

Gilbert Cranmer

## Our Heritage Reveals Our Mission

by Victor Novak

The Church of God (Seventh Day) has a great heritage. Our pioneer men and women, dedicated to Almighty God and His Son, Jesus Christ, to the Holy Scriptures, and to the proclamation of Bible truth, have given us that heritage.

God has produced many spiritual giants, men who were anchored firmly in their faith and zeal for the truth such as William Miller, Joseph Bates, Gilbert Cranmer, H.E. Carver, Jacob Brinkerhoff, Erastus G. Branch, A.C. Long, A.F. Dugger, and many others. The pioneers of the faith labored without recognition or fanfare to lay the foundations of the church of God. Their example should humble us and challenge us to greater dedication and zeal in proclaiming present truth.

Most of our great pioneers were not trained for the ministry according to human standards, but rather studied themselves into the truth through concentrated Bible study with the help of God's Spirit, and learned how to be effective in the ministry by fearlessly proclaiming the truth to all who would listen. Many worked full time at jobs or farming to support their families, while working full time in the ministry; they hated nothing but sin and loved God with all their hearts. They asked no quarter from Satan and gave none. They traveled on foot, on

horseback, in wagons, and on trains in order to share the gospel of the kingdom and proclaim the Third Angel's Message; and they refused to quit the ministry even though their work seemed impossible. They were a tough breed of committed believers. Today, we stand upon the firm foundations they laid.

Toward the latter part of the eighteenth century, the churches in America were spiritually dead in religious formality and worldliness. Many Scriptural truths were all but lost, including the great truth that Christ would return to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Churches of that day tended to spiritualize away Christ's second advent, and were either teaching amillennialism (there would be no real Millennial Kingdom) or post-millennialism (Christians would bring in the Kingdom and Christ would return AFTER the millennium).

In the midst of this spiritual vacuum, God raised up a man to lead a great revival, a revival which would bear fruit in the restoration of Biblical Truth and lead to the present organization of the Church of God. That man, God's man of the hour, was William Miller. The motivation behind this spiritual revival was the rediscovery of the Biblical doctrine of the personal return of Jesus Christ to this earth and the establishment

of His Kingdom.

According to Dr. Lee E. Baker, in the tract, "History and Teachings of the Advent Christian Church": *The person through which the Spirit moved in this momentous revival was a self-educated man of keen intellect and oratorical powers, a patriotic and honored citizen of Hampton, New York, named William Miller. Giving up his earlier deism, he accepted the Bible as the Word of God, became a Christian, and subsequently a Baptist minister. Through a comparison of history with Biblical prediction, his faith in the prophecies concerning the second advent of Christ sent him forth on a crusade which resulted in the conversion of hundreds of infidels and skeptics and in turning thousands to a belief in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

As the advent (coming of Christ) teaching spread, many thousands accepted it and were forced out of their protestant denominations, which they recognized as Babylon. These advent believers, under the guidance of God's Spirit, gathered in groups, congregations and conferences to study the Scriptures in search of other neglected truths. Between 1831, when the "Great Second Advent Awakening," led by Miller began, and 1844, more than 5,000,000 copies of adventist papers, pamphlets and books were published. As these brethren went about

the task of communicating the truths they learned, the Lord continued to give them new light. The spread of the advent message caused many to leave their spiritually dead churches, and new congregations were formed. Some of these congregations had more light than others; yet all were growing in the truth and eager to spread the good news (gospel) of the soon coming Kingdom of God. By the late 1840's, many adventists had become Sabbatharians, and it is reported that by 1858 over 80 percent of advent believers embraced the truth of conditionalism (rejecting the false doctrine of immortality of the soul).

Soon the advent movement became divided between first-day adventists (believers who would accept so much new light from God, but no more), and Sabbatarian adventists (believers who continued to accept God's light and who restored the Sabbath truth). Among the Sabbath-keeping adventists there was, at first, no general organization or common name. They called themselves "Seventh-day people," "Sabbath-keeping Advent Believers," "Sabbath-keeping Adventists," "Advent Sabbathkeepers," "Seventh-day Brethren," "Sabbath-keeping Remnant of Adventists," and "The Church of God." Nor was there complete unity in doctrine and practice. The Sabbatarian wing of the Adventist movement was divided over the issue of the visions of Ellen G. White. Many accepted Mrs. White as a living prophetess, while others rejected her claim. As long as her visions were not a test of fellowship, nor required to be accepted as a source of authority, an uneasy unity remained among Sabbath-keeping adventists.

Gilbert Cranmer, a man who had participated in the early Millerite movement, accepted the Sabbath

truth in 1852 from Joseph Bates. In 1857, he met James and Ellen White and worked with them in Battle Creek, Michigan, until the visions forced a division among the Sabbatharians.

