

Craig White

SYNOPSIS  
of the  
History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)

The Advent Movement

In considering the history of the Church of God (Seventh Day) it is necessary to review the Advent movement which began in the United States between the years 1831-1845 by William Miller.

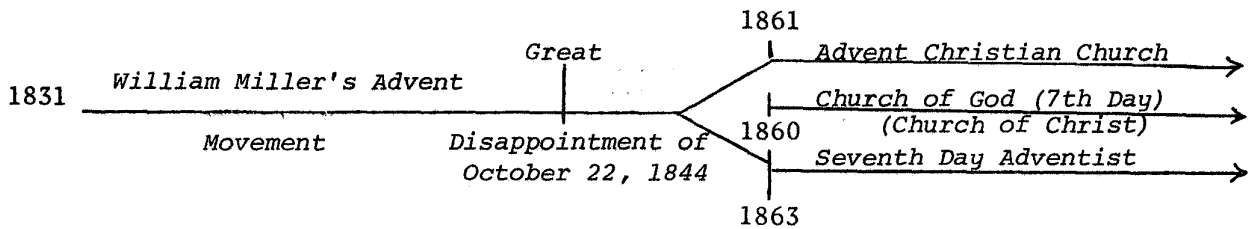
William Miller (1782-1849) was a farmer in the state of New York. After years of Bible study he began to preach in 1831 that the present world would end "about the year 1843," with the second Advent of Christ. He based his belief primarily on Daniel 8:13, 14. He published many books and pamphlets. Two principal organs were the Signs of the Times and The Midnight Cry. Miller estimated that 50,000 to 100,000 persons believed his views on the Advent at the height of the movement. When 1843 passed and the Advent did not occur, some of Miller's associates revised the date and proclaimed October 22, 1844 as the date of the second coming of Christ. This date passed uneventfully and brought the movement to an end. The last meeting of Miller's Advent movement was held in Albany, New York, in April, 1845. Belief in the imminence of the Advent was reaffirmed, but no date was set. No permanent organization was created in the 1845 meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the Church of God (Seventh Day) two other Adventist bodies trace their history back to Miller's Advent movement. These are the

<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 15, 1963 edition*

Advent Christian Church which was organized in 1861 and which observes Sunday as a day of worship and the Seventh Day Adventist Church which was organized in 1863.

The following diagram illustrates the development of three distinct churches out of the Millerite Advent movement:



Sabbatarianism in America

In 1664, Stephen Mumford, a Seventh Day Baptist, came to America and settled in Newport, Rhode Island. His devoted stand for the Sabbath was noticed by the members of the established churches and several people adopted his practices and views. In December, 1671, these Sabbatarians organized the first Seventh Day Baptist Church in America at Newport.

About 1684, Abel Nobel came from England and settled near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was a Seventh Day Baptist minister who preached the Sabbath to his neighbors. By 1700 he had been successful in establishing six congregations in his neighborhood.

At about this same time, Edmund Dunham, a First-day Baptist living near Piscataway, New Jersey, accepted the Sabbath and began to observe it. By 1705 he had organized the Seventh Day Baptist Church at Piscataway.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference was organized in 1801 and incorporated in 1927. In 1977 the Seventh Day Baptists report that

there are 60 churches with a total membership of 5300 in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Adventist Introduced to the Sabbath

A little group of Advent believers living in Washington, New Hampshire, had the Sabbath introduced to them by a faithful Seventh Day Baptist, Rachel Preston. Through her efforts, the majority of the congregation at Washington began to observe the Sabbath about the time of the great disappointment in 1844-1845.

Elder Joseph Bates, who had been a prominent figure in the time-setting Advent movement, began to observe and teach the Sabbath in 1845.

Elder and Mrs. James White accepted the Sabbath a little later. They went on to become the founders of the Seventh Day Adventist church.

Elder Gilbert Cranmer, a follower of Miller's Advent calculations and interpretations of prophecy, was first introduced to the Sabbath in 1843. He read an article on the subject in the Millerite publication, The Midnight Cry. Cranmer was not fully convinced of the Sabbath until Joseph Bates went to Michigan advocating its observance. Cranmer and David Hewitt began to observe the Sabbath on the same day in 1845. Cranmer was living in Comstock, Michigan when he became a Sabbatarian. Elder Cranmer, who had preached for the Methodist and later for the Christian Church, became a Sabbatarian Advent preacher. He established numerous Sabbatarian congregations in western Michigan. Later, it was through Elder Cranmer's efforts that the Church of Christ, the forerunner to the Church of God (Seventh Day) came into being in Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> History of the Seventh Day Baptists, compiled by the Committee on Publications, Board of Christian Education, 1977.

Many isolated Sabbatarian individuals and groups appeared in various areas before and following the 1844 disappointment. This can be ascertained from the reports written by Elder James White about the various trips he and his wife, Ellen G. White, made through eastern and mid-western United States in an effort to organize the Seventh Day Adventist church. By the 1860's they found many independent Sabbatarian congregations.<sup>3</sup>

A specific case of Sabbatarians who were unattached to a denomination of the day is the Thomas Madill family. Madill lived in Toronto, Canada, in the 1850's. Because of religious persecution and because he heard of an active Sabbatarian work being started in Michigan, Madill moved his family to Michigan to identify with the work being conducted by Elder Cranmer.<sup>4</sup> Through his three daughters, Thomas Madill was the progenitor of three families who have been prominent in the history of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Michigan. Those are the Merriam, Leach, and Wilkinson families, names which are well-known throughout the Church in Michigan at this time.

#### Controversial History

The History of the Church of God (Seventh Day) is controversial in some religious quarters. Today, the term Adventist is associated with the Seventh Day Adventist church. It is by far the largest of the distinct church groups which can trace their history back to William Miller's Advent movement of the 1840's.

<sup>3</sup> History of the Church of God (Seventh Day), John Kiesz, May, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Bible Advocate, "A Look At the Past," Floyd Turner, August, 1977.

The controversy begins with the claim of the Church of God (Seventh Day) that it too can trace its beginning to the same movement. Over the years, Seventh Day Adventist historians have resolutely stated that the Church of God was originally a part of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and that it separated from it.

