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General Conference Secretariat and the Mission Enterprise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

In the more than 150 years since the Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded at the first General Conference Session in May 1863, many things have changed in the Church. One of the few that has remained the same is the office of Secretary, which is as old as the General Conference (GC) itself, but of course the role of the GC Secretary has changed. One of the changes is that he (and thus far the Secretary has always been a “he”) gradually acquired a staff—and its role, too, has changed over the years.

This is the second of two papers on the history of the GC Secretariat and of what Arthur G. Daniells, 111 years ago, called the Adventist “mission enterprise.”¹ The two papers are connected by the role of Secretariat. As I just observed, however, that role has not been an unchanging one in Adventist history. The Secretariat’s role underwent organizational evolution. Part of its story is that, after a long period of being primarily focused on foreign mission, its main concerns came instead to be policy, governance, and administration. Mission was still in the portfolio, but it did not have the same priority, even while successive Secretaries and their Associates insisted that it did.

In the first paper, I considered the origins and development of what today we call the ISE program. In this paper, I discuss the development of GC Secretariat. In this paper, I sketch the stages of Secretariat’s history. I show that in Secretariat’s first four decades it was chiefly a conduit for communication and collection of information, before then becoming what might be termed “mission control”: the world church’s center for recruiting, training, and deploying of missionaries worldwide. The promotion of mission was an important and largely forgotten part of this

stage of the church's collective history. But then in a third phase, while still being the central clearing point for calling missionaries and setting missionary policies, Secretariat became more focused on supporting the burgeoning denominational bureaucracy and on policing *Policy*. In this period, Secretariat, to put it bluntly, bureaucratized. Most recently, we seem to be entering a fourth phase, with Secretariat and its associated denominational entities at world headquarters shifting to a renewed focus on strategically planning for outreach to unreached people groups and on supporting and developing cross-cultural mission and missionaries.

This paper concludes by arguing that this mission focus is what the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs in the 21st century if it is to make a real impact on territories such as the 10/40 Window and large cities, where, in its 150 years, the Church has previously had minimal influence. The world church needs the GC Secretariat once again to become Adventist "mission control."

First Phase: 1863–1901

The constitution adopted on May 21, 1863, provided that the General Conference's "officers . . . shall be a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of three, of whom the President shall be one" (Art. II).² In 1863, there were six conferences, employing a total workforce of thirty, and around 125 local churches and 3,500 members; because there was not much to administer, there were few administrators. Further, for the denomination's first 25 years, with Adventists limited both geographically and numerically, GC Sessions were held annually, so most important matters and decisions were taken to the Session, rather than to committees. Thus, the three officers and the Executive Committee were less important than they later became. It is not entirely clear what the officers did in those early years. The constitution briefly defined the Treasurer's function, but about the other two officers it stated simply: "The duties of the President and Secretary shall be such respectively as usually pertains to those offices" (Art. III).

What this seems to have meant in practice was that the Secretary took the minutes at the annual Sessions. In addition, following an action taken by the fourth GC Session in 1866 that thenceforth every conference should submit statistical reports to the Secretary, from 1867 onwards, he presented a statistical report to each annual Session. But these seem to have been the sum of the Secretary's duties for the first twenty years of the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As the church grew, however, administration became more important. So, too, did the mundane task of taking official minutes, since Sessions

lasted longer and took more actions, which were also more substantive and consequential in nature. Every major decision taken by GC Sessions or by the Executive Committee was summarized and recorded by the Secretary. These included rulings on church organization; missionary strategy and placement; creation of new church entities; and miscellaneous decisions on policy, doctrine, financial matters, and the denominational stance on political and governmental matters.

By 1883, the number of congregations, church members, and employees had all quadrupled or more in the twenty years since 1863. There were 32 conferences along with the Central European, British, and Scandinavian Missions.³ More and more decisions were being deferred by the annual Sessions to the GC Committee (as the Executive Committee was typically called). At the 1883 GC Session, complaints were voiced that “more thorough work [could] be accomplished in the various branches of our cause by faithful correspondence on the part of secretaries.” This seems to have been directed at the GC Secretary, A. B. Oyen, for the Session did not re-elect him; instead it voted back into office the veteran Uriah Smith (who had previously served 17 terms in three separate spells as Secretary: 1863–1873, 1874–1876, 1877–1881). The Session also amended the constitution to add a fourth officer: A Corresponding Secretary (who seems, however, to have worked under the direction of the Secretary). Membership of the GC Committee (GCC) was also increased for the first time, from three members to five.⁴ The Corresponding Secretary’s position existed for 16 years and was filled by women as well as men.

