

# The Decision

Harry Anderson lay on warm, springy grass under one of the apple trees in his father's orchard, watching the shadow pattern of green leaves and blue summer sky. Lying there, chewing idly on a grass stem, the young man created a picture of complete relaxation. But his mind was busy. Harry was considering a serious proposition just made by the tall man who stood, hands in pockets, gazing down at him.

After a period of thought the boy turned his head, shifted the grass stem to the other corner of his mouth, and asked a question. "Uncle Ben, just why do you think Battle Creek College would be a good place for me?"

"Well, Harry, for one thing, it's different from any other school in the country. It will make a man out of you."

The challenge in his uncle's words and voice startled the lad. He sat up abruptly. "How is it different? Are the rules stricter than in other colleges?"

Benjamin Anderson pondered a moment, wondering just how to answer the question. He longed to see his nephew in a Christian school. Only a few months before, he himself had accepted the Seventh-day Adventist teachings. Now, eager to help his nephew, he had come to his brother's Indiana farm for a short visit. He wondered how much to tell Harry about this school. Might the lad not shy away from the idea of going to Battle Creek if he knew that the rules there were stricter than in other schools? Yet somehow he felt that it would be wisest to tell him the truth.

"Yes, Harry, the rules are strict," the man answered; "but they are all made with the one purpose of helping the student to do his best."

"Well, that's all right. I wouldn't mind going to a school where I would have to concentrate on my studies. But there is one very good reason why I cannot go to Battle Creek College."

"What is that?"

"I am not a Seventh-day Adventist. In fact, I am not even a Christian. I don't belong to any church, and you said that all the teachers at this college are Adventists like yourself. I would have to join their church to get in, and I am not prepared to do that; at least not until I know about what they believe."

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“That’s no real barrier, Harry. Every year many non-Adventist students attend Battle Creek College. Some become Adventists, some do not. As long as they keep up with their studies, obey the rules, and deport themselves properly, they are welcome.”

“But how could I support myself there? You said there are tuition fees to be paid besides buying the textbooks. Besides this, there would be the expense of board and room.”

“That is a real problem, Harry, but I feel sure it can be solved. I wish I could promise to put you through; unfortunately I cannot help much. But you know the saying, ‘Where there’s a will, there’s a way.’ Other students have gone there with little or no financial resources and have worked their way through. Some, not able to carry a full scholastic load and meet tuition costs, have taken five or even six years to complete the four-year course. But they have come out all the stronger for the experience of learning to stand on their own feet.”

Harry made no further reply, as he had run out of objections. Very wisely his uncle did not press the matter further. The cows were gathering at the barnyard gate, waiting to be milked. Harry stood to his feet, and the two started for the house, Ben’s arm around his nephew’s shoulder.

“Think about it, Harry, and let me know what you decide. I shall be happy to write a letter recommending you to the president of Battle Creek College.”

For several days the lad pondered the proposition his uncle had set before him. Finally he decided to follow his uncle’s suggestion and attend Battle Creek College. He realized that it was his duty to tell his parents of his plan. He hesitated, knowing how much his father depended on his help in running the farm. He was also painfully aware of his father’s ill-concealed contempt for Benjamin’s recent decision to follow the teachings of those “Advents.”

Supper was nearly over one evening before Harry managed to stammer out words which nearly choked him. “Dad, I have decided to attend Battle Creek College this fall.”

“Where is it? Never heard of it.”

“It’s the Adventist college up in Michigan. Uncle Ben has told me about it.”

Putting down his knife and fork, Elijah Anderson stared at his son. “Surely you are not serious.”

“Yes, Father, I am. From all I hear, it is a good school.”

“From all you hear! That consists, I dare say, of what my brother has told you. What does he know about it, anyway? He never attended there.”

“Well, Father, I’ve decided to go and find out. If it isn’t a good school, then I will come home.”

Father Anderson’s face became grave. He leaned forward and spoke kindly but firmly: “Listen, Harry. You are too smart to throw your life away with those Adventists. What do they amount to in the world? Do you remember how you graduated from high school when you were only fourteen? You wanted to go out and teach, but the chairman of the board laughed at the idea of giving you a teaching certificate because you were so young. So you cheerfully went back and repeated the last two years of high school, graduating with highest honors. You spent a year taking a course at the Logansport Business College. You have had your training; now you are ready for work. I have been waiting to see what you might decide to do. I would not dream of trying to keep you on the farm; but why should you go back to school again?”