In 1860, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was formally organized, and Ellen White was officially accepted as its prophetess. Those who remained committed to accepting only the Bible declined to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and began to reorganize themselves. In 1860, the Bible-only, Sabbath-keeping adventists, under the leadership of Gilbert Cranmer organized the Church of Christ in Michigan. The same year, the Church of Jesus Christ was organized in Marion, Iowa. The Michigan church began to publish *The Hope of Israel* in 1863 as the voice of Bible-only Sabbath-Adventists. Through *The Hope of Israel*, many scattered Sabbatharians who had declined to join the newly organized Seventh-day Adventist Church, or who had joined but later rejected the visions of Mrs. White, were able to communicate with one another.

Soon state conferences were organized, and the generally accepted name for the church became the Church of God. In 1883, a General Conference was organized and the name Church of God became official. God continued to give the Church of God "meat in due season" and the brethren accepted this new light with joy. An example of this growth in truth is the Marion church. In 1870, they adopted foot washing and the Lord's Supper to be observed every three months, but by 1899, the Lord's Supper was being observed annually on the fourteenth of Nisan.

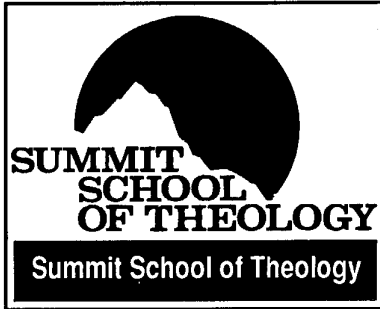
The Church of God, which emerged from the "Great Second Advent Awakening," continues to

seek God's truths, despite the obstacles Satan puts in our way. Our church did not come into being by accident, nor is it merely one of several thousand denominations. God has a plan for us—the Church of God. Yes, the church has suffered through many problems, and has struggled through periods of disintegration, division, and reorganization; but she has survived the furnace. The church is not necessarily synonymous with a certain organizational structure or leader, but is rather the remnant of God's people who keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Let us claim our God-given heritage; let us emulate the zeal and dedication of our forefathers; let us emphasize the special truths God has entrusted to us; and let us proclaim the Third Angel's Message throughout the land!

I have a dream. I dream of God's old-time gospel message being preached in dozens of evangelistic crusades and old-fashioned camp-meetings; of evangelists being sent out and God's people giving Bible studies to their friends and relatives. I dream of God's message ringing out from a hundred radio stations. I dream of our preachers boldly preaching against sin and upholding high standards. Am I old fashioned? Perhaps I am. I still believe that the Bible is the Word of God, that the law is for today, and Christ's imminent second coming is the message of the hour. Yes, comparing Bible prophecy with news events of today, I am convinced that His coming is near, even at the door. How I love that advent message; how I love that old-time religion; how I love the Church of God!

Friend, do you share my love? Do you share my dreams? Together, with the help of God, we can make our dreams a reality.



## Sacrifices Made to Attend Summit

Most of the readers of the *HFM* have heard of more than one fund raising campaign for Summit School of Theology and its students. Many have responded to at least one of Summit's programs, but do you really know the people whom these contributions are being used to help; the sacrifices, the changes and adjustments the students AND their families are called upon to make?

Summit's students come from far and wide: from California, Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri, from as far away as Alberta, Canada. All have made tremendous sacrifices to answer God's calling. To illustrate this point allow me to highlight a couple of families who made changes in their lives so they could attend Summit.

Oscar García is finishing his first year at SST. When he decided to come to Summit, Oscar was living in Hawthorne, California, with his wife, Ofelia, and their two daughters and two sons. Oscar worked as a welding supervisor, as well as being active in the Hawthorne church and in the Hispanic community.

Ofelia also held a position of respect and trust in the job she held for seven years. She now works in Denver as it is necessary for her

family's survival and for her husband to attend SST.

Oscar's two daughters, Miriam and Rachel, were called upon to forego one lifestyle and develop a new one. The eldest daughter, Miriam, had attended one school for the past four years. Now she is in a new school, one quite different from the school system of southern California. We in the General Conference building have had the opportunity to get to know Oscar's younger daughter during the past months—since Ofelia began working, Rachel comes to school with Daddy.

Another example of what is given up by students who come to Summit can be found in the Paul Vander Horst family. Prior to making the move, Paul worked as a construction electrician in the rural community of Erie, Michigan. He and his family lived in a two-story house situated on two acres of land. Paul earned a good living and had excellent benefits through the union, so his family was well provided for. His wife, Jeanne, was able to devote her time toward

nurturing a happy and healthy home and family life, in addition to being involved in the church. Still, Paul and his family chose to forfeit all of this so that he could come to Summit and study for the pastoral ministry.

After selling their house and moving to an apartment near SST, the family began to re-establish themselves in this neck of the woods. They found Denver to be different from the small town they had left. All three of Paul's children, Cathy, Laura, and Michael started school three weeks late in Denver, but are adjusting to a larger school and making new friends.

Jeanne is experiencing a complete remodeling of her life following the move to Denver. For the first time since their marriage it has become necessary for Jeanne to find employment. So far, Jeanne has been able to work part-time for Summit and in the General Conference offices while she looks for full-time work. She has integrated herself into the life of the Denver church through volunteer work



*Summit students often minister to isolated church members in the district. Oscar García and his family recently visited Elder and Sister John Kiesz, who reside in Canon City, Colorado.*