people to do. They are to study the history of the cause and people of God. They are not to forget the past dealings of God with His people. They are to revive and recount the truths that have come to seem of little value to those who do not know by personal experience of the power and brightness that accompanied them when they were first seen and understood. In all their original freshness and power these truths are to be given to the world.³

Does the Bible place importance on history? Should we?

[After referencing 1 Samuel 7:12: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'" (NKJV)], Oh, where as a people are our commemorative stones? Where are set up our monumental pillars carved with letters expressing the precious story of what God has done for us in our experience?⁴

Where are these stones for us today?

Adventist Heritage Ministry is glad to answer on her behalf: Here they are representing core Seventh-day Adventist beliefs:

- ▶ The William Miller Home: "The Birthplace of Adventism in America" (Second Coming)
- ▶ The Hiram Edson Farm: "The Birthplace of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Heavenly Sanctuary)
- ▶ The Boyhood Home of Joseph Bates: "Apostle of the Sabbath" (Sabbath)
- ▶ The 1856 Wood Street Home of James and Ellen White: where *The Great Controversy* was written. (Conflict between Christ and Satan)

¹Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 134.

²Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 145.

³Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p.157.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 320.



WILLIAM MILLER HOME

healthful living, his conviction to help the downtrodden, and finally his evangelistic zeal to spread the Bible truth of the seventh-day Sabbath.

At the 1856 Wood Street home of James and Ellen White in Historic Adventist Village, Battle Creek, Michigan, visitors learn of the prophetic gift bestowed on Ellen White as God's messenger and can receive a copy of *The*

Great Controversy in the very room in which it was written.

Through the many years God has preserved these four specific and important sites, now authentic artifacts, to serve as venues where thousands of tourists from all around the world can visit and learn of these four last-day Bible doctrines that are shared here.



JOSEPH BATES HOME



HIRAM EDISON BARN

For more information and to learn how to become part of this exciting mission opportunity, visit Adventist Heritage Ministry at www.adventistheritage.org.



JAMES AND ELLEN WHITE HOME

ALL PHOTOS: MERLE POIRIER

ISSUES REGARDING THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AND ITS LEADERSHIP

BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM



principle that to correctly identify the application of these prophecies, each symbol should have a single, specific fulfillment in history. Those who try to suggest that the Seventh-day Adventist Church or its leadership are fulfilling the prophecy of Revelation 13 are virtually identifying the church as Babylon.

A careful analysis of the “beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns” (Rev. 13:1) reveals that it is the continuation of the fourth beast of Daniel 7. Both beasts have ten horns (Dan. 7:7; Rev. 13:1) and are linked to speaking blasphemies (Dan. 7:20, 25; Rev. 13:5-6) and the persecution of God’s people, which lasts for three and a half times or years, symbolizing 1,260 literal years (see Dan.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was raised up by God in fulfillment of Bible prophecy to prepare people for the second coming of Christ (Rev. 12:17). But some have suggested that the church’s leadership is now fulfilling different aspects of Bible prophecy, specifically those that we have understood as applying to the Roman Catholic Church. They charge that the current efforts being made to fulfill the voted actions of the world church at the 2015 San Antonio General Conference Session and bring compliance are papal and contrary to liberty of conscience. One of their major claims is that the decision-making process has been manipulated by not presenting the reports from the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) to the 2015 General Conference Session. This response is offered to help Adventist leaders and members understand the truth about these matters.

WHO PERSECUTES THE SAINTS?

Applying Revelation 13:7 (“to make war with the saints and to overcome them”) to Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership is misguided since it ignores the historicist

7:25; Rev. 13:5, 7).

Seventh-day Adventists have long understood that Daniel 7:25 adds that this power would “intend to change times and laws.” This refers to an attempt to change the very law of God written with His own finger on tables of stone. The Roman Church not only replaced the Bible Sabbath with a man-made day of worship, Sunday, but it also dropped the second commandment referring to idolatry and divided the ninth commandment into two separate commands. The issue regarding the change of the law of God revolves around the issue of authority. In understanding Daniel 7 and its corollary Revelation 13 we must ask, does any power claim to have the authority to change the immutable law of God?