“Because I feel there is still so much that I do not know.”

“Very well. If you wish more education, you can certainly have it, but do not go to Battle Creek. I will send you to law school and gladly pay every cent of your expenses. What do you say to that, Son?”

Harry shook his head. “It’s Battle Creek College for me, Dad.”

Elijah Anderson found it difficult to conceal his rising anger. “Of course you are eighteen, and old enough to know your own mind. But please understand this. Not one penny of assistance will you get from me if you go to the Advent school.”

Pushing back his chair, Elijah rose from the table and stomped out of the house and to the barn, where he busied himself for an hour while his wrath cooled.

That September, 1889, Harry Anderson enrolled as a freshman at Battle Creek College. Among his subjects were several he had studied during his high school years. The Bible classes, however, offered something entirely new and different. He found himself spending more time on this subject than on any other. It opened a whole new world of thought which he found fascinating.

During the Week of Prayer, Harry gave his heart and life to the Lord and began to study more carefully the doctrines taught by Adventists. At the end of the school year he was baptized.

Harry Anderson did not gallop through college as he had through high school. The subjects were more difficult, and he had much less time for study. He faced the grim prospect of having to earn all his own tuition, board, and room.

The manager of Battle Creek Sanitarium, having heard that this particular young man was both punctual and dependable, hired Harry to

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work as one of the night watchmen. In this position he soon became friendly with David Paulson, who shared the job with him. In order to reduce expenses, the two decided to share the same room. For one month Harry took the evening shift, turning in at midnight, then David took over. The next month they reversed their schedules.

Because he needed more time for study, Harry frequently ran from one building to another in order to gain a few extra moments with his books. His outdoor work was particularly trying during the winter months when temperatures dropped below zero and icy winds chilled him to the bone as he made his rounds. The boardwalks around the buildings often disappeared under accumulations of deep snow. Through it all Harry faithfully and cheerfully performed his duties.

One summer a friend, John Shaw, persuaded Harry that they could do better canvassing than by working for farmers. So the two young men took their books and went to Canada. Unfortunately the entire province to which they were assigned was suffering from drought. Farmers whose wheat fields lay withering beneath a blazing sun were in no mood to buy books, no matter how interesting or important they appeared, or how earnestly the young colporteurs talked. Finding they were not even making expenses, John and Harry returned to the college prepared to take any kind of work that might be available for the rest of the summer.

Thus Harry Anderson continued working, year after year, climbing slowly but surely toward the coveted B.A. degree. He might not be able to take many subjects, but he mastered the courses he studied. Throughout his six years in school he was always an honor student. While science was his major, he loved mathematics and took the most advanced classes the college offered in that field.

The progress of Adventist missions in Europe, Africa, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific aroused much interest among the students. A number of young men openly declared their purpose of offering themselves for foreign mission service after graduation. But it took a stranger to fan the flame of their ambition.

Several years before, a young man by the name of George James had arrived from England to settle in Michigan. A serious illness took him to Battle Creek Sanitarium. There he accepted the Adventist faith. At his suggestion a foreign mission band was formed at the college and regular meetings were held. Books were read describing conditions in various foreign countries. In the columns of the weekly *Review and Herald*, band members followed the progress of Adventist missions in far-off corners of the earth. Harry Anderson was a charter member of this band.

George James, longing to follow in the footsteps of his hero, David

Livingstone, offered his services to the foreign mission board, asking for an appointment to Africa. Sadly the brethren told him there was no money for such a project. Supporting the existing missions took every cent the denomination could scrape together. F. M. Wilcox, secretary of the board, told James that he would have to wait until funds became available.

But George James did not intend to wait. In his ears he seemed to hear the cries of millions who knew nothing of the way of salvation. Selling most of his possessions in order to raise his steamship fare, James prepared to set out for Africa on his own.

