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# The Origins of the Church of God's Oldest Publication — *The Bible Advocate*

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Some nineteenth-century Sabbatarian adventists did not believe Ellen G. White to be a prophet of God. Today we trace the corporate ancestry of the Worldwide Church of God through these scattered people. These Sabbath keepers published a newspaper titled *The Hope of Israel*. We thought you may find the following historical information interesting.

### William Miller and *Midnight Cry*

The Church's publishing work was preceded by the great "Advent" movement of William Miller (1782-1849). The Advent movement had begun in 1831, the year Sunday-observing Miller started preaching the second coming (Advent) of Jesus Christ to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

Miller's preaching generated a remarkable religious interest throughout the United States, and led to the formation of several denominations including what would later be called the Church of God (Seventh Day). Those who belonged to Miller's movement were generally called *adventists*.<sup>1</sup> To support his campaign work, Miller began publishing a periodical called *Midnight Cry* in the autumn of 1842. It was an immediate success.

A misunderstanding of Daniel 8:13-14 led Miller to predict that Jesus Christ would return in 1844. Following the "Great Disappointment" of that year, Miller admitted his error, but exhorted the brethren to remain watchful and not let the day come unawares.

### Shut Door Doctrine

By 1846, a few adventists had accepted the seventh-day Sabbath primarily through the influence of Rachel Oakes Preston, a Seventh Day Baptist. These converts in turn proclaimed the Sabbath truth to others. Gradually their numbers increased.

Many adventists, unlike William Miller, refused to admit that they had been wrong about 1844. They believed they had simply misunderstood the date's significance. But where had they gone wrong?

Hiram Edson believed God revealed to him the answer. In setting dates for Christ's return, adventists

had placed great emphasis on the Day of Atonement. Edson believed that the Levitical ceremony for that day gave the answer adventists sought.

Edson believed that Christ had not intended to return to Earth in 1844. Instead he entered the heavenly Holy of Holies to cleanse it of sins — sins that had been forgiven but not blotted out. Now a great investigative judgment of the saints had begun.

This concept became united with the belief that from the date of the Great Disappointment, God had shut the door of salvation to nonbelievers in the Advent message. Strict Shut Door believers contended that from that day forward no one else could be converted.

These beliefs were readily accepted by James White and his wife Ellen, who displayed prophetic gifts. Not long thereafter, Joseph Bates introduced the Whites to the Sabbath. After becoming Sabbatarians, Ellen White's prophetic claims initially failed to receive widespread acceptance among Sabbatarians. However, her influence gradually grew until her supporters became the majority party among the Sabbatarian Adventists.

One of Ellen White's earliest visions appeared to uphold the Shut Door doctrine, though some dispute this conclusion. Years later, when it became apparent that others were being converted, she denied that her visions ever supported a *strict* Shut Door position. Unconvinced, her Sabbatarian opponents argued that time had proven her Shut Door vision false and that she therefore could not be a prophet of God.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, not long after the Great Disappointment, the conditions for division among Sabbatarian Adventists were laid. Those who accepted the Shut Door doctrine and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary idea tended to support Ellen White as God's messenger. Those who rejected the Shut Door and the Cleansing ideas inevitably came to reject her as a prophet. Her visions, they felt, contradicted the plain teachings of the Bible.

To promote their ideas, in 1850 the Whites began publishing a periodical called *Review and Herald*. The printing press became a powerful tool in spreading

their understanding of the gospel. Not long after that, the Whites' Sabbatarian opponents responded with a publication of their own.

#### Case and Russell publish *Messenger of Truth*

In the autumn of 1853, "anti-White" Sabbatarian adventists led by Hiram S. Case and C.P. Russell began publishing *Messenger of Truth* at Jackson, Michigan, to counter the teachings being spread by the Whites' *Review and Herald*. *Messenger of Truth* was published for five years, until 1858. The Whites claimed it contained "many falsehoods."

In October 1860, adventists who accepted Mrs. White's visions met at Battle Creek, Michigan, and adopted the name Seventh-day Adventist for their General Conference. They rejected the name *Church of God* as being inactive and a mark of fanaticism. By the end of 1863 they completed the legal organization needed to form a new denomination.

#### Gilbert Cranmer publishes *The Hope of Israel*

Also in 1860, a conference of several anti-White congregations was organized in Michigan, with Gilbert Cranmer (1814-1903) as president. Cranmer had established many of the participating congregations.