The one and only power that makes this claim and matches the prophetic description is the Roman papacy, which exercised both religious and political power throughout its history and especially during the Middle Ages from AD 538-1798.

To counteract this widespread apostasy, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been raised up by God as the remnant of Bible prophecy, entrusted with the three angels’ messages to present Jesus in all His fullness and warn the world



“

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GOSPEL

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against worshipping the beast and its image and to prepare people for Christ’s return (Rev. 14:6-12). The New Testament gospel articulated by Paul and restated in the prophecies of Revelation is the incredibly good news that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection delivers us from both the penalty and power of sin. God has commissioned His end-time people to proclaim this “good news” and call people everywhere out of man-made systems and human creeds based solely on human tradition. A part of this commission is to call people out of “Babylon”—symbolizing both a system of falsehoods, human authority, and unbiblical teachings exercised on a worldwide scale.

“KINGLY POWER” AND POPYRY

The charge that the General Conference or its leadership are exercising “kingly power” akin to papal authority misunderstands the vast difference between the decision-making processes in the Catholic Church in comparison to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The papacy is a system of centralized, top-down authority centered in the pope of Rome and his cardinals. During the Middle Ages, as predicted by prophecy, the papacy ruthlessly tortured, persecuted, and murdered dissenters who refused to accept its supreme authority. Its exercise of authority flows from a hierarchal structure.

But in the Adventist Church authority flows in both directions, from the bottom-up and the top-down, through representatives who include *at all committee levels* women as well as men, and lay members as well as pastors.

In the Catholic Church, decisions on doctrine are decreed by the pope and the top theologians of the church,

but, in the Adventist Church, the statement of 28 Fundamental Beliefs simply summarizes what members, based on their own Bible study, already believe. Only the largest and most representative gathering of leaders and lay members at the General Conference Session held every five years can modify this statement of beliefs, the *Church Manual*, and certain GC policies, because they affect every level of the church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church on all levels functions based on a representative form of church government. Church leaders are elected officials who are duty bound to carry out the voted actions of the General Conference Session and the General Conference Executive Committee.

The decision regarding who is qualified to join the local church through baptism and profession of faith is made by the entire congregation, based on recommendations from the pastor and the church board in harmony with the statement of Fundamental Beliefs articulated by the world church. The decision regarding who should be ordained to the gospel ministry is made by the union, based on recommendations of local conferences in harmony with biblical qualifications articulated by the world church.

A local church is not authorized to baptize someone who is not in full agreement with the statement of 28 Fundamental Beliefs voted by the world church, nor is a union authorized to ordain someone who does not qualify for ordination based on criteria voted by the world church.

The president of the world church does not govern with the authority of the pope of Rome but rather administers the work of the church through committees such as the

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church on all levels functions based on a representative form of church government.”

General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), which has established five compliance subcommittees to help ensure that the decisions voted by the world church are fully implemented by church entities and institutions. These subcommittees have come as the result of requests from union presidents and other church leaders to review areas of non-compliance in addition to women’s ordination. Preferably, all cases of non-compliance should be dealt with by those entities closest to the matter, and they are encouraged to establish their own committees to help ensure compliance at all levels within their fields. These compliance committees, rather than being an authoritarian, top-heavy bureaucratic tool of General Conference administration, are an attempt to encourage each local entity to deal with non-compliance on a local level. The General Conference compliance subcommittees will function when conferences, unions, or divisions are unable or unwilling to deal with voted actions of the General Conference Session or Executive Committee actions that affect the World Church.

The fact that non-compliance in various areas of church life take time to resolve is a powerfully clear testimony to the fact that the Adventist Church has a distributed, rather than a top-down, system of authority, with appropriate checks and balances, including the possibility of resolving matters by higher levels of church governance, such as the General Conference Executive Committee or the world

gathering of leaders and lay members at the General Conference Session.

THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION STUDY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The process for the study of ordination was careful, thorough, and transparent in every way. In addition to the church’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), encouragement was also given for the study to be pursued at other levels. And all thirteen divisions of the world church as well as some lower levels of church organization did just that.

Division committees reported their findings to TOSC and vice versa, which enabled extensive dialogue on these issues worldwide.