It was a thrilling day for the foreign mission band when its members gathered at the Battle Creek railway station to bid farewell to their leader. Was he not going out as their representative, a self-supporting missionary to Africa? The soul of Harry Anderson burned with desire to accompany his friend.

“Good-bye, George. Be sure to write and tell us all about what you find. I hope to follow you as soon as I finish my college work.”

“So glad to hear it, Harry. I shall be there to welcome you. I feel sure that Africa could use a hundred missionaries.”

Thus George James set out on his twelve-thousand-mile trip. He settled in Nyasaland, where he worked for three years. Then hearing that an Adventist mission had been started in the interior of Africa, he decided to pay the missionaries there a visit. But as his ship sailed down the Shire River and out onto the broad Zambezi, he came down with malaria. After a short illness he died, and he was buried at some unmarked spot on the bank of the river. Harry Anderson never saw his friend again.

Whenever he could get away from his studies at the college, Harry visited the farm in Indiana. Great was his joy when his mother was baptized into the Adventist Church. His father and older brother, however, remained indifferent. Harry’s visits to his mother were a source of joy and inspiration to her. Frequently when he left to return to college, he carried a bag of her own homemade cinnamon buns plus a dollar or two she managed to slip into his pocket.

One thing about Harry Anderson set him apart from some of his fellow students. He refused to take more schooling than he could pay for, and he refused to buy clothing or anything on credit. God blessed him in all his undertakings and brought him into favor with friends who could help him.

When Harry left Battle Creek College in the spring of 1895, he owed no man anything. More than that, he actually had two dollars and fifty cents in his pocket! Never once did he express regret for having come to Battle Creek. Something told him that God had a plan for his life, and he was willing to wait and watch for the unfolding of that plan.

# Africa Bound

In 1893 a very important change had come into the life of Harry Anderson. That year, Nora Haysmer agreed to link her life with his and become his bride. She knew of his burning desire to go to Africa, and she willingly accepted the prospects of the challenge.

On October 24, 1893, Harry and Nora were married in the home of the bride near Fenwick, Michigan. The next day they returned to Battle Creek, where they set about with redoubled determination to finish their respective courses of study—Harry to pursue his degree, and Nora to finish the last year of nurses' training.

When school closed in the spring of 1894, Harry and Nora were invited to spend the summer working for the Lord. They would receive no salary, not even expense money for traveling to the town where Harry would be holding meetings. Cheerfully they accepted the assignment, earnestly praying that the Lord would add souls to the church as a result of their labors. A church member lent them a tent in which to live and thus save rent money.

One evening Harry took to his bed, saying he felt very ill. For two days he tossed with a high fever. Nora felt sure he had typhoid. With the last coin, a single nickel in the family purse, she went to the store to buy a little gasoline with which to operate the stove and heat water so that she might give him fomentations.

Hurrying back to the tent, Nora looked pityingly at her husband on his cot, the perspiration standing on his brow. She wondered whether he was delirious. Her mind went to the two letters which had arrived earlier in the week. One was from a lady she had nursed at the sanitarium. The lady wanted Nora to go with her to her home and there give her the same treatments she had received at Battle Creek. She offered Nora good pay, plus room and board.

The other letter came from one of Harry's former employers. It promised him good wages with Sabbaths off if he would just come back to his old job. The more she thought about those letters, the more perplexed and discouraged Nora felt.

Were these offers the Lord's way of helping them find money to cover their school expenses? she wondered. Then the thought came that perhaps this was only the devil's plan to lure them away from the work of

God. Glancing at her husband, she saw that he was awake. His eyes met hers. Nora laid her hand on his hot forehead and burst into tears.

“Oh, Harry, do we have to live like this? Do you know what I think we should do? I will go and take care of my patient for a year while you return to your employer for the same length of time. By saving our money we will be able to return to college and pay our way without having to toil day and night to meet expenses.”

Harry’s only response was a slight movement of his head from side to side. Nora brushed away her tears.

“Harry, I didn’t mean a word of it. We are going to stay by this work, and we are going to stay by it together.”

The fever passed away, and Harry recovered. With the Lord’s help the young couple stayed and finished their work. Their joy was full when the conference sent a minister to baptize their converts.

In the fall both were back at Battle Creek, Harry for his final year, Nora to continue her work in the sanitarium. They lived in a small cottage not far from the college.

