

## Chapter 1

### Introduction to Volume 1 1855-1868

This is the volume of beginnings. During the times of this volume, the people later to be known as Seventh-day Adventists tripled their numbers from about 1,500 to 4,500. At the start, there was no name, no organization, no system of financial support, and there were no institutions. At its end, we were called “Seventh-day Adventists” and there were seven conferences organized into a General Conference. We had a plan of finances called “systematic benevolence” that would eventually lead to tithing. We were operating a publishing house and a medical institution. We even had a few permanent church buildings and some elementary schools.

None of these developments came easily. Publishing in our own building began the year this volume began. Choosing a name and organizing a church were strongly resisted by some. Organization was accomplished right in the middle of the American Civil War. Most church enterprises had simple starts. For example, The Western Health Reform Institute - our first medical work - started in 1866 with “two doctors, two bath attendants, one nurse (untrained), three or four helpers, and one patient” - Medical Missionary, January 1894.

In 1855, after ten years of Sabbath keeping, we finally settled when to begin and end the Sabbath. At the same time, we also officially accepted the prophetic gift among us. Choosing a name would come five years later; organization, three more years down the line.

How can we determine the effect Ellen White’s ministry had on the emerging church? Four experiences have been chosen as illustrations.

#### How It All Began

IT 113-115

Nobody likes to be corrected. We don’t like it from family, friends, or those with whom we work. It isn’t any easier to take from a prophet. In the Old Testament, because kings felt they were responsible only to themselves, prophets had a hard time getting God’s messages heard and accepted. Kings seldom welcomed the prophets’ claim of higher authority.

When Jesus corrected the Jewish religious leaders, they hated Him, secretly plotting His death all the while. While pledging their

confidence in the Old Testament prophets, those leaders resisted when the message came with their names attached.

When the prophetic gift was given to Ellen Harmon at age seventeen, she faced the same resistance. Ignorance of the messenger keeps some from accepting their message. Ironically, a clear understanding of the message also may produce the same resistance because of an unwillingness to do what we know to be right.

But there was much more to Ellen White's call than correction of wrong. Visions contributed to establishing the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its many facets of witness. In November 1848, for example, Ellen White was shown that Adventists should begin to print a paper. The angel told her that from this small beginning it would become "like streams of light that went clear round the world" - *Life Sketches*, 125.

In July 1849, in response to this vision, James White began publishing an eight-page paper, *The Present Truth*. Because Adventists were small in number and scattered widely, for three years the publishing was done wherever the Whites lived, with James as editor. Then, in 1852, a simple hand-operated press was set up in a rented house at Rochester, New York. In 1855, the venture was moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, into a building constructed by Adventists. The last issue of *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, printed in Rochester, appeared on October 30, 1855. For the month of November, publishing was in transit, with the first *Review* coming out on December 4, 1855, at the new location.

That November was a significant month. And this is where our story really begins. Church leaders met at Battle Creek for an urgent discussion of the future of the fledgling church. There was still no formal organization, though publishing had raised interesting questions about the future that must soon be resolved.

Several important topics were discussed at the Battle Creek conference in November 1855. One of these was the relationship the developing church should have to the visions of Ellen White. Note the following sequence of events:

When Christ did not return to earth in 1844, the more than 50,000 waiting Millerites, or Adventists, did not stay together. A small number of about fifty went back to the study of the Bible to see where they had gone wrong in expecting the second advent of Christ at that time. They were scattered across the northeastern United States.

These few Adventists were the nucleus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Among them three major developments took place, amazingly enough, all before the year 1844 ended. The seventh-day Sabbath was introduced, a clearer understanding of the heavenly and earthly sanctuary came, and visions were given to 17-year-old Ellen Harmon. How quickly God revealed His interest in the prosperity of His church!

It seemed impossible for these few Adventists to survive as a group. Hardly anyone wanted to listen to their explanation of the sanctuary and the disappointment. The seventh-day Sabbath was certainly not popular. And Ellen Harmon's visions were even more difficult for some to accept. But circumstances began to change, and by 1851, James White could write positively about the future: "Now the door is open almost everywhere to present the truth, and many are prepared to read the publications who have formerly had no interest to investigate" - *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 19, 1851 (hereafter identified as the *Review*).