The papers presented at TOSC were made publicly available online soon after each committee meeting on the ASTR website (adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc).

Three weeks before the 2014 Annual Council, the *Adventist Review* and Adventist News Network published an appeal for church members—and especially Executive Committee members and 2015 General Conference Session delegates—to prayerfully study the Bible and the materials on the ASTR website. The appeal (bit.ly/ARappeal and bit.ly/ANNappeal) included numerous weblinks to the related materials.

At the 2014 Annual Council, members of the GC Executive Committee received 30-minute reports representing each of the three positions generated by TOSC, as well as a 125-page report

published in June 2014 containing detailed summaries of these three positions and their respective recommendations regarding the way forward.

The 30-minute reports presented at Annual Council were published in their entirety in the *Adventist Review* as Position 1 (bit.ly/ARposition1), Position 2 (bit.ly/ARposition2), and Position 3 (bit.ly/ARposition3).

On March 4, 2015, a letter was sent to every GC Session delegate with a link to session materials, including this full TOSC report with a link for requesting a printed copy.

At the GC Session itself, summaries of each of the three positions were read, allowing more time for discussion, and printed copies of the TOSC report were made available.

It should be remembered that TOSC was a study committee only, with no administrative authority, nor was it representative of the world field. Its purpose was to study the topic of ordination and to make its findings known to the larger church, not to decide the issue.

The “vote” taken of its members indicates that the committee was quite evenly divided among the three positions. While some have tried to read that “vote” (which was an unofficial “straw poll,” according to the TOSC chair) as favoring the ordination of women, others point out that a similarly sizable majority recognized male leadership as the ideal biblical model for God’s people.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM/ LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

Based on our understanding of

Daniel and Revelation, Seventh-day Adventists have long been strong advocates of religious freedom and liberty of conscience. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which claims the power to excommunicate heretics and consign them to eternal damnation in hellfire, the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that God the Father has committed all judgment into the hands of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 5:22), and that salvation is a personal matter between the individual and God. Consequently, those who no longer believe in the church's teachings and practice are left free to follow the dictates of their conscience, which may include resigning their church offices without condemnation or judgment.

Church leaders have a special responsibility to set an example of faithfulness to Christ, whether by drawing the church into closer bonds of unity based on our voted beliefs and practices or, should their conscience so lead them, by resigning their position and perhaps even their church membership if their conscience no longer allows them to support the beliefs and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Every individual is left free to follow God's leading as they understand it. This is a very high and precious value that should always be guarded and respected among us.

GOD'S CHOSEN LEADERS

When there is disagreement, one should try to follow the principles of Matthew 18. Personal and public attacks are against our biblical mandate as Christians. Jesus was clear: we should treat each other as we wish to be treated (Matt. 7:12).

The same is also true for how we treat leaders. Even the apostle Paul, when rebuked for speaking disrespectfully of the Jewish high priest, said "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people'" (Acts 23:5). As one hears or reads the strong rhetoric being used today against church leadership, one wonders if those making the accusations know the person whom they are attacking.

The Bible encourages us to speak respectfully about each other and our leaders. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to control our words and actions.



Only a church united in love and doctrine, committed to mission, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit will accomplish Christ's purpose in preparing people for the coming of our Lord.

FORGET COMPLIANCE AND FOCUS ON MISSION?

The church is the object of God's supreme regard. Jesus prayed specifically for His church as He faced the shame of the cross, recognizing that unity was a necessary pre-requisite for the successful accomplishment of the mission He was entrusting to it. He prayed not only for His disciples "but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, . . . that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20–21). Jesus spent much of His time teaching the disciples because their work was the most

important to which human beings had ever been called and He knew that the future of the church would be in their hands. They were "to become one in faith, doctrine, and spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 296). The same is God's will for His people today. "They will not be at variance, one believing one thing, and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. . . . If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinions of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?" (*Testimonies of the Church*, vol. 3, p. 446). Only as we unite in faith, practice, and mission can the work God has given us be successfully accomplished. A dying world waits the proclamation of the unique last day Christ-centered biblical message that has been entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Heaven's imperative is to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:16). Only a church united in love and doctrine, committed to mission, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit will accomplish Christ's purpose in preparing people for the coming of our Lord.