On the other hand, Andrew N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd, in their history, A History of the True Church, state that Elder James and Mrs. Ellen G. White frequently used the name "Church of God" from 1844 to 1860. They cite various references in letters and documents to show that the term "Church of God" was widely used by Sabbatarian Adventists of those days.

Dugger and Dodd then conclude that on October 1, 1860 in Battle Creek, Michigan, when at the insistence of the Whites the name "Seventh Day Adventist" was adopted, they separated from the Church of God to become a separate body.<sup>5</sup>

It is truly doubtful that either the Adventist or Dugger - Dodd claim is accurate. Early Seventh Day Adventist historians were biased, and denounced anyone who opposed the Whites as fanatics. Further, most of the early history of the development of the Seventh Day Adventist church and Church of God is cited by their historians. The only written history the Church of God (Seventh Day) has is its archive of publications which go back to The Hope of Israel, August, 1863.

The problem with the Dugger-Dodd account is that it makes an over-zealous attempt to trace the history of the Church of God (Seventh Day) of the twentieth century, in an unbroken line, to the church of

<sup>5</sup> A History of the True Church, A.N. Dugger and C.O. Dodd, "The Bible Advocate," W. Va., 1936, pages 292-294.

apostolic times. In doing so, it seized upon any and all opportunity to identify the church by reference to the term Church of God. In many places Dugger and Dodd have used this term out of its intended context, thus distorting the facts. This fact, coupled with other distortions of historical data, make their account quite unreliable.

While the name Church of God was used prominently from 1844 to 1860 by various Sabbatarian Adventists, serious differences developed between adherents to the Whites and the forerunners of the Church of God before the name "Seventh Day Adventist" was adopted in 1860. To be sure, the name became an issue, but there were more basic and important issues at stake. It was these issues that permanently divided the Sabbatarian Adventists into two camps. This being true, it appears the development of the Church of God (Seventh Day) and Seventh Day Adventist churches parallel each other.

#### Opposition to the Whites

According to A History of the Seventh Day Church of God, by Nickels and Cole, the early Seventh Day Adventist historian, J. N. Loughborough, states that prior to 1860, the segment of the Advent movement which embraced the Sabbath was completely dominated by Elder and Mrs. James White. Loughborough presents the origin of the Seventh Day Adventist Church by 1863 as the natural outgrowth of the Whites' effort to promote the Advent doctrine. He admits some opposition to the visions of Mrs. White. He describes her opponents as having gone insane or falling into strange beliefs. They are reported as never amounting to anything.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Richard C. Nickels and Raymond C. Cole, vol. 1, page 5.

The Messenger Party

Some of the earliest organized opposition to the Whites was termed by them as the "Messenger Party." The Messenger Party was organized by Hiram S. Case and C. P. Russell. Case was a pioneer preacher of the Advent doctrine in 1844 in New York. He became a Sabbatarian in 1851 in North Plains, Michigan. Shortly afterward, Case went out preaching in Michigan, Ohio, New York, Illinois and Wisconsin. He is credited with being the first to preach the Advent message in Wisconsin in the spring of 1851.<sup>7</sup>

In June, 1853, Case and Russell who had been persuaded that the visions of Mrs. White were a spiritual gift attended a meeting in Jackson, Michigan where they were rebuked following one of Mrs. White's visions. As a result of that experience, they began to oppose her visions.

In the fall of 1853 Case and Russell together with some other opponents to Mrs. White's visions began to publish the Messenger of Truth in Jackson, Michigan. No known copies of the Messenger are in existence today. However, because of some of the material published in rebuttal to the Messenger by the Whites in the Review and Herald between 1853 and 1855, a good idea of its position can be determined.<sup>8</sup>

The Messenger Party apparently stood strong on the use of the name, Church of God. It also provided strong opposition to Mrs. White's visions.

There is good reason to believe that because of the opposition of the Messenger Party on these two issues the Whites encountered widespread

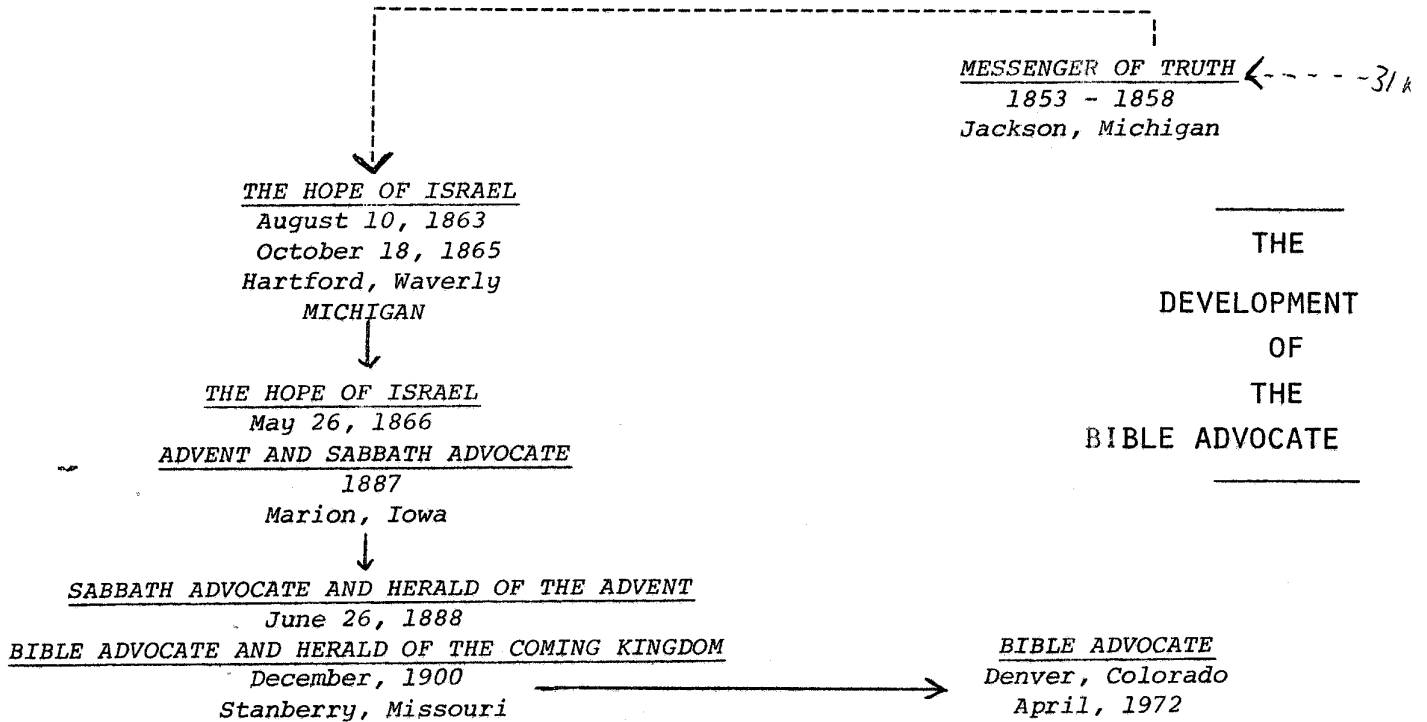
<sup>7</sup> A History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Richard C. Nickels and Raymond C. Cole, vol. 1, page 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