However, as prejudice diminished outside the group, James planned a course of action inside that in time bore serious consequences. He decided to eliminate all references to Ellen White and her visions in the church paper because some Adventists doubted her prophetic gift. He explained his action in an "Extra" of the *Review*, made up largely of Ellen White's experiences and visions. This "Extra" was to be the first of a paper to be published every two weeks, only for "believers" in Ellen White's visions. He wrote: "As many are prejudiced against visions, we think best at present not to insert anything of the kind in the regular paper. We will therefore publish the visions by themselves for the benefit of those who believe that God can fulfill His word and give visions in the last days" - *Review, Extra*, July 21, 1851.

For more than four years the *Review* was almost silent on Ellen White's work. During these years only five articles by her were published. None referred to visions. This was in startling contrast to what had been done earlier. Interestingly, James White never published another "Extra" as promised. During these four years, the negative treatment of the gift of prophecy, along with the absence of any mention of visions in the columns of the *Review*, led to a general lack of appreciation for the gift.

At the conference called at Battle Creek, in November 1855, it was clear that something was very wrong. A realization of this condition led

to “confessions relative to the evident departure of the remnant from the spirit of the message, and the humble, straightforward course taken by those who first embraced it” - Review, December 4, 1855.

At about this time, Ellen White wrote: “The visions have been of late less and less frequent, and my testimony for God’s people had been gone. I have thought that my work in God’s cause was done, and that I had no further duty to do, but to save my own soul, and carefully attend to my little family” - *ibid.*, January 10, 1856.

By 1855 she had published only two small books. One was *Christian Experience and Views of Ellen White* (64 pages), that appeared in 1851. The other was a *Supplement* (48 pages), printed in 1854. These two books, together with the first great controversy account of 1858, today make up the book titled *Early Writings*.

At the November 1855 meeting, Joseph Bates, J.H. Waggoner, and M.E. Cornell were to address the conference regarding spiritual gifts. Here is an excerpt from that statement: “In view of the present low state of the precious cause of our blessed Master, we feel to humble ourselves before God, and confess our unfaithfulness and departure from the way of the Lord.... Nor have we appreciated the glorious privilege of claiming the gifts which our blessed Master has vouchsafed to His people; and we greatly fear that we have grieved the Spirit by neglecting the blessings already conferred upon the church...” - *ibid.*, December 4, 1855.

The statement then explained their understanding of the proper place of the gift of prophecy: “Nor do we, as some contend, exalt these gifts or their manifestations, above the Bible; on the contrary, we test them by the Bible, making it the great rule of judgment in all things; so that whatever is not in accordance with it, in its spirit and its teachings, we unhesitatingly reject...” - *ibid.*

But then the statement came to a central issue: “While we hold these visions as emanating from the divine Mind, we would confess the inconsistency (which we believe has been displeasing to God) of professedly regarding them as messages from God, and really putting them on a level with the inventions of men. To say that they are of God, and yet we will not be tested by them, is to say that God’s will is not a test or rule for Christians” - *ibid.*, December 4, 1855.

On November 20, at the close of the conference, Ellen White was given a vision - the first that she had experienced in nearly three months. “November 20, 1855, while in prayer, the Spirit of the Lord came suddenly and powerfully upon me, and I was taken off in vision. I

saw that the Spirit of the Lord has been dying away from the church” - Testimonies, 1:113.

The content of this vision was read to the Battle Creek church on November 24, and the thirty-six members voted unanimously to have it published. The initial printing was a two-page broadside. Ellen White then added a few other counsels to complete a small sixteen-page pamphlet, which was published in December 1855, titled Testimony for the Church. This was the beginning of the nine volumes we know today as Testimonies for the Church.

The conference address at the Battle Creek meeting and Ellen White’s subsequent vision marked a turning point for the developing church. It would be eight more years before we would formally organize the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. But we were on our way.

Ellen White wrote a few weeks later: “At our late conference in Battle Creek, in November, God wrought for us. The minds of the servants of God were exercised as to the gifts of the Church, and if God’s frown had been brought upon His people because the gifts had been slighted and neglected, there was a pleasing prospect that His smiles would again be upon us, and He would graciously and mercifully revive the gifts again, and they would live in the Church, to encourage the desponding and fainting soul, and to correct and reprove the erring” - Review, January 10, 1856.

The attitude of those early Adventists toward God’s messages made a difference in His continuing to speak through His chosen messenger, Ellen White. Today she no longer lives among us. But the books remain as a testimony to God’s leading in the past. But even more than this, they provide encouragement and correction to help us in the present and the future, until Christ returns. We dare not ignore them.