Harry continued to be an active member of the foreign mission band, even serving as leader for a term. Whenever possible, Nora went with him to these meetings. One day Harry read a thrilling report that a tract of land had been donated to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the African country already being referred to as Rhodesia after Cecil Rhodes, the great empire builder. On this land it was proposed to establish a mission station among the Makalanga tribe in Matabeleland. The report stated that more than twelve thousand acres had been given.

Of course this news caused great excitement among the band members. Thinking of the fertile farms of the Midwest, they concluded that this was truly a magnificent gift. The report further stated that a company of missionary farmers from South Africa would travel by train and wagon to the new country, there to mark out the farm and start mission work. Later another party of carefully chosen workers from North America would join them.

One wintry afternoon someone handed Harry a note. On opening it, he found that it was from F. M. Wilcox, who wished to see him. Naturally Harry was excited. He knew that Wilcox was the secretary of the mission board of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the man charged with the responsibility of choosing the men and women to be sent to the new mission in Africa. Could it be possible that he might be invited to go? Harry entered the secretary’s office with eager step. Wilcox came immediately to the point.

“As you know, Brother Anderson, we are opening up the mission work

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in Africa. Would you be willing to accept a call to go there with three other missionaries?"

Although it was quite a decision to make, Harry did not hesitate. "I can think of nothing in all the world I would rather do. My answer is Yes, and I am sure that Nora shares my willingness to go."

"Thank you, Brother Anderson. I will let you know when more definite plans have been laid."

The winter months passed. Harry heard that two of the men chosen were unable to go. Then early in March Wilcox sent for him again.

"G. B. Tripp has been appointed to lead the group of which you and your wife will be members to open up mission work in Matabeleland," the mission board secretary announced. "Dr. A. S. Carmichael will also be going with you. The Tripps plan to sail from New York for England early in April. Can you and Sister Anderson be ready to go with them?"

It took a few moments for the significance of the question to sink in. "But—" Harry stammered, "that means leaving several weeks before graduation. Surely I should finish my college work before we go."

"I'm afraid the party cannot wait that long. Let me explain. You see, the last six hundred miles of your journey will be through the dry Bechuanaland country, skirting the Kalahari Desert. Water becomes very scarce there within two or three months after the summer rains stop. Since you are going to travel by ox wagon, the matter of water is important. If the trip is not taken in May or June, it might have to be postponed for another year."

"You mean I won't be able to graduate?" Harry could not hide his disappointment.

"I have talked with the college president, and he has discussed the problem with your teachers. They say that since you have been an honor student all through your college years and are well advanced in your studies, they are willing for you to leave a few weeks before the close of school and still receive your diploma."

Harry accepted this arrangement, although it meant missing the excitement and thrill of the graduating exercises—something he had looked forward to for six years.

Harry and Nora embarked upon the busiest three weeks of their lives. So many things had to be done. They knew very well that they were going into the wilds, hundreds of miles beyond the centers of civilization; therefore careful preparation was essential.

Only a few days were allowed for good-bye visits. On March 29 the young couple bade farewell to Father and Mother Anderson and Harry's only brother on the farm in Indiana. Little did Harry dream of the



changes that would take place in his family before he could return and visit them again. A few days later they left Nora's home in Michigan, waving good-bye to her loved ones from the rear platform of the train as it steamed away from the station.

What were the resources with which this young couple set out on their great adventure? After selling their few items of furniture and settling up final tuition charges, they had exactly two and one half dollars in hand. Then Nora's Aunt Amelia gave her five dollars, tripling their capital. So there they were, on board the train, starting out for Africa, poor in material possessions but rich in faith and hope and love. Of course their transportation was paid, and they trusted the Lord to provide for their daily needs along the way.

The train clicked off the miles as the Andersons sat up trying to catch a few winks in the noisy coach that night. The next afternoon they walked out of the New York railway station and gazed upon the largest city in the United States. After three busy days spent in sightseeing and purchasing a few last-minute items they boarded the S.S. *New York* on the tenth day of April to begin their long voyage. Escorted by noisy tugs down the East River, the ship passed the Statue of Liberty, rounded Long Island, then turned her prow eastward toward England, nearly three thousand miles away.

