

GENERAL HISTORY OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD (7TH DAY) OF MICHIGAN

Michigan became one of the states in the union in 1837. However, at that time it was a sparsely settled, primitive wilderness over much of the land area. Many of the first settlers were deeply religious and without question the basic truths held sacred by the Church of God today were subscribed to by pioneers of a very early date.

It is unfortunate that the record of the very earliest sabbath keepers in Michigan is unknown, so we have to base our historical information on the earliest record available. Most of our information came from the activities of groups of believers of a few years ago and later.

It is with a spirit of gratefulness and thanks that we stop at this time to remember these pioneers of the church who earnestly contended for the faith and worked hard to establish churches which have held the truths of the Bible sacred. We are thankful for leaders in the past who have exerted their influence and have preserved the Bible truth in such a way that we may profit by it in our day.

The fact that we can trace Church of God work in Michigan back through the pages of history for a century neither proves nor disproves the truth of our teachings. It is not because of a heritage of time, and is not because of the influence of great numbers that we are an organization today. The reason for our present day existence is because we believe to be Bible and God's will of Christendom living even as our forefathers did a century ago. We are under obligation to briefly express in keeping the commandments of God and Father's name, taking the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the rule of our faith and discipline."

Thus far it has been almost impossible to establish a trace of organizational date. In the life story of Elder Gilbert Graham as told to M. A. Branch, he made the first statement that "organization was not discussed and was finally effected in the year 1860". Some old state conference records are believed to have been destroyed in a fire, but records of state conferences held in the back as 1916 indicate that this year (1962) is the one hundred and first annual conference of the Church of God in Michigan. This would mean that the hundred years has elapsed since the meeting of the first conference.

To make this clear, we call your attention to the fact that the second conference convened they had completed one year of organization and were ready to start the second year. By the same token, the meeting of the one hundred and first conference would be the completion of one hundred years of organizational effort by the Church of God (7th Day) in Michigan.

Apparently there is some discrepancy in the records that we have been able to examine because it states organization was effected in 1860 this year would be more than the completion of 100 years of work. It is our feeling that the conference meetings were numbered consecutively but that it is likely that the Church may have missed holding an annual meeting some time in the early beginning. 1860 is very likely the organizational date.

Before his death, Elder Gilbert Graham told his life story to M. A. Branch of White Cloud, Michigan. M. A. Branch wrote this story as Elder Graham related it to him and this is a special source of information about early sabbath keepers in Michigan, but they began to teach doctrines contrary to his understanding of the Bible. One of the main things was that the door of salvation was closed. They also believed that the visions of Mrs. Ellen G. White were inspired and should be accepted with the Bible.

"The Hope of Israel" appeared with H. S. Dille, editor, but conference convened Friday April 15, 1864, at Randy Wine c Corner, at which time at the reading of the minutes of the last conference, H. S. Dille resigned the position as editor and Gilbert Grammer was elected for the place. An executive board was chosen with John L. Staunton president, H. S. Dille secretary, and Hiram Gobel treasurer. The first quarterly financial report appeared in the Hope of Israel as follows: "Treasure's quarterly report, money received \$52.15, paid Dille \$24.50, office \$4.40, Gobel \$21.00, balance on hand \$2.15. Other in letters being added to the different bands. Not far from this Erastus B ranch (rather of the writer) began his ministry and to his death, which occurred February 3, 1873. He labored hand in hand with Father Grammer, their very souls were knit together, of one heart and one mind. Early in Father Grammer's history he had learned that the Lord was willing to hear prayer in behalf of the sick. The instruction James 5:14-15 he believed to be for the church and practiced it there ever he went. In a report on B ranch Grammer's he says "The readers of the Hope of Israel under date May 26, 1864". The Lord manifested his power in a wonderful manner, Sister Carter of Osego attended the meeting, she had been deprived of her speech for a long time, on the Sabbath in the midst of a large congregation and signs followed them that believed, examples almost without number, of healing were witnessed; One blind woman received sight, all manner of sicknesses yielded to the power of God. The Lord was truly among his people".....