#### When “Even” Was Not Sunset IT 116

Ellen White’s vision on November 20, 1855, marked the beginning of publishing Testimonies for the Church. It contained another very important question - at what time should Sabbath begin? This topic also was discussed at the Battle Creek meeting held November 16-20. It is a story that has some surprises. But first, let’s go back about twelve years earlier.

It is the fall of 1843. Eighteen-year-old Delight Oakes had been hired to teach public school at Washington, New Hampshire. Her mother, Rachel Oakes, a Seventh Day Baptist, recently widowed, came to live with her at Washington. The year before, a small church had been built at Washington by the Christian Brethren. But by the time Rachel Oakes and her daughter came to live there, most of the congregation had accepted the second advent preaching of William Miller. Even though Rachel and Delight, as Seventh Day Baptists, observed Sabbath, they attended Sunday services at the church. Frederick Wheeler, a circuit-riding Methodist preacher who also had become a Millerite Adventist, lived in nearby Hillsboro and was the pastor of the Washington church.

One Sunday, probably late in 1843, he conducted a Communion service at Washington. Rachel and Delight were present. Wheeler suggested that only those who kept all of God's commandments should participate. Rachel could hardly keep her seat. After the service, she reminded Wheeler that he was not keeping the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment. By March 1844, Wheeler was a Sabbath-keeping Adventist minister - the first such anywhere.

T.M. Preble, who lived in nearby Weare, New Hampshire, was pastor of the Free Will Baptist church at Nashua. He also accepted the Sabbath, probably through contact with Wheeler. Preble was the first Adventist to advocate the Sabbath in print in the February 28, 1845, issue of *Hope of Israel*, an Adventist periodical published in Portland, Maine. Preble's article and a subsequent tract printed the next month came to the attention of other Adventists. These included fifteen-year-old John Andrews in Paris, Maine, and Joseph Bates in Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

When Joseph Bates, retired sea captain and staunch Adventist, read what Preble had written, he decided to travel to New Hampshire to learn more about the Sabbath for himself. Bates arrived late at night at Wheeler's home in Hillsboro. Never one to be timid about his intentions, he awakened Wheeler, and they studied together the rest of the night. The next day the two of them walked ten miles to Washington, where they met with Cyrus Farnsworth on his front lawn and continued their study. Cyrus and his brother William would be among the first members of the Washington, New Hampshire, church to become Sabbath keepers. Cyrus Farnsworth's brick house still stands today. Delight Oakes would later marry Cyrus. Both she and her mother, Rachel, eventually became Seventh-day Adventists.

Bates was now thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Sabbath. He hurried back to his home in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, with the Sabbath truth burning in his heart. When he met a friend, James Madison Monroe Hall, on the bridge approach between Fairhaven and New Bedford, Hall asked: "Captain Bates, what's the news?"

Bates had an untypical answer: "The news is that the seventh day is the Sabbath."

After they studied together, Hall joined Bates in keeping the next Sabbath.

Joseph Bates wrote a Sabbath tract of his own - *The Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign* - and published it the next year, in August 1846. James and Ellen White were married that same month. They read Bates' tract and accepted the Sabbath. Writing later, Ellen White said: "I believed the truth upon the Sabbath question before I had seen anything in vision in reference to the Sabbath" - Letter 2, 1874.

The next year Ellen White had two visions, about a month apart, regarding the importance of the Sabbath. The first came on March 6, 1847. Bates witnessed this vision at his hometown, Fairhaven, Massachusetts, and published it in a one-page broadside titled, "A Vision." An account of this vision is in *Life Sketches*, 95, 96.

The second vision was given to Ellen White on Sabbath, April 3, 1847, at Topsham, Maine. It first was published as a letter from her to Joseph Bates in his above-mentioned broadside. There are two accounts of this vision, one in *Early Writings*, 32-35, and the other in *Life Sketches*, 100-103.

In both visions she saw heaven's sanctuary and the ark of God in the Most Holy Place. She watched Jesus take the Ten Commandments out of the ark and open them. The fourth commandment shone with a halo of glory around it. By this time there were about fifty Adventists in New England who observed the Sabbath. (See *Testimonies*, 1:77.)

Bates's tract on the Sabbath became the standard work on the subject. There was a major problem, however. Bates, the much-traveled sea captain, knew that sunset occurs at about six p.m. the year-round at the equator. With such knowledge, he believed that each day should begin at that time anywhere in the world. So, in his tract he taught that the Sabbath begins at six p.m. on Friday evening, and ends at six p.m. on Saturday evening. He also used Jesus' parable of the workmen starting at different hours of the day to come to the same conclusion.