On Monday, August 10, 1863, the "Cranmerites" (as the Whites called them) began publishing a periodical called *The Hope of Israel* at Hartford, Michigan. (See page 17 for a photocopy of the front page of the first issue). The first few issues were probably published in Cranmer's home. The periodical took its name from the words of the apostle Paul in Acts 28:20: "For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

Some consider *The Hope of Israel* to be the successor to *Messenger of Truth*, the earlier "anti-White" paper. It has been claimed that *The Hope* was printed on the same press that had been used to print *Messenger of Truth*. While some of those associated with the "Messenger Party" were mentioned in early issues of *The Hope*, to date there has been no documentation proving one evolved into the other, or that anyone associated with the earlier paper was responsible for beginning *The Hope*. Robert Coulter, a Church of God minister and historian, reports that *The Hope* was printed on a new Adams Cottage printing press

manufactured in Chicago. This press was purchased expressly for publishing *The Hope* and was never used by *Messenger of Truth*.<sup>3</sup>

*The Hope* began with fewer than 40 subscribers and was issued every other week. The acting editor for the first two issues of *The Hope* was Enos Easton. After that, H.S. Dille was editor. (Dille would later be disfellowshipped and became a Mormon.) Gilbert Cranmer was a "corresponding editor." He would later become editor for a time.

*The Hope* was supported by Sabbath-keeping congregations in many states. It was conceived as an organ through which scattered Sabbath-keeping brethren could communicate with each other, and as a vehicle for disseminating biblical truth. At first, it was open to the sincere views of all, even to opinions the editors could not

**Early issues of *The Hope of Israel* name brethren imprisoned for refusing to fight in the United States Civil War.**

endorse.

In that first issue, under the title "My Experience," Cranmer recorded some of the details of his break with the Whites. He explained why he could not accept Mrs. White's visions: "I found they [the visions] contradict themselves, and that they also contradict the Bible." Cranmer declared that he "would not belong to a church that was ruled by a woman."

In early issues of *The Hope*, Cranmer and other church leaders argued that they had not rebelled against Ellen G. White (as Seventh-day Adventists had accused), for though they had cooperated, and sometimes worked with her disciples, they had never specifically endorsed her.

#### Doctrinal orientation of *The Hope of Israel*

Also in the inaugural issue, Enos Easton wrote, "We shall stand firmly by what the Bible reveals to be truth, turning neither to the right nor the left." Easton spelled out the doctrinal orientation of the publication. Some "founding principles" he enumerated were that death is a total extinction of being; that sin is the transgression of the law, and that we cannot know sin but by the law; that man, having sinned and having had the sentence of death passed on him, can have no hope of eternal life except through Christ, by a resurrection of the dead; that God is about to set up his kingdom on the earth; that Christ as King will sit on the throne of his father David and that the 12 apostles will sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel; that the reward of the righteous, as well as of the

*(continued on page 18)*

# THE HOPE OF ISRAEL.

ARTFORD, VAN BUREN Co. Mich., Monday, August 10th. 1863.

No. 1.

the World's Crisis.  
These.

Billows rise and fall,  
; shafts our hearts befall;  
; troubled sea,  
; Rock of Azoa, safe in Thee.

able all my sorrow to assuage,

From most distant the blotted shades from life's dark and cheer-  
-quered path.

Who I see through fully wandering, thy blest precepts only I see.  
; leading me in wisdom's pathway, Rock of Azoa, safe in Thee.

Of our courage fails, and trembling we exult in mazes dark,  
; And forget that there is succor for the weak in mercy's ark.

But when, Father, we're sinking in the surge of the sea,  
; Take us by the hand and lead us, Rock of Azoa, safe in Thee.

Earth's decaying; those graves' tombstones fill the vale and mourn-  
-ing hear,

With no rest, but when they perish, gone like breakers on the shore;  
; Beauty fades and riches perish, all is fading that I see,—

Fix me on a sure foundation, Rock of Azoa, safe in Thee.

Each day perils thicken round me, but pollutes no working's heart,  
; All the moral air is murky, all of earth is leary and dark;

But beyond earth's deep pollution realms of purity I see,—  
; May we find rest forever, Rock of Azoa, safe in Thee.

## Letter from Iowa

Ed. H. S. DILL.

Dear Brother:—Your letter to Bro. V. M. Gray, July 3d, is received, and he hands it to me to write you a reply, he intending to write you next week.

The account you give of the churches of God in Michigan, looking for the appearing of the Lord; is to us very grateful information. We have often felt like Elijah when he made complaint against Israel; saying, "I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." We hope it may prove now as then, that the Lord hath reserved unto himself seven thousand in Israel; names that have not bowed the knee into Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed his image.