defection from their early efforts to organize a church. Opposition is known to have been expressed to the Whites in New York, Wisconsin and Michigan as a direct result of the Messenger Party's efforts

The Messenger Party is important to the history of the Church of God (Seventh Day) because it was a forerunner to it. It focused attention upon two major issues which were to bring the Church of God into being — the name Church of God versus Seventh Day Adventist and, more important, the validity of Mrs. White's visions.

The Messenger of Truth is especially important because it was the predecessor to The Hope of Israel, the first Church of God publication. The Messenger was published between 1853 and 1858. In August 1863, the same printing press used to print the Messenger was used to print The Hope of Israel.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> A History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Richard C. Nickels and Raymond C. Cole, Vol. 1, page 5.



Church of God in Michigan

Elder Gilbert Cranmer was born in Newfield, Timpkins County, New York, on January 18, 1814. He joined the Methodist Church at the age of 17 and shortly afterward began to preach for them. Later he joined the Christian Church. He became an itinerant preacher for them, finally moving to St. Joseph, Michigan.

Cranmer studied William Miller's Advent theory and was convinced it was correct in 1842. On October 22, 1844, he faced the great disappointment with thousands of others. Cranmer recognized that a mistake had been made by the Advent movement in setting a date, but he continued to have faith in the second advent of Jesus Christ. He taught the second Advent of Christ for the remainder of his life.

Cranmer became a Sabbatarian in 1845. He had read an article in The Midnight Cry, a Millerite publication in 1843 and became completely convinced of its observance after hearing Joseph Bates teach it. Shortly afterwards, Cranmer became a Sabbath Advent preacher.

Cranmer was successful as a Sabbatarian Advent preacher in establishing several congregations in western Michigan. By 1858 the work Cranmer and his associates were conducting had grown to more than 12 congregations in western Michigan, some of which had 100 members.

Throughout this period Cranmer had no organization to associate with except the Whites. He worked with several who went with the Seventh Day Adventist church. Cranmer himself tried to associate with James and Ellen G. White. In January or February, 1858, Elder Cranmer

went to Battle Creek, Michigan to apply for a license to preach, from James White. He was refused because he would not accept the visions and doctrines of Mrs. White.

In the first issue of The Hope of Israel, August 10, 1863, Cranmer records his break with the Whites under the caption, "My Experience": "About ten years ago a Seventh Day Advent minister, by the name of Bates, came to our town and advocated the whole Law, the gifts of the Spirit, and many other glorious truths. The gifts belonging to the Church, I had believed in for over twenty years. Hence I felt to rejoice, supposing I had found the people I had been so long looking for. He told me that the gifts were realized among them, that they had the gift of prophecy and the gift of healing the sick. But as long as I was with them I never knew of any being healed. I have known them to try but they always failed. In this I was disappointed. I also found the spirit of prophecy, with them, was confined wholly to a woman. By this time I became suspicious that I had gotten on board the wrong ship. I then commenced to giving her visions a thorough investigation. I found they contradicted themselves, and that they contradicted the Bible. My doubts concerning the visions I made known to the brethren. At once they gave me the cold shoulder, and I was held at bay. Not knowing any people I could unite with, I remained with them for years, hoping they would get sick of the visions of E. G. White, and that we could yet walk together in unity of spirit. But instead of rejecting them, as I hoped they would, they only drew the reins the tighter. At last I made up my mind I would not belong to a church that was ruled by a woman any longer. From that time the Bible has been my creed, with Christ at the

head of the Church. I started alone, with my Bible in my hand. God has blessed my labors beyond my utmost expectations. We have some eight ministers and some hundreds of members in the State of Michigan. God has manifested His power among us in a wonderful manner . . . ."

In Gilbert Cranmer's own words from his autobiography: "Organization was now discussed and was finally effected in the year 1860." This is the same year the Whites met in a conference in Battle Creek, Michigan and adopted the name "Seventh Day Adventist" and covenanted together to form a church organization. Formal organization of the church occurred on May 21, 1863, as reported in the 1955 edition of the S.D.A. Yearbook.

In 1860, when Elder Cranmer's group organized, he was selected as its first president. By 1864, the Michigan churches had adopted the name, "Church of Christ."

#### The Hope of Israel

In 1863 conferences were held in Waverly and Bangor, Michigan. It was the decision of these conferences to publish a paper. The first issue of this paper was published on August 10, 1863, as The Hope of Israel. It began with a reported 40 subscribers. In little over a year, by November 10, 1864, the Hope was circulated to 18 states and western Canada.

Hope appeared to receive the support of many scattered Sabbatarians from Vermont to Missouri. In the east, some of its supporters referred to themselves as the "Church of the First Born"; in Michigan the term was "Church of Christ," while those in Wisconsin and Iowa preferred to be

called "Church of God."

Correspondence and an occasional exchange of delegates between some of the early local conferences appear to be the principal tie between these groups until 1884.