Because Bates had introduced the Sabbath to the others, his argument that six p.m. is synonymous with "even," was accepted by

many, including James and Ellen White. But there were other Adventists who believed Sabbath began at sunrise. Others believed in sunset time, and still others, midnight. This diversity of practice created some confusion for about ten years.

In June 1854, James White asked Elder D. P. Hall, a minister in Wisconsin (who later defected to the Messenger Party), to write an article on the subject for the Review. It was never written. Finally, in the summer of 1855, James asked J. N. Andrews to study the subject. Remember, he was the teenager who read Preble's tract and accepted the Sabbath in Paris, Maine, ten years earlier. James White wrote that Andrews "decided to devote his time to the subject till he ascertained what the Bible taught in regard to it" - Review, December 4, 1855.

When the Battle Creek conference was called in November 1855, Andrews' conclusions were presented. (See *ibid.*) A specific point was made of rejecting the six o'clock time that had been so strongly advocated by Bates. Both Bates and Ellen White hesitated to accept Andrews' conclusions. Then Ellen White was given the vision of November 20. The time to begin the Sabbath was a part of the vision. Her brief account of this part of the vision takes the form of a conversation with an angel: She begins the account by saying: "I saw that it is even so: 'From even to even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.'"

Angel: "Take the word of God, read it, understand, and ye cannot err. Read carefully, and ye shall there find what even is, and when it is."

Ellen White: "Is the frown of God upon His people for beginning the Sabbath as they have?"

The angel then reviewed the beginnings of the Sabbath among Adventists, and Ellen White did not see that the Lord was displeased.

Ellen White: "Why is it that at this late date we must change the time to begin the Sabbath?"

Angel: "If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject" - Testimonies, 1:116.

Many Adventists had been under the impression that Ellen White had seen in vision that the Sabbath began at six o'clock. But she had only stated that the Sabbath began at "even," and they concluded that "even" was six. The vision ended with Ellen White saying: "The servants of God must draw together, press together."



Later, James White wrote regarding Ellen White's role: "The question naturally rises, If the visions are given to correct the erring, why did she not sooner see the error of the six o'clock time? I have ever been thankful that God corrected the error in His own good time, and did not suffer an unhappy division to exist among us on this point. But, dear reader, the work of the Lord on this point is in perfect harmony with the correct position upon spiritual gifts. It does not appear to be the desire of the Lord to teach His people by the gifts of the Spirit on Bible questions until His servants have diligently searched the word. When this was done on the subject of the time to commence the Sabbath, and most were established, and some were in danger of being out of harmony with the body on this subject, then, yes, then, was the very time for God to manifest His goodness in the manifestation of the gifts of His Spirit in the accomplishment of its proper work" - Review, February 25, 1868. (Quoted in Testimonies, 1:713, 714.)

There are several facts in this story that are interesting to note. The Sabbath was kept in at least four different ways for about ten years among Adventists. Another fact is that Ellen White was a Sunday keeper for almost two years after her first vision. And, of course, Ellen White and Joseph Bates were still not thoroughly convinced after Andrews' presentation. A vision corrected them! They accepted the vision as settling the question. And shouldn't this be so? James White had stated the position of the pioneers, that the Bible comes first in understanding truth. Visions brought unity and understanding of the Bible but did not take its place in study to find the truth. It is still the same today.

### The First Apostasy

IT 116-118

What is truth? Some truth can be discovered through testing and application. But there is also truth for a certain time. When James White began the publication of our first Adventist periodical in 1849, he called it *The Present Truth*. On the masthead he quoted Peter: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the PRESENT TRUTH" (2 Peter 1:12, emphasis was supplied).

In his introduction to this unpretentious eight-page periodical, James White spoke about "truth." "The Church have ever had a present truth. The present truth now, is that which shows present duty,

and the right position for us who are about to witness the time of trouble, such as never was. Present truth must be oft repeated, even to those who are established in it. This was needful in the apostles' day, and it certainly is no less important for us, who are living just before the close of time" - The Present Truth, July 1849.