It is very encouraging to us to find, that unknown to each other, there are now found in bands of brethren and sisters, and many individuals related from each other, in several different States, who have believed the same things, taken the same position, set out to seek the same objects, by the same means; and so far as now appears filled with the same spirit, and having the same hope of inheriting the Kingdom of God; looking for it as nigh at hand. Surely we shall see the hand of the Lord in this matter. He who saw His servant, the prophet, under the juniper tree, and had compassion upon him in his affliction of spirit, hath looked upon His afflicted people of these last days, and provided consolation for them in the wilderness. These things give us hope that he is about to gather the "Many to be purified, and made white and tried," (as spoken of, Daniel 12: 10.) into clear bonds.

The churches of God in Wisconsin, looking for the appearing of the Lord, and the same class of churches in Iowa and some of the same faith in Illinois, have taken their stand upon the word of God contained in the prophets of Jehovah, and the apostles of Christ, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; admitting no other

authority for their faith, practice and discipline; yet are we waiting for the latter rain, spoken of by Joel 2: 23. If, as Peter said on the day of pentecost, that which then was seen in the apostles was a fulfilling of the prophecy of Joel, surely it was but the former rain; and the latter rain is yet to come, attended with wonders in the heavens and in the earth and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

We are glad you are about to issue a paper for an advocate and correspondence of those who hold the hope of Israel, and we purpose to seek its prosperity. We think however, that it would be for our mutual profiting and the advancement of the cause to hold a general conference at some point easy of access to all the parties interested, either in September or October; and we take the liberty to suggest, that you solicit correspondents upon that subject in your first issue, and after the matter is before you, decide upon time and place at the meeting of your next conference, Aug. 21, and then notify the churches, and faithful brethren of your decision, with an invitation to attend. In that way we hope you would be able to obtain much co-operation, and the brethren much confidence in each other.

Your's to serve in the truth,  
SAMUEL DAVISON.

## My Experience.

I feel it my duty to inform the readers of the Hope of Israel, how I came to occupy the position that I now do, as a professed teacher of the Bible. About 31 years ago, I first made a profession of the religion of Christ. For one year I stood aloof from any creed, seeking for the true people of God. I then thought I had found them. I was baptized into the Christian Church, and remained with them until 1812 when I became an Adventist. All know we met with a sad disappointment in 1811. Our Lord did not come as we expected, and we were left without a star to light our pathway, for some time. At last God removed his hand and light broke in upon our minds, and we discovered that our disappointment was in perfect harmony with the teachings of the prophets.

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 that the spirit of prophecy, with them, was confined wholly to a woman. By this time I became suspicious that I had got on board the wrong ship. I then commenced giving her visions a thorough investigation. I found they con-

tradict themselves, and that they also contradict 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. The eyes of the blind have been opened; the deaf have been made to hear; and almost every disease incident to the climate, has been cured through faith, to the number of about one hundred cases. We still feel determined never to lay down the two-edged sword, until the victory is gained, and we are called to exchange the armor for the crown.

GILBERT CRANMER, Ed.

Constock, Kalamazoo Co. Mich.

OUR SAFETY.—With God as our God, we are safe and happy everywhere. A gentleman crossing a dreary moor came upon a cottage, and entered into conversation with its inmate, who was standing at his garden gate. When about to leave he said: "Are you not afraid to live in this lonely place?" "Oh no!" said he; "for faith closes the door at night and mercy opens it in the morning."

IMPURE RELIGION AND TOTAL DEFILED BEFORE GOD AND THE FATHER IS THIS TO TURN THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS OUT DOORS IN THEIR AFFLICTION, AND TO KEEP HIMSELF SPOTTED WITH THE WORLD.

Babylon Church (trans.)

One hundred dollars a Sunday is about the expenses of a fashionable church in Boston. In New York the expense is not far from five times as much.

## MAN'S INHERITANCE—A LORDSHIP.

The following is from "Typology of Scripture," by Rev. Patrick Fairbairn, of Salton, Scotland, on the original inheritance of man: "Man's original inheritance was a lordship or dominion, stretching over the whole earth.... When he fell, he fell from his dominion, as well as from purity; the inheritance departed from him.... What can the redemption of the inheritance be but the ridding of this earth from the manifold ills which through the instrumentality of Satan have come to lodge in its bosom,—purging its elements of all mischief and disorder,—changing it, from being the vale of tears and charnel-house of death, into a paradise of life and blessing,—restoring to man, himself then redeemed and fitted for the honor, the sceptre of a real dominion over all its fullness,—in a word, rendering it in character and design what it was on creation's morn, when the sons of God shouted for joy."

wicked, will be on the earth; and that the earth will ultimately be restored to more than its Edenic glory and beauty.