The editorial policy of The Hope of Israel was set forth in the June 15, 1864 issue. It was to "be open for communication from all candid enquirers." This policy permitted the magazine to be open to divergent views. Since each church was independent and did not seek to develop a common doctrine with its scattered counterpart, real unity was lacking within these early churches and conferences. Their disunity probably contributed to the ultimate demise of The Hope of Israel in Michigan. The last issue published in Waverly, Michigan, was October 18, 1865. Lack of financial support forced Hope to cease publication.

While the publication of The Hope of Israel ceased in Michigan, the paper was not dead. The Hope entered in a new era when on May 26, 1866, it was revived and issued on a semi-monthly basis from Marion, Iowa. The Christian Publishing Association, headed by Henry E. Carver, bought the printing press, type and fixtures and transported them from Michigan to Iowa.

The same printing press which had first published the Messenger of Truth and later The Hope of Israel in Michigan had now found its way into Iowa to another pioneer branch of the Church of God (Seventh Day).

The Iowa church had been mentioned frequently by the Hope while it was being published in Michigan. Samuel Everett, the editor of the Hope in 1865, was from Iowa. A close relationship had developed between the two churches.

The Marion, Iowa Church

The Marion Church was established in 1860, the same year the church was organized in Michigan by Elder Cranmer,

In the early part of 1860 a Sabbatarian preacher, Merritt E. Cornell, appeared in Marion, Iowa. It is not known who sent him but he began to preach the second coming of Jesus, the unconscious state of the dead and the observance of the Sabbath. His preaching had a profound effect upon the members of several of the town's churches. He soon organized a church of fifty members composed of former members of other congregations throughout Marion.

A covenant dated June 10, 1860, under which the Marion church organized, states: "We, the undersigned, do hereby express our wish to be associated together in Christian fellowship as the Church of Jesus Christ, at Marion, whose covenant obligation is briefly expressed in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, keeping the Bible alone, as our rule of faith and practice." <sup>10</sup>

Dissension developed in less than two years within the Marion Church when Cornell began to uphold the visions of Mrs. White as equal to the Bible and binding forever. <sup>11</sup> About half of the Church left with Cornell while the other half remained true to their covenant.

Following this experience in Marion, other churches were organized in Iowa, which began to associate with the Marion congregation. A church

<sup>10</sup> A History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Richard C. Nickels and Raymond C. Cole, Vol. 1, page 68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

with 100 members was organized at Vinton. There were congregations founded at La Porte City and Lisbon as well. These congregations were all tested in the same manner as the Marion Church, over the visions of Mrs. White. Those who remained faithful sought the fellowship of other tried and true believers.

While there were several local congregations organized in Iowa by mid-year 1860, the first conference was not organized until November 5, 1862, in Marion, Iowa.

Until 1865, the Marion Church called itself the "Church of Jesus Christ." While The Hope of Israel was still being published in Michigan, the paper carried a discussion on the name of the church. This discussion resulted in the Marion Church changing its name from "Church of Jesus Christ" to "Church of God."

Conferences were held frequently by the Iowa churches. By 1869, the Iowa Conference was named the "General Conference of the Church of God." But it only served the Iowa Churches of God.

#### Missouri Growth

In September, 1868, Elder B. F. Snook, a prominent Iowa preacher, journeyed to Davies County, Missouri, to the home of William Rodgers. They held evangelistic meetings in six locations in that part of the state of Missouri. Twelve converts were added to the church. Among those who are mentioned as faithful workers in Missouri were the Morrisons, Longs and Rodgers. They are reported to have been Sabbatarians for years.

By 1871, reports began to appear in The Hope of Israel from A. C. Long. He was doing evangelistic work in Missouri and Kansas. In 1872 he reported holding meetings in Worth and Harrison Counties near Stanberry, Missouri.

On August 2, 1874, the first conference was organized in Missouri. It was known as the "Sabbatarian Adventist Conference of Missouri." The second conference was held in Harrison County, Missouri on August 13, 1875. In this meeting the Conference adopted the name "Church of God."

#### Advent and Sabbath Advocate and Hope of Israel

At the third annual meeting of the Church of God, General Conference, Iowa (1871), the name of The Hope of Israel was changed to Advent and Sabbath Advocate and Hope of Israel. In March, 1874 the term "Hope of Israel" was dropped altogether. The name Advent and Sabbath Advocate was used for the paper until 1888.

Although the Advent and Sabbath Advocate was published in Marion, Iowa until 1887, the greatest amount of work being done by the Church of God shifted to Missouri and not Iowa. Missouri was fast becoming the center of the church's activity.

#### General Conference Organized

Through a series of conferences, the General Conference was organized in 1884.

In March, 1884 there was a ministerial conference held at Stanberry, Missouri. This meeting resulted in the decision that the Church of God in Missouri, would have unity in doctrine and practices. Later in the August camp meeting which was held in Albany, 13 miles from Stanberry,

the members of the church were urged to send delegates from each congregation to conference meetings.

In September, 1884, the Iowa Conference adopted a Constitution and Bylaws. This meeting was attended by members from Iowa and delegates who were returning to Michigan from the Missouri meeting.

Next the annual conference in Michigan met in October at Irvington, Van Buren County. In this meeting the Michigan Church voted to accept the name "Church of God." Thus, for the first time, every local conference had accepted the name "Church of God." This signified the desire to effect a more unified effort on the part of the church.

In view of these several meetings in Missouri, Iowa and Michigan, the subject of a more unified body was discussed. During the Michigan conference on October 5, 1884 it was decided to organize a General Conference made up of the state conferences of Michigan, Iowa and Missouri.