But it is not always easy to get a group of people with diverse backgrounds to agree as to what "truth" is. So it was among the small band of Adventists that later was to form the nucleus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. From the beginning, these Adventists took the Bible as their standard of doctrine. But with so many differing ideas about its meaning, the gift of prophecy through Ellen White and her visions provided stability and unity in understanding of the Scriptures.

There was another major problem that was dealt with at the November 1855 meeting. This story also needs to be told.

It had to do with the first apostasy among Adventists, known as the "Messenger party" and its magazine, The Messenger of Truth. But truth it was not. Its beginning goes back to the time James and Ellen White visited the Adventist church in Jackson, Michigan, in June 1854.

Ellen White had seen in vision that the church was in confusion. She spoke to them about what she had been shown regarding one woman in particular. Two ministers there, H. S. Case and C. P. Russell, were, in Ellen White's words, "greatly prejudiced against this sister, and cried out, 'Amen! Amen!' and manifested a spirit of triumph over her, and would frequently say, 'I thought so! It is just so!'" - Spiritual Gifts, 2:181.

Ellen White was so "distressed" at their attitude, that she sat down before she finished relating her whole vision. Case and Russell "exhorted others to receive the vision, and manifested such a spirit that my husband reprov'd them," said Ellen White. The meeting ended in further confusion.

That night, Ellen White received another vision. The part of the vision that she had not revealed, was repeated to her. She was shown the wrong attitude of Case and Russell. She saw they were a major cause of division because of their proud attitude. She wrote: "I saw why the Lord had hid from me the part of the vision that related to them. It was that they might have opportunity to manifest before all what spirit they were of" - *ibid*.

Another meeting was called the next day, where she shared what she had seen the night before in vision. But these men, who earlier had strongly supported the visions, did not accept her rebuke of them.

They fought against her message, and shortly after, began what was to be known as the Messenger party. In September 1854, they began to publish their paper, *The Messenger of Truth*.

At about this time J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall, recent converts, began to preach for the Adventists in Wisconsin. These two men, however, had accepted the “age to come” theory of the millennium. This theory held that the second advent of Christ would mark the beginning of one thousand years where probation would continue and the nations would be converted under the reign of Christ and His saints. They taught that the Jews were also to play a key role.

Some former Millerite preachers had also accepted this theory after the disappointment. These included Joseph Marsh, who published a pamphlet entitled “Age to Come” and also edited *The Advent Harbinger*. His assistant on the journal was none other than O. R. L. Crosier, who had studied with Hiram Edson and had written an article for the *Day Star Extra*, February 7, 1846, that had helped to provide a correct understanding of the sanctuary and the disappointment. It had been endorsed by Ellen White as in harmony with what she had seen in vision. (See *A Word to the Little Flock*, 12). But Crosier had left the Sabbath-keeping Adventists over the Sabbath doctrine. However, he remained with a branch of the Sunday-keeping Adventists.

The larger group of Adventists under the leadership of Joshua Himes, had rejected the “age to come” theory after 1844. The small group that would eventually become the Seventh-day Adventist Church also rejected it.

In June 1854, James and Ellen White visited both Case and Russell in Jackson, Michigan, and Stephenson and Hall in Wisconsin. James told of conversation with them: “When we were in Eldorado, Wisconsin, June 1854, Elders Stephenson and Hall stated to us that they were firm believers in the ‘age to come.’ We asked them if they had ever known one sinner converted, or a backslider was even worse: ‘Those trials which arise among ourselves are the most severe’” - *Review*, September 5, 1854.

White then said: “It is not our duty to leave the work of God to contend with unreasonable men. It is our duty to point out and warn the flock to beware of the influence of those who cause divisions, then leave the matter in the hands of God” - *ibid*.

In June 1855, Ellen White was shown the same thing in vision: “I saw that the people of God must arouse and put on the armor. Christ is coming, and the great work of the last message of mercy is of too

much importance for us to leave it and come down to answer such falsehoods, misrepresentations, and slanders as the Messenger party have fed upon and have scattered abroad” - Testimonies, 1:123.

Ellen White saw in vision that though some honest people had been misled by the Messenger party, a change was coming: “I saw that such will have evidence of the truth of these matters. The church of God should move straight along, as though there were not such a people in the world” - *ibid.*, 117.

Those who gathered at the November 1855 conference at Battle Creek obviously agreed with James and Ellen White. They went on record as follows:

“Whereas, Inquiries have been made as to what course we designed to pursue in the future, in reference to the misstatements of the enemies of present truth, therefore, for the information and satisfaction of the brethren abroad.