The second issue (August 24, 1863) contained a statement that the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul was "born and bred by pagan philosophy," noting that "Pagan Plato was its father." Regarding the fate of the wicked, it was observed that "they are to be made into carpeting for the New Earth." In the same issue, H.S. Dille suggested that Napoleon III of France might be the Antichrist who would meet Christ in "the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

These early issues also mention the names of brethren imprisoned "for refusing to fight with carnal weapons" in the United States Civil War. Later, conscientious objector status was granted to members of the Church. As would be noted in the April 23, 1865, issue of *The Hope* (eight days after President Lincoln's death):

We thank God that President Lincoln, kind and feeling as he was, and pious too, according to his idea of piety, did cause to be made such laws as would deliver God's saints from participating in war.

The May 26, 1864, issue carried news of a miraculous healing experienced by a woman at one of Gilbert Cranmer's public meetings. Unable to speak for some years, her speech was perfectly restored. Cranmer's ministry was full of reports of healings.

The November 2, 1864, issue addressed the question of unity. In an article by Samuel Everett on Ephesians 4 and Christian unity, he said that there is one body, and that the Church belongs to God, with Christ as its Head. He wrote:

As far as the name is concerned, "The Church of God, — The Church of Christ," are scriptural names of the people of God taken collectively... We should beware of all sectarian parties and divisions.

After six issues, *The Hope* was moved to Waverly, Michigan, where it was published until October 18, 1865. By November 1864, *The Hope* was being mailed to subscribers in 18 states and in eastern Canada. There were several interruptions in its publication due to financial difficulties resulting from the Civil War.

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In the autumn of 1864, an article by Luther Tiffany appeared in *The Hope*, arguing that Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights. Many issues of this period addressed the subject of "slavery to tobacco." Circulation as of June 1865 was 336 copies.

The October 18, 1865, number was the last to be issued at Waverly, Michigan. A total of 39 issues of *The Hope* was issued from Michigan. Apparently the brethren were not providing adequate financial support for the paper.

#### *The Hope of Israel moves to Iowa*

On May 29, 1866, *The Hope of Israel* was revived at Marion, Iowa, where a Sabbatarian Adventist congregation had been founded in June 1860. Having moved the printing press and type from Michigan to Iowa, members there published the periodical semi-monthly under the auspices of the Christian Publishing Association. It contained 16 pages per issue. William H. Brinkerhoff, a minister of the Marion congregation, became editor. Two years later he was succeeded by his long-time friend, B.F. Snook. (Brinkerhoff and Snook later left the Church and affiliated with the Universalists.)

The first issue of *The Hope* published in Iowa contained an article urging those who had not already done so to "abandon the use of swine flesh entirely" due to the danger of trichinosis. (A subsequent article advised: "Swine was unclean to the Jew, and you had better regard him thus to the Gentile.") Keep in mind however, that the paper published a variety of opinions on different subjects. At the time these comments were made, the church took no doctrinal position on clean and unclean meats.

The second Iowa issue contained a letter from Gilbert Cranmer congratulating Brinkerhoff on the revival of *The Hope*. "May it ever advocate the truth and breathe forth the Spirit of Christ," Cranmer wrote.

During the next few years, *The Hope* contained many articles on prophecy and doctrinal issues, letters from readers, news items, reports of work being done by field ministers, notices of state conference meetings, etc. Doctrinal differences with the Seventh-day Adventists were frequently discussed.

The April 23, 1867, issue contained an article contending that the early Church, to the time of Constantine, "observed the Lord's Supper annually at

the beginning of the fourteenth of Abib, and that we should now show His death until He comes, by also observing it at the beginning of the fourteenth." Another article in the same issue advocated the use of fermented wine at the Passover service.

#### Jacob Brinkerhoff becomes editor

In March 1872, the Association renamed the publication *Advent and Sabbath Advocate and Hope of Israel*. Jacob Brinkerhoff (1841-1916), the younger brother of W.H. Brinkerhoff, had become editor and publisher the previous year, at the age of 30. He would hold the position, on and off, until 1914. Jacob Brinkerhoff was perhaps the greatest Church of God leader of the 19th century. No minister made more significant contributions in furthering the Work.

In March 1874, Brinkerhoff dropped the subtitle *Hope of Israel* from the name of the paper, which became known simply as *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*. But financial and other difficulties threatened the continuation of the paper. So to save the *Advocate*, Brinkerhoff sold his home. With the proceeds he bought the office, press, printing materials and furnishings.