The first officers of the General Conference were:

A. C. Long, Iowa	President
A. F. Dugger, Nebraska	Vice-President
Jacob Brinkerhoff, Iowa	Secretary
I. N. Kramer, Iowa	Treasurer

Committeemen:

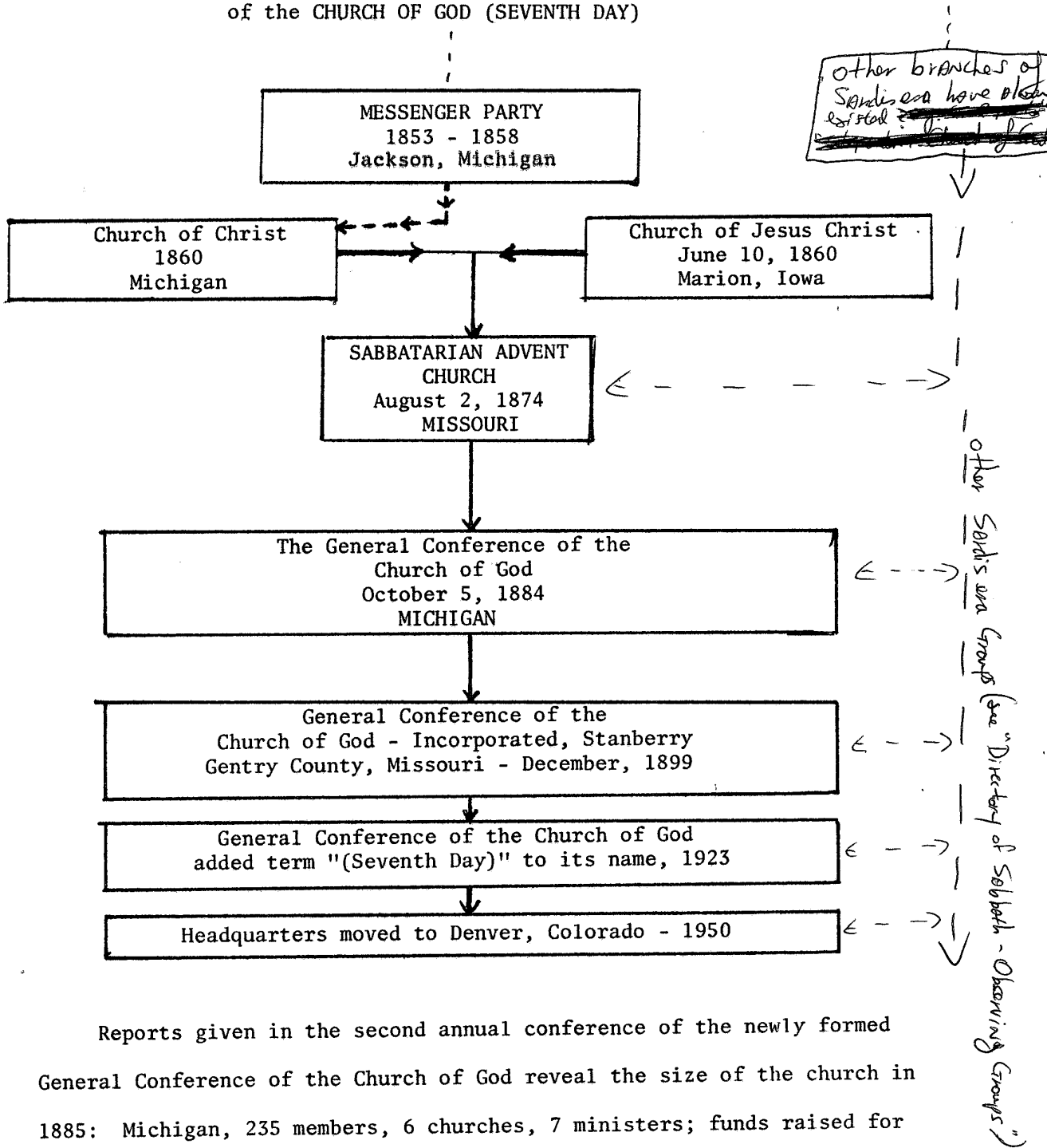
A. C. Long, Iowa (President)  
W. C. Long, Missouri  
John Branch, Michigan

As organized in 1884, the General Conference of the Church of God was only a loose confederation. Individual congregations and members had great liberty about many points of belief.

*(See diagram on next page.)*



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION  
of the CHURCH OF GOD (SEVENTH DAY)



Reports given in the second annual conference of the newly formed General Conference of the Church of God reveal the size of the church in 1885: Michigan, 235 members, 6 churches, 7 ministers; funds raised for the state and General Conferences, \$267.50; Missouri, 425 members,

11 churches, 12 Sabbath schools, Conference funds, \$476; Iowa, 100 members, 3 churches, 4 Sabbath schools, Conference funds, \$234; Nebraska and Kansas, 60 members, 3 churches, 2 Sabbath schools, Conference funds, \$88.

The General Conference in 1885 had a reported membership of 820 in 23 churches and 18 Sabbath schools. Total funds reported were \$1,065.50.

The November 15, 1887 issue of the Advent and Sabbath Advocate was the first issue published by the General Conference of the Church of God. When The Hope of Israel was first moved to Marion, Iowa, it was published by the Christian Publishing Association. It was first published in Iowa in 1866. In October, 1873, the successor to the Hope, The Advent and Sabbath Advocate, suspended publication. It was not resumed until March, 1874. The Christian Publishing Association had dissolved and Jacob Brinkerhoff, a prominent church leader in Iowa, sold his home in order to purchase the printing press and all its accessories. He published the Advocate until the Conference assumed its responsibility in late 1887.

#### The Move to Missouri

The first General Conference meeting to be held in Stanberry, Missouri was the fourth annual conference held in October, 1887. During this meeting, Jacob Brinkerhoff resigned as editor of the Advocate. A. C. Long, Marion, Iowa, assumed the editorship and ownership of the Advocate beginning with the November 15 issue. The General Conference agreed to provide Long with financial support for a year when he was appointed editor. He bought the equipment from Brinkerhoff and continued to produce the paper in Marion, Iowa.

A. C. Long was in bad health. He was unable to act as editor for the year. W. C. Long, who was a brother to A. C. Long and who lived in Stanberry, Missouri, bought the equipment from his brother and moved it to that city. Thus, W. C. Long moved the Advocate to Stanberry, Missouri, and published the first issue there on June 26, 1888. Since Stanberry had become the center of the growing work in Missouri, and since W. C. Long resided there, it became the headquarters for the General Conference which by now was beginning to assume responsibility for the publication of the Advocate.