“Resolved, That we henceforth devote ourselves exclusively to the advocacy and defense of the present truth, conducting ourselves in all things to Him who judgeth righteously, after the example of our Pattern, in affliction and in patience” - Review, December 4, 1855.

We can still apply this principle today!

Within three years, the Messenger party had all but disappeared. What happened to them? James White tells about a few of their leaders: “Wyman, rejected by his party for crime, and a town charge. Bezzo, their editor [turned schoolteacher], fined \$25 for presenting a pistol, and threatening to shoot a scholar in school. Case, run out as a preacher, and fishing on the lakes. Chapin, in a clothing store. Lillis, a spiritualist. Russell and Hicks had denounced Bezzo and the publishers of their sheet [ as ] hypocrites, and were standing alone” - Review, January 14, 1858.

What about Stephenson and Hall in Wisconsin? Stephenson adopted views that cut him off from the others and he divorced his wife to marry a younger woman. J. N. Loughborough reported: “In this forlorn condition - friendless, penniless, and with failing health - he was placed in the ‘poorhouse.’ There his mental faculties failed him - not a derangement, but a state of imbecility. The last four years of his life he had no more sense, or ability to care for himself, than a year-old child” - Pacific Union Recorder, May 12, 1910.

D. R. Hall stopped preaching, and went into selling real estate. He later went bankrupt. This led to discouragement and finally, insanity. And so the first apostasy was ended among Adventists though a few

from this group later joined with others to form the Church of God (Adventist).

Ellen White wrote later about such apostasies: “Satan knows how to make his attacks. He works upon minds to excite jealousy and dissatisfaction toward those at the head of the work. The gifts are next questioned; then, of course, they have but little weight, and instruction given through vision is disregarded. Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable, and ends in destruction” - Testimonies, 5:672.

What an accurate prediction! Will there be apostasy in the future? It is likely. But just as surely, God will continue to take care of His church.

“The Nameless One”

IT 223, 224

On the surface, it would seem a simple thing to choose a name, whether of an organization or of a newborn baby. But it was not easy in either case in early Adventist history. Sometimes names are labels that are used to ridicule. Religious groups often have the same trouble with names that individuals do. What comes to mind when you hear the name “Methodist”? “Quaker”? “Shaker”? “Millerite”? These are labels that originally were attached by enemies.

But there is sometimes as much of a problem when a group sets out to name itself. The name “Seventh-day Adventist” did not come easily. Sentiment among Adventists ran very strongly against choosing a name - any name. But a change was coming. The day before Christmas, 1850, Ellen White received a vision. She wrote: “I saw everything in heaven was in perfect order... Said the angel, ‘Behold ye and know how perfect, how beautiful, the order in heaven. Follow it’ ” - MS 11, 1850. (See Messenger to the Remnant, 45.)

The Millerite movement, from which our pioneers had come, had not taken kindly to organization, or choosing a name. The following is taken from the leading Millerite paper: “Take care that you do not seek to organize another church. No church can be organized by a man’s invention but what it becomes Babylon the moment it is organized” - The Midnight Cry, February 15, 1844.

George Storrs, the author of these words, was a leading advocate of the October 22 date for Christ's second coming. It is perhaps ironic that he was one of the first Millerite preachers to leave the movement after the disappointment, calling it a delusion.

The decade from 1850 to 1860 marked a steady development of order among our early Adventist pioneers. The first deacons were chosen, discipline was administered, the first Sabbath-School lessons were written, cards of recommendation for ministers were signed by James White and Joseph Bates, meetinghouses were erected, tents were used for evangelistic meetings, and "systematic benevolence" was begun.

All of these developments still had not brought about full organization of the church. Here is where the publishing work comes into the story. For the first eleven years of Adventist publishing, its business success or failure rested almost entirely on James White. Adventists frequently invested their money with hope of a profit. This "borrowed money" was the subject of three paragraphs by James White in the Review of February 23, 1860. He said that borrowed money he had received for publishing was not secure, and hinted that a recognized church should be operating the venture.

Roswell F. Cottrell, a leading Adventist minister, responded: "For myself I think it would be wrong to 'make us a name,' since that lies at the foundation of Babylon" - Review, March 22, 1860.

There's that word "Babylon" again. He then made the following point: "I think it is for us to take the best care of the property we can and then trust it with the Lord... Those that lend money to the office, lend it to the Lord and they must trust the Lord for it" - *ibid*.