They had a very rough crossing. The nearer they came to Europe, the more their ship pitched and rolled. The missionaries spent most of the last three days of the voyage lying on their bunks, counting the hours until they would step on firm ground once again. Their steamer trunks slid back and forth incessantly, banging first against one cabin wall, then bounding away against the other before shooting out and crashing into the door. Few of the passengers had much sleep.

But like most unpleasant things, the voyage came to an end; on the eighth day the missionaries landed in Southampton, England. When their baggage was passing through Her Majesty's customs, the inspector asked Anderson how much liquor and tobacco he was importing. The officer could scarcely believe it when Harry assured him that he neither drank nor smoked. Leaning across the counter, he took a deep sniff of Anderson's breath. Satisfied that the missionary was telling the truth, he passed the baggage without further questioning.

A pleasant seventy-mile train ride through the beautiful fields of green England brought the travelers to London, hub of the British Empire and the largest city in the world. Thrilling days followed. They visited the British Museum and looked upon the Rosetta Stone. They explored the Tower of London, where kings and queens of England had lived and died centuries before.

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But their most inspiring moment came when they stood in Westminster Abbey, looked down upon a stone slab set into the floor, and read, "Brought by faithful hands over land and sea . . . here lies David Livingstone."

"He died less than twenty-two years ago," remarked Tripp. "We must carry on where he left off. May we emulate his self-sacrificing spirit."

Their days in London were far too short—and the longest part of their journey still lay ahead. The missionaries returned to Southampton and boarded the *Roslin Castle*, a small boat of only five thousand tons, preparing to make her final voyage to South Africa.

About three weeks later the ship dropped anchor in beautiful Table Bay. There in the morning sunshine lay the city of Cape Town, snuggled in the lap of Table Mountain. The rocky sides and apparently flat summit, rising more than three thousand feet above the city, appeared very impressive. Nora and Harry had reached the gateway to Africa. From here the railroad stretched northward to Mafeking, nearly a thousand miles away. And from Mafeking, indefatigable, restless men departed with their ox wagons for the deeper interior of the continent.

The party of missionaries remained only a short time in Claremont, a suburb of Cape Town. Here they talked with A. T. Robinson, the conference president. Robinson was the man who had interviewed Cecil Rhodes and secured the mission land grant. The new arrivals also had a pleasant visit with Brother Druillard, a member of the group which had made the journey north to peg out the mission farm the previous year. He warned them not to expect to find land comparable to farms in Iowa or Illinois.

But the missionaries dared not tarry long in civilization. They realized the importance of getting the expedition across the dry regions of Bechuanaland before the streams and water holes dried up. Most of their time was spent in purchasing articles needful for setting up housekeeping in the bush and for trading with the Africans.

Wednesday evening, May 22, 1895, found Pastor Tripp, his wife and his son George, Harry and Nora Anderson, and Dr. Carmichael standing on the platform of the Cape Town railway station ready to board a train which would transport them to the end of the line. They looked in dismay at the huge pile of luggage which had to accompany them. At the "booking office," when purchasing their tickets, Tripp had been surprised to learn that only seventy-five pounds could be checked in the "van," or baggage car, on each ticket. But recently acquired South African friends who had come to see them off said, "Don't worry. You can take all the luggage you can find room for in your compartment."

Soon a long string of empty coaches backed into the station and stopped alongside the platform. Passing from coach to coach, Harry soon discovered a card in the window of a compartment listing the names of the missionary party.

The room seemed quite large, with sleeping accommodations for six persons. But when their twenty-three pieces of baggage had been passed in through the windows and stuffed under the seats, onto top bunks and in every corner, there was hardly room left in which the passengers could turn around. But that did not matter. Was this not the start of the last lap of the journey, a part of the most glorious adventure for Christ in their lives? They were on their way—the first Adventist missionaries from America to establish a mission station among heathen people.

The clock in the tower of the city hall was striking the hour of eight as their long train pulled out of the station. Tripp dimmed the compartment lights. Then the missionaries dropped to their knees to pray and to renew their consecration vows. Earnestly did they plead for power and wisdom to do aright the work which lay before them.