When W. C. Long moved the Advent and Sabbath Advocate to Stanberry, the name was changed to Sabbath Advocate and Herald of the Advent. The paper continued to be published under that name until December, 1900. At that time the name, Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom, was chosen for the paper. It was published under this lengthy title until 1972 when the printing plant of the church was moved from Stanberry, Missouri to Denver, Colorado. The latter portion of the name was dropped to result in the term Bible Advocate. In 1977, the Bible Advocate is in its 115th year of publication, going back to August 10, 1863 when its predecessor, The Hope of Israel, was first issued.

#### The General Conference of the Church of God

In 1899, the General Conference of the Church of God held its 16th annual meeting in Stanberry, Missouri. In this meeting the conference acted upon a proposal which had been pending from previous conferences to incorporate in the State of Missouri. Incorporation was thus effected in Gentry County, Missouri in December, 1899.

From this time until 1914 several changes occurred in the Conference. The work of the Conference which had originally been represented in Michigan, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska, had by 1914 been extended into California, Oregon, Washington, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kansas, North and South Dakota.

It was also in this period that many of the early pioneer ministers and founders of the church were taken by death. In 1900, A. C. Long, a leading Church of God minister from the 1870's, died at his home in Browndale, Missouri. Gilbert Cranmer, at the age of almost 90 years, died in 1903. A. F. Dugger, a pioneer in the work in Nebraska, died in 1910. Jacob Brinkerhoff, in his seventies, wrote his last editorial for the Advocate on May 12, 1914. He was suffering a fatal illness which at the age of 75 took his life in 1916.

As those older ministers began to pass on, new leadership was to develop in the church.

Elder A. F. Dugger had two sons. Both of his sons became ministers in the church. Alex F. Dugger, who in 1977 is 93 years old, resides in Denver, Colorado.

The late Andrew N. Dugger followed in the footsteps of his father. In 1914, he became both editor of the Bible Advocate and president of the General Conference. He had begun his ministry in 1906.

From the time that Dugger assumed leadership in 1914 until 1932, he exerted much influence upon the church. In 1923 the General Conference adopted its current name — The General Conference of the Church of God (*Seventh Day*).

During his tenure the church experienced more growth than it had previously. During this time the church became missionary minded. In the September 22, 1925 issue of the Advocate some 79 congregations are listed. These were scattered over 17 states.

As the number of congregations and members grew, the General Conference began to adopt new policies. From the beginning, the church's paper had been regarded a forum in which different points of view were published. The General Conference itself had begun as a loosely knit confederation of state conferences in which congregations and members exercised a great deal of doctrinal freedom. This led to considerable doctrinal discord. In the 1920's, the General Conference began to take steps to remedy the problems which these earlier conditions had created in doctrinal disunity.

An example of the growing concern which the membership of the Conference expressed over the disunity of the church is exemplified in its 1927 meeting. In this meeting at Rich Hill, Missouri, the conference amended its bylaws stating: "no member of the conference shall teach any doctrine in public which is not believed by the conference body, without clearly stating that such belief has not been endorsed by the Church of God, but that it is his own individual opinion."

Pentecostalism had become a problem in some quarters of the conference so the 1927 session passed a resolution stating its position on the subject: "Resolved that the Church of God believes and teaches the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of a life that bears the fruit of the Holy Spirit, but denies that speaking in tongues is 'the evidence.' " <sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Kiesz, pages 111, 112.

Further evidence that the membership of the conference wanted more doctrinal unity was demonstrated at the 1929 conference held in Stanberry. In this session the conference instructed its ministers to teach against eating unclean meats and use of tobacco.

This type of action, coupled with the tightening of the financial policies of the conference which prevented individual ministers from receiving tithe directly from the membership, began to gender contention and strife within the ranks of leadership. Some ministers began to publish their opposing views in their own bulletins.

Key doctrinal issues in the impending trouble within the conference were: the time of the New Birth, time for observing the Lord's Supper, the Clean and Unclean meats, the use of tobacco, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Third Angel's Message.

For many years Dugger, who by 1931 was editor of the Bible Advocate but not president of the Conference, had wanted to go to Jerusalem, Israel. He had envisioned the establishment of Jerusalem as the world headquarters of the Church of God. Thus on October 3, 1931, Dugger gave his farewell address to the Stanberry Church and left with his family for Palestine. Elder John Kiesz moved to Stanberry from South Dakota to become assistant editor of the Advocate.

While Dugger was in Israel, he sent many articles and notes of experience on his travels back to be published in the Advocate. He arrived back in the United States in October, 1932.

#### The Year 1933

By 1933 about half of the membership in the Church of God (Seventh Day) were in favor of the idea that there should be greater doctrinal

unity. On the other hand, a great many felt that the conference, in striving for more unity, was denying its membership freedom of expression and right of personal conviction. This had been a matter of contention for nearly a decade. It came to a head in the conference of 1933 held in August in Stanberry, Missouri.

In the election for officers of the conference a tie vote was cast for the office of president. Candidates for this office were A. N. Dugger and A. S. Christenson. The presiding officer broke the tie by casting his vote for Christenson.

The results of the 1933 conference sorely disappointed Dugger.

Dugger claimed that after he returned from Palestine several of his acquaintances in the conference suggested that the church should restore the "Scriptural organization of the twelve to look after the spritual affairs of the church, and seven to take charge of the financial business and also the seventy to go forth two by two in giving the warning message of the hour."<sup>13</sup> He suggested that several members of the conference had discussed the need for "Bible organization" unknown to the conference and had thought to bring the matter up in the August, 1933, conference. In the context of the disappointment of the 1933 conference and the secret discussion of the need of the restoration of "Scriptural organization," the seeds of separation were sown.

In his own words, Dugger wrote, "The Lord Jesus prophesied in Revelation 19: 7, 8, concerning His church in the latter times . . . . From this Scripture it was understood by many leading brethren

<sup>13</sup> Dugger and Dodd, page 299.

that the church was not ready, but she should 'make herself ready' . . . . Hence they had set their hearts to prayer, and were consequently led in one accord to stand for a clean church without worldly spot or wrinkle; also to form the Scriptural organization, so when Jesus came to receive his bride he would find her prepared and ready, having cast to one side the organization patterned after the civil organizations of this world, and with world headquarters moved to the place he himself had chosen. Thus the reorganization became more and more impressed upon the church, and its needs more apparent. A set time and place therefore were chosen to perform this work. It was set for November 4, 1933, and the place chosen was Salem, West Virginia, U.S.A." <sup>14</sup>

#### The Division

Several weeks prior to November 4, a letter was sent to about 25 countries inviting persons known to A. N. Dugger to pray that God would lead His church as in the early times. In addition, he reports that about ten thousand letters were sent to people in the United States.