James White replied immediately in an editorial:

1. "Babylon signifies confusion, and refers to the confusion of languages of the Babel-builders, and not to their making themselves a name."

2. "If wrong to hold church property legally, how can it be right for individual members to hold property legally?"

3. "To send out a few hundred dollars worth of books [Cottrell's suggestion] would not obviate a twentieth part of the difficulty. If we should leave this matter with the Lord, as Brother R.F.C. says, why not leave the books in his hands at the Office with the other property?"

James White argued that those who had invested money in the publishing venture might want it back, forcing the closing of the publishing office. Then, he came directly to Cottrell's major point: "

‘Leave this matter to the Lord.’ This is the plea. Well, if the Lord has not left the management of his goods to us, that with them we may spread the truth, then we can leave it with him. But we regard it dangerous to leave with the Lord what he has left with us, and thus sit down upon the stool of do little, or nothing.”

White went on: “Now it is perfectly right to leave the sun, moon and stars with the Lord; also the earth with its revolutions, the ebbing and flowing of the tides, the running of the rivers, the changing seasons, sunshine and rain, heat and cold - we say, ‘Let us leave these with the Lord.’ But if God in his everlasting word calls on us to act the part of faithful stewards of his goods, we had better attend to these matters in a legal manner - the only way we can handle real estate in this world” - *ibid.*, April 5, 1860.

This marked the beginning of a prolonged debate in the Review on organization. This finally led to the calling of a meeting at Battle Creek on September 29, 1860. Churches were asked to appoint delegates. Arrangements were announced:

“Several empty houses will be engaged for the use of those who come in campmeeting style....Also stables and barns will be hired for horses. Stable room and hay for horses will be provided for 50 cents each, for three nights” - *ibid.*, September 4, 1860.

The second notice gave more details of the purpose for the meeting: “The principle object of this general gathering is to call... active friends of the cause, to consider several important questions, such as the proper method of holding church property, the wants of our Office of publication, etc.” - *ibid.*, September 11, 1860.

Those who came were not a group of gray-haired brethren. It’s true that Joseph Bates, sixty-eight years old, was selected as chairman. That was expected. But among those gathered were James White, thirty-nine; Ellen White, thirty-two; Uriah Smith, twenty-eight; J. N. Andrews, thirty-one; J. H. Waggoner, forty; M. E. Cornell, thirty-three; and J. N. Loughborough, twenty-eight.

An evidence of the importance of the meeting is that the minutes filled several pages of the October 9, 16, and 23 issues of the Review. At the meetings, Moses Hull (who later became a leading spiritualist) moved that because James White had written so much on the subject of organization, he should present his views.

James White then spoke of the problems that Cottrell’s opposition had created. Cottrell was not there, but had written a letter stating his views, and it was read. This prompted considerable discussion over a

period of three days, becoming especially heated when the topic turned to choosing a name. T. J. Butler, the delegate from Gilboa, Ohio, strongly favored the name "Church of God." James White had also favored such a name earlier.

It was made clear that if we were to organize our publishing work, the church that would own it needed a name. When the morning meeting adjourned on Sunday, September 30, a committee consisting of Andrews, Waggoner and Butler was appointed to provide a suggestion for a name. When they again convened at four p.m., the committee had no recommendation. That afternoon, the "Advent Review Publishing Association" was formed. But still no name for the church.

On Monday morning, October 1, a constitution was presented and approved for the publishing association. It was then moved that we adopt a name for the church. There was more discussion regarding choosing a church name. Brother Butler, from Ohio, again proposed the name "Church of God." More discussion. At eleven a.m., it was voted to adjourn for one hour.

When they reconvened, the question of choosing a name was once again taken up, and a vote was taken to adopt a name. The account states: "The name Church of God was proposed and zealously advocated by some [no doubt by T. J. Butler from Ohio]. It was objected that this name was already in use by some denominations, and on that account, was indefinite, besides having to the world an appearance of presumption" - *ibid.*, October 23, 1860.

Finally the name "Seventh-day Adventist" was proposed as a name that would be "expressive of our faith and position." Brother Hewitt offered the following: "Resolved, That we take the name Seventh-day Adventists." For some reason, the group did not like the wording, and the following was suggested by Brother Poole: "Resolved, That we call ourselves Seventh-day Adventists."