"Others labored in connection with him and brought scores into the truth. The church at Hartford was at one time very large and active, some died, others moved away; but the church at Hartford is still alive and doing good work. Several other churches were organized, one at Hamilton, Allegan County, where B ranch, W. E. Field and wife were converted. Another at Salem where B ranch, Home and wife, also A. Walker and family united with the church, and although none of the ministers mentioned in the early history of the church remain, other ministers have been added from time to time, who have taken up the work in earnest and churches have been organized and the work is still onward in Michigan. Submitted in love to the church. M. A. B ranch, White Cloud, Michigan".

The Erastus B ranch family was one of the pioneer church families in the Hartford area. Later several members of this family and others included to the town of White Cloud. It wasn't long until a church was started there as we can see from again examining "The Backward Look."

"The four brothers, Mortimer A. B ranch and family, Charles R. Branch and family, Erastus G. Branch and family, and Adelbert Branch and wife, came to White Cloud, Michigan, from Hartford, Van B ranch County, Michigan, arriving on April 16th, 1864, being formerly members of the church of God at Hartford, Michigan.

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Under these circumstances, a friend, who is abundantly able, assures him that he will pay the debt, when it becomes due. He is satisfied; he believes his friend; his burden is gone; he releases him; his countenance brightens; all his actions become buoyant; he cannot help telling his neighbors how free he feels, now that his trouble is gone. His debts are paid! All this change in his deportment, and in his feelings; and all this light heartedness and joy comes from his faith in the assurances of his friend. But suppose he doubts his friend's sincerity; his joy departs; his trouble comes. He again believes his friend; his doubt is removed; his joy returns. This is the earnest of his promise. It makes him cry, "Rejoice in my friend. And yet his friend had done nothing for him. He only made him a promise.—By and by the mortgage matures; the debt is cancelled by his friend; now all is well. But he no longer lives by faith; the promise has been redeemed.

Thus with Christians, they live by faith. They receive the consolation of the promise; are made happy and joyful in their Christian experience. But they hope and wait for the adoption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; to have their vile bodies, fashioned like unto Christ's beautiful body, so they can die no more.

THE TWO COVENANTS.

BY I. N. KRAMER.

[continued]

God never promised to perform this covenant to the Gentile, only through the house of Israel; for to them pertain the promises, and the covenants. And if the words, "Zion," "Jacob," "house of Israel," and "house of Judah," mentioned in this covenant of promise, do not have a literal and specific signification, then was this covenant a confusion to the Jew, and makes all other scripture unintelligible to the Gentile. Hence we conclude that the new covenant is one of the covenants of promise, and is yet future.

Again, if we adopt modern theology, we shall be obliged to make this new covenant read something as follows: "Behold, saith the Lord, I have found that my law is contrary to you, and against you: (See Rom 8:7) therefore, behold, the days come that I will abolish my law, and take it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. Nevertheless I will make another just like it, all except the fourth commandment. And this is the covenant that I will establish with you after those days;" as much as to say, that, because he man broke the law, he abolished it; because he could not conform to God's holiness, God retracted the demand. * But that the law of the new

It shows that they are not yet in fact the children of God Heb 11:13, 25, 39. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised. The promises reached to things not yet obtained. Now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The things embraced in our faith, are things hoped for; and it we hope for them, then we must with patience wait for them. We hope for eternal life. This is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life. I will illustrate. Suppose a person has become deeply involved in debt; he has used all his means, and still he is in debt, far beyond his ability to pay. The mortgage that holds his place is not yet due, but he knows that he has no means to pay it, when it becomes due. He worries by day and by night, and expects to lose his place.