On Friday, November 3, 1933, Dugger reports, brothers, sisters and ministers gathered in Salem, West Virginia, from as far as 1000 miles west, 900 miles northeast and 600 miles south. That night, Friday night, was spent in an all-night meeting in prayer and fasting. On Sabbath, November 4, a box was prepared and 140 names were written on slips of paper and placed in the box. The selection of the twelve and seventy was to be made by lot — that is, by drawing the slips with the names on them from the box.

<sup>14</sup> *Dugger and Dodd, page 300.*



At a few minutes past 11:00 A.M. eastern standard time, following a brief silent prayer, the names of the twelve were drawn from the box, one at a time, followed by the names of the seventy. Lastly the congregation selected those who were to act as the seven. A prayer meeting followed which lasted until late Sabbath afternoon.

The Church of God (Seventh Day) was divided into two separate organizations on November 4, 1933. The one, the original body at Stanberry, Missouri; the second, with world headquarters to be at Jerusalem, Palestine, and sub-headquarters in Salem, West Virginia for the United States. This second body had separated from the original church on the pretext of restoring "Scriptural organization."

On November 6, 1933, the newly organized Salem church issued a Bible Advocate which carried the same volume number as the original one still being published in Stanberry. Subsequent issues dropped the Stanberry volume number because of copyright laws.

Two Churches of God existed from 1933 to 1949. One at Stanberry, the other at Salem.

#### The Original Conference at Stanberry

The General Conference at Stanberry never had the twelve, seventy and seven organization. It had never attached Biblical significance to the pattern of its organization as did Salem. The Stanberry Church had a conference board of seven and sometimes eight members.

In 1936, three years after the separation, Stanberry reported that it had nine organized state conferences.

Principal personalities in the Stanberry church after the separation were: Roy Dailey, editor and president of the conference, Burt Marrs, editor and president of the conference; S. J. Kauer, editor; Roy Davison, president and editor; Carl W. Carver, president; Ennis Hawkins, evangelist; L. I. Rodgers, evangelist; A. S. Christenson, editor and president.

The division in the church damaged its influence and membership. Church leaders on both sides began to attack each other in print and in the field in person. This caused members to become discouraged. It repelled many who might have been interested in associating with the church. Many members gave up the faith altogether during this period. Neither the Stanberry nor the Salem churches grew significantly during the period of their separation.

#### The Merger

From 1933 until the early 40's the composition of the leadership of the churches had gradually changed. Younger men were beginning to assume leadership. They had not been a part of the earlier contention between the two churches. The issues on doctrines began to disappear to a great extent. This development led to an unsuccessful attempt to achieve unity in 1942. A subsequent and more successful attempt occurred in 1947. In the summer of 1947 each conference appointed a three-man "unity committee." These committees met together for the first time on November 7, 1947. The members of the committees were:

#### Salem

E. A. Straub  
K. H. Freeman  
W. W. McMicken

#### Stanberry

S. J. Kauer  
L. I. Rodgers  
Charles Adams

The moderator for the committees was A. E. Lidell, a neutral who was respected by both Salem and Stanberry.

The major issues on which the committees had to work out differences were church government and doctrinal beliefs.

Church government: Stanberry had only an executive board of seven in its conference. Salem, on the other hand, had the 12, 70, 7 form of government which it taught to be the "Scriptural organization." In the merger, Stanberry compromised and accepted Salem's form of organization. Several changes were made in the assignments of the 12, 70, and 7.

Doctrine: Stanberry had no article of belief in reality. The Stanberry conference held many of the same positions on doctrine as Salem, but they were not published in the same form. Salem had adopted 40 doctrinal points of faith. Again Stanberry yielded to Salem's position and accepted a revised form of Salem's articles of belief. The merger church published 38 articles of belief.

After the joint committees had worked out the details of a plan for a merger of Salem and Stanberry, a joint ministerial council was held on February 12-17, 1948, in Fairview, Oklahoma. The council of sixty one ministers representing both churches unanimously endorsed the report of the committees. They recommended that Salem and Stanberry conferences adopt the plan for unity in their respective 1949 conference sessions.

Salem and Stanberry held their 1949 conference sessions in Stanberry, Missouri on August 12 - 21, 1949. The conferences held joint worship services together. They held their business meetings separately. After the merger plan was introduced to each conference, they met to consider the adoption of the merger plan in their respective meetings.

Salem voted 75 in favor of the plan, one voted against, one abstained from voting.

Stanberry voted 121 in favor of the plan while 15 voted against it.

Following the adoption of the plan for the merger by both conferences, the original articles of incorporation of 1899 were amended in Missouri to reflect the fact that the united church was an extension of the work that had been started in the 1850's and 60's in Michigan and Iowa, and later incorporated in Missouri in 1899.

One of the conditions of the merger was that neither Salem, West Virginia nor Stanberry, Missouri was to serve as the location of the headquarters of the conference. Early in 1950, the headquarters was moved to Denver, Colorado. The basement of the local Denver Church first housed the conference offices. Later in 1953, a residence was purchased at 1510 Cook Street and converted into the offices of the conference. In 1972, a new building was constructed north of the city of Denver on Interstate 25 highway. It now houses the offices and printing plant of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day).

#### Salem after the Merger

The greatest majority of the membership of the Salem and Stanberry conferences approved of and supported the merger of 1949. However, a few who had been associated with Salem attempted to destroy the merger by starting a movement called "Back to Salem." Principal personalities in this effort were: A. N. Dugger, F. L. Summers, M. L. Bartholomew and A. C. Olson,

These men made extensive trips across the United States in 1950 in an effort to win support for a withdrawal of the Salem churches from the merger. They were unsuccessful in causing a withdrawal but they did cause a great deal of confusion. They themselves have since divided. F. L. Summers remained in Salem, He is now deceased. A. N. Dugger went to Jerusalem, Israel and established his own church. He is deceased. M. L. Bartholomew remained with Salem and F. L. Summers for a time. Later he separated from Salem and has his own movement. He lives in Cleveland, Ohio. A. C. Olson left Salem and helped to establish a church in Caldwell, Idaho. He died some years ago.