Among the numerous Church of God tracts available to the public in 1877 were *The Seventh Day Sabbath; The Second Coming of Christ; Who Changed the Sabbath?; The Sabbath for Both Jews and Gentiles; The Soul; Where Are the Dead?; Man, Mortal or Immortal?; Man, A Living Soul; and The Saints' Inheritance*.

In summer 1881, minister W.C. Long wrote a letter to the *Advocate* in which he urged the practice of "thing, which appears to have been a recently restored teaching in the Church of God about that time.

#### A general conference formed

Unfortunately, these Sabbath keepers lacked unity. Up to 1884, the church was not organized beyond local congregations and state conferences. Each congregation remained largely independent. Strong antiorganizational feelings had often been expressed in early issues of *The Hope* and *The Advocate*. In place of a national organization, the *Advocate* was the one thing the congregations had in common. They depended on it as their primary medium of communication among themselves.

In October 1884, a loose confederation called the "General Conference of the Church of God" was founded, made up of the state conferences of Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas. Other states were added later. A.C. Long (one of the founders of the Missouri church) became president of the conference. A.F. Dugger (a pioneer in the Nebraska church) was elected vice president. Jacob Brinkerhoff became secretary, and I.N. Kramer treasurer. A.C. Long, W.C. Long and John Branch were general conference committeemen.

Jacob Brinkerhoff, editor of the *Advocate*, had been a strong champion of organization of the church. In the summer of 1884 he had given forceful editorial support to the idea of organizing an umbrella organization to unite the different state conferences

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and secure unity of action. He wrote:

It has long been known that our cause is one, in the East and in the West; that we are one people in faith and doctrine, one in hope and Christian unity, and a unity or organization is desired.... In carrying out the apostolic commission to teach other people and make believers to preach the gospel into all the world and to take out of the world a people for the name of the Lord and for His coming kingdom, it is necessary for that work to be done to the best advantage, and all know this is best done by a concerted action and by a general oversight of gospel labor. Conferences are necessary to organize for work, raise means, consider Christian character and ministerial ability, and this should be considered important. Also a union of conferences is desirable, making the people one people, and by which we can labor more effectually.

Beginning in 1885, the General Conference took over the publication of the *Advocate*, relieving Brinkerhoff of the financial burden. Its circulation then had reached 485. Membership of the Church of God had grown to about 1,000. The annual budget for the *Advocate* was \$1,100, or about \$1.10 per year per member. According to Brinkerhoff, this sum covered paper, ink, firewood for heat and salaries for typesetters and pressmen.

#### Headquarters moved to Stanberry, Missouri

In 1888, the Church of God moved its headquarters

from Marion, Iowa, to Stanberry, Missouri — and with it the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, which they re-named the *Sabbath Advocate and Herald of the Advent*. By 1892, the *Sabbath Advocate* had become an eight-page weekly, with a circulation of about 1,000 copies. In 1900 the name was changed again, to *Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom*.

Herbert Armstrong

The Church of God was still publishing the *Bible Advocate* in the 1920s when Herbert Armstrong became converted and fellowshipped with members of

their Oregon Conference. At that time, he read the magazine regularly and even contributed several articles to it.

Today, after more than 130 years, the Church of God (Seventh Day) — now headquartered in Denver, Colorado — continues to publish *The Bible Advocate*. Through it, the Church of God strives to teach its international readers sound Christian guidelines for these troubled times.

Keith W. Stump,  
writer, Television Department

## Endnotes

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1. To differentiate the stages in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, scholars today sometimes classify adventists in the following manner: Millerite — a disciple of William Miller's prophetic teachings prior to the Great Disappointment of 1844; Adventist — a Millerite after the Great Disappointment or one of their spiritual descendants, generally, though not always referring to a Seventh-day Adventist; Sabbatarian Adventist — an adventist who came to accept the Sabbath during the period from the Great Disappointment until the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, regardless of whether they supported Ellen G. White; Seventh-day Adventist — a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, organized in the early 1860s, though sometimes used to refer to all Sabbatarian Adventists prior to that date. These designations are modern classifications helpful in separating the differing parties from each other. Adventists writing during the decades in question did not maintain these distinctions.
2. For a detailed discussion of the Shut Door controversy and evidence that the Whites may have promoted a strict Shut Door doctrine, read Ingemar Lindén's *1844 and the Shut Door Problem* (Uppsala, 1982) as well as his *The Last Trump* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978). For the contrary view, consult P. Gerhard Damsteegt's *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).
3. Roy A. Marrs, editor, *Bible Advocate*, to Ralph Orr, 18 November 1993.

*Henceforth let no man glory in his denomination; that is sectarianism:  
but let all men glory in Christ and practice brotherhood with men;  
that is Christianity.*

— Peter Ainslie