5th. But are not Christians often called the children of God, in this life? They are; but not in the sense of being born again. Christians in this life are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For we walk by faith, and not by sight; that the just shall live by faith; that they purify their hearts by faith; that they are sanctified by faith; that they are justified by faith; that they wait for the hope of righteousness by faith; that they are made wise unto salvation through faith. Thus the children of God in this life are only the children of God by faith. They live by faith. How does this fact modify the sense in which Christians are called the children of God?

4th. When will Christians be born again? John 3:6. "That which is born of the Spirit is flesh; and that which is born of the flesh is spirit." As all Christians have been born of the flesh, they will be born again, when they are born of the Spirit. It is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly; or spiritual. Paul says, Christians receive the Spirit of adoption here, by which they cry abba Father; but that they wait for the adoption (itself) to wit, the redemption of the body. He says, that at the coming of Christ their vile bodies will be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. Christ says, that at that time, they will be equal to the angels; and can die no more; for they are the children of God, being children of the resurrection. Christians, when they put on immortality; when their vile bodies are fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, when they become children of God, by being children of the resurrection.

Christians, then, are begotten again when they receive the Gospel, the word of truth; when they receive the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. "In this life they are begotten again, are not corrupted, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

* To suppose that because man broke God's law of holiness, God would think of abolishing it, would be to suppose that God yielded to the weakness of man, and became a creature weaker than he, and subject to him.

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services as best they could, always meeting in the homes of the members (some being shanties) and in lumber camps, as school houses in the community were not as yet built. From memory I believe that between twenty-five and thirty such meeting places were used before we were able to build a church, which I am the earliest was being planned.

"It was February 11th, 1888, that the first public effort was made toward the building of a church, and the attached record sheet will show the feeble but earnest effort made toward such an undertaking. It was on January 1st, 1893 that

dedication was had of the little church in the country, two miles northwest of White Cloud, the building being only 20 X 30 feet square inside."

Church of God history has not always been a series of events denoting progress. There has always been sufficient growth and interest to keep the work

intact, but often difficulties would arise and discouraged groups and individuals would leave the fellowship. Such was the case with the White Cloud Church. Dissatisfied with problems in the general conference, the church voted to leave the organization and in the year 1917 they affiliated with the Seventh Day Baptists.

Several of the older members who remember their association with the Church of God still have a high regard for our work and many of us are counted among their friends, even as we think of them with warm feelings of Christian friendship.

Dr. John Branch contributed very much to the good of the church. He was both an ordained minister and a medical doctor. In addition to his work in the ministry he promoted the building of a hospital in White Cloud and practiced his medical profession extensively. Elder C. J. Heywood's wife can remember being treated by him when she was only three years old. Her family at that time had no connection with the church but were residents in the Branch area where the Church of God work was strong.

One of the Branch family (thought to be Dr. John) also worked in Ontario, Canada and contacted Madill, Leach and Hogarth families. Temple Leach and his wife Sarah Madill Leach studied to prove him wrong and became converted to the Sabbath and joined the Church of God. The Leach family moved to Hartford and lived with the Branch family until they located a building in Inaco.

Due to time limitations, this history will be completed at a later date, but we trust this will serve to enlighten us regarding the beginning.

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"Elder Grammer was supported from the very first by such men as John Reed, Sylvester Baker, Hiram Goble, Phillip Strong and his father (better known as Father Strong), Daniel Tiffany, Joseph Perkins, and others who were his associates in the early work; and later such men with their families as James Watkins Isaac Catt, Harvey Dille, Joseph Stoughton, Isaac Newton, J. D. Brown, Greenwood Waite, Martin Shepherd, Erastus G. B. Ranch, W. E. Field, George Stone, Thomas Home, F. C. Pixley, many of these being also ministers; and such further helpers as R. C. Horton, L. J. B. Ranch, J. C. B. Ranch, M. A. B. Ranch and others". The Erastus B. Ranch family was one of the pioneer church families in the Hartford area. Later several members of this family and others included to the town of White Cloud. It wasn't long until a church was started there as we can see from again examining "The backward look."

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