Bible Church of God — Seventh Day

Just as there was a group from Salem who withdrew from the merger, a similar group of the Stanberry conference also refused to remain with the united church.

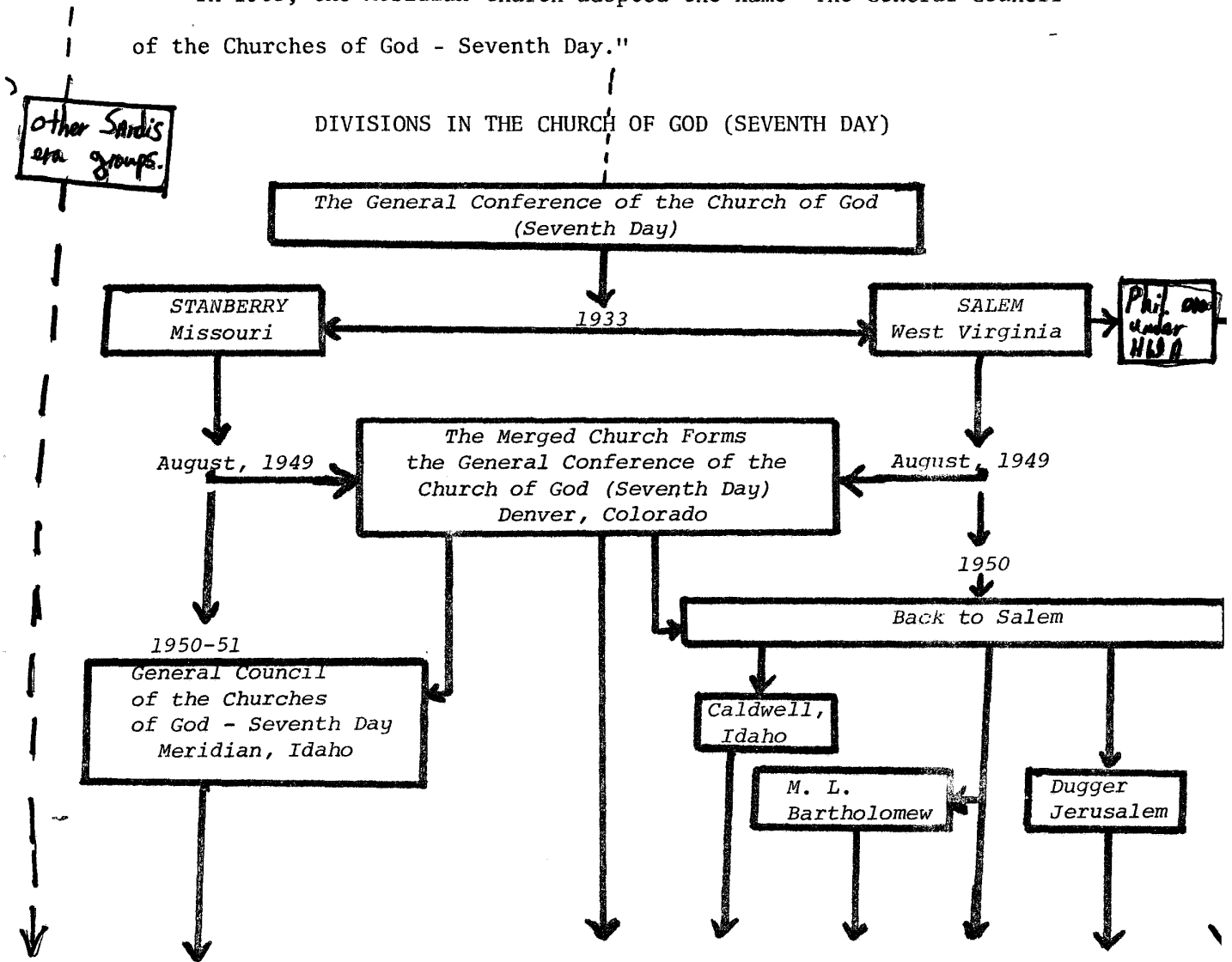
This group called themselves the "Bible Church of God — Seventh Day." They established their headquarters in Meridian, Idaho. This movement was not as well organized as the "Back to Salem" movement. It gained momentum in 1950 - 51.

Principal personalities in the Meridian church were: Frank M. Walker, R. A. Barnes, Mark Burnham, A. H. Stith, Luvelt Palmer, and Arthur Estep.

The major issues in this withdrawal were organization and the clean, unclean meats question. In merging, Stanberry had adopted most of Salem's plan of organization and doctrinal statements. The merger organization is a modified congregational form of organization. The Meridian Church felt this was too restrictive since it believed in local congregational

autonomy. The merger organization took a stand against the use of unclean meats for food. The Meridian Church opposes this position. It stands for "no" position on this issue to permit each person to decide for himself whether or not to use the unclean for food.

In 1963, the Meridian church adopted the name "The General Council of the Churches of God - Seventh Day."



The General Conference of the  
Church of God (Seventh Day)

In 1977, the Church of God (Seventh Day) is an active, growing church, serving the United States and Canada. It has ~~sister~~ <sup>other Seventh Day</sup> churches in 15 countries around the world with an estimated membership of 25,000 persons.

In the United States and Canada there are 102 congregations consisting of a membership of approximately 6,000.

The General Conference publishes the Bible Advocate monthly with a total circulation of 13,000 magazines per issue.

The General Conference sponsors a boarding high school; a ministerial training center; a Sabbath school program; a women's organization; a youth organization; a national radio program heard over 28 stations daily and weekly; and a missionary program which assists workers in seven countries.

The General Conference has a roster of 96 ministers. These ministers constitute the membership of the North American Regional Ministerial Council which serves the church in the United States and Canada.

Craig White.