After lengthy consideration, the resolution was passed, with only Brother Butler dissenting and four others not voting. Moses Hull then moved that the name chosen be recommended to the churches generally. This was passed, again, with Brother Butler the only one voting against the resolution. T. J. Butler, by the way, later created other problems in Ohio and left the church.

Ellen White's vision regarding the name, first published in *Testimony for the Church*, number 6, in January, 1861, is better understood in light of the 1860 meeting just considered. She said: "The



name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind.... I was shown that almost every fanatic who has arisen who wishes to hide his sentiments that he may lead away others, claims to belong to the church of God.... The name is too indefinite for the remnant people of God” - Testimonies, 1:224 (emphasis supplied).

Soon after the conference, Roswell F. Cottrell accepted the action and wrote an apology: “If any have been encouraged in a spirit of waywardness by what I have written, I am sorry for it. I did not intend it. And I would exhort such to put away such a spirit, to seek pardon for the past, and in the future endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” - Review, November 6, 1860.

So, the name of the church had been chosen. But there was still another name to choose. James and Ellen White’s fourth son was born on September 20, just nine days before this historic meeting at Battle Creek. With three sons already, the Whites were perhaps caught off guard. Maybe they hoped for a daughter this time. Or they might have been so busy planning for the meeting that there had been no time to decide on a name. Whatever the reason, when he was born, they had no name chosen.

Immediately after the meeting James was called to travel to Illinois and Wisconsin. Seven letters are preserved from Ellen White to her husband between October 12 and November 21, 1860. Here are some excerpts:

“Our nameless one grows finely, weighed him last Wednesday. He then weighed ten pounds and one quarter. He is well” - October 12 (Letter 10, 1860).

“The little nameless one was weighed this morning. He weighed eleven pounds and three quarters. He is quite good-natured” - Early October (Letter 12a, 1860).

“The little nameless one is fat and rugged, and very quiet, has not had a cold yet” - October 22 (Letter 11, 1860).

In other letters she refers to him as “babe” and “the fourth one.”

Letters to Lucinda Hall, a close friend, finds Ellen White using familiar words again:

“We have just weighed our nameless one” - October 24 (Letter 17, 1860).

Still another to Lucinda:

“I improve this opportunity while the yet nameless one is asleep. (Send him a name)” - November 2 (Letter 18, 1860, all emphasis supplied).

On November 16, James was visiting in Markesan, Wisconsin, and had what he called a “presentiment” that the baby was very sick. He saw the baby lying in Ellen’s lap, with his head and face terribly swollen. James wrote to her, telling her of what he had seen. When she received the letter on November 19, the baby was perfectly well. That night, however, the bed was made with damp sheets, and the next morning he was very sick, with symptoms to those James had witnessed.

The same night he had “seen” his sick son, James dreamed that a certain firm of brokers in Battle Creek were selling shopworn shoes in a small store. This seemed strange to him, and he awoke wondering if the dream had any significance.

Earlier, because there was no bank in Battle Creek at that time, James had deposited with this seemingly reliable firm, \$1,800 that had been sent to him to be invested in stock for the publishing association. Memories of his dream left him until, a few days later when he received a telegram from Ellen. She had written: “Monday night [November 19] our child was taken sick in the night and all day yesterday was very sick, dangerous.... He is a very sick child. I thought you had ought to know this, and then you could do as you pleased about returning” - Letter 15, 1860.

James did return home on November 25, in time to see his son before he died on December 14, 1860, after living less than three months. The Whites had finally named their son, John Herbert. With no other preacher available, James spoke at his own son’s funeral. The afternoon of the same day, as he was entering the Review office, he remembered the other part of his dream, that seemed to indicate that the money in the hands of the brokers was not safe. He called the office workers together and told them that he believed God was warning him. A decision was made to immediately invest the money in building materials for the new office. By the last of June, all the money had been withdrawn from the brokers. Two days later they were declared bankrupt. Other depositors in Battle Creek lost more than \$50,000.

Many knew that James had invested money with these men, and asked: “How much did you lose by these men?” James White could answer: “Not one dollar.” The experience had far-reaching influence as

## MY DEAR BROTHER M . . .

others heard of it, and many invested money with the Review office without interest, knowing that God would protect it - Life Sketches (1880 edition), 351-353.

John Herbert, James and Ellen White's fourth son, never saw his first birthday. But the church named that year has grown from barely fifty hearty souls after the disappointment, to several million worldwide. Can it be that just as publishing interests helped us toward a name, so publishing around the world will help to finish the work so nobly begun? Surely it will.