The role of the Secretary’s office had evidently evolved and grown. It now revolved around maintaining correspondence with the conference and mission secretaries; sharing with them the decisions taken by Sessions and by Executive Committee meetings (themselves given official form by the Secretary); and trying to ensure that these decisions were being honored and implemented by the burgeoning denomination.

In 1886, the GCC membership was increased to seven and, for the first time, the Secretary was elected a member.⁵ Thereafter, he invariably was a member of the Executive Committee, though the Treasurer, as yet, was not; and neither would be *ex officio* members until after the 1901 reforms. The 1887 Session, in an important moment in both GC administrative history and wider Adventist history, amended the GC constitution to increase the number of officers from four to seven, with the addition of “a home mission secretary, a foreign mission secretary, and an educational secretary.”⁶ This was an interesting step and reflected wider currents in a church still working out how best to manage foreign missions. I will briefly discuss this step and its context, but a key point is that it illustrates the fact that the Secretary had, as yet, no special responsibility for mission.

Eight years earlier, the 1879 GC Session had extensively debated a proposal to establish a Mission Board. In the end, it voted to create a "Missionary Board," which was to "have special oversight of all our foreign missions, under . . . the General Conference Committee." It is not clear if the preference in nomenclature for Missionary Board over Mission Board had any significance but given the original intention that the Executive Committee itself would be a "missionary board" (Art. V), the creation of a separate board was an admission of relative failure. It also probably reflected some heartfelt comments, made by John N. Andrews to a special GC Session earlier in 1879, about the "difficulties under which laborers in foreign fields are placed, while the General Conference Committee [members] are so scattered, and are so overburdened with other duties" that, Andrews implied, they were failing in their duty.⁷ Seven months later, the creation of the Missionary Board was surely a response. Ellen G. White's son, W. C. (Willie) White, seems to have been secretary of the board, but it is notable that three of the first seven members were women: Minerva Chapman, the GC treasurer, Maria Huntley, secretary of the Tract and Missionary Society, and Maud Sisley, who was not yet 30 years old.⁸

It is difficult to know what impact the Missionary Board had. There is little sense from GC Session minutes of the Missionary Board's work, but stray references show it existed,⁹ and if, as is likely, it conducted the bulk of its business outside sessions, then we would have no record of such, since there are no minutes of any standing GC committees or boards from this early. The Missionary Board may have played a role in the European Missionary Councils of the early 1880s that provided strategic direction to mission in Europe. In 1886, missionaries sent abroad numbered in double digits for the first time, so the board probably had some success. Yet not enough, for the 1887 Session action to establish the post of Foreign Mission Secretary was clearly an attempt to strengthen the Church's mission enterprise.

Back in 1879, after identifying problems, J. N. Andrews had proposed a solution, namely that the GC appoint an official specifically to care for overseas missions and missionaries, which Andrews described as "an officer . . . corresponding in some respects to the Secretary of the Missionary Boards of other denominations."¹⁰ He envisaged that such "an officer [would] inform himself fully in reference to all the foreign work, and be prepared to respond to the communications of laborers in foreign fields without delay." This is, of course, another hint that the Secretary in in this period was not undertaking official correspondence as efficiently and expeditiously as he might.

It was not until eight years later that, as noted earlier, the 1887 Session finally took action to implement Andrews's recommendation for a permanent secretary for foreign mission; Andrews by this time had been dead

for four years. A week into the Session, Willie White proposed the creation of the three new officer positions and the vote was carried.¹¹ Evidently there was different rationale for the home mission and foreign mission secretaries than for the position of education secretary, which can be seen as a precursor to the Education Department created 16 years later.¹² Meanwhile, a week after the motion had been carried, which hints at considerable discussion in backrooms, all three positions were filled, and W. C. White was elected the first Foreign Mission Secretary!¹³ A year later, at the 1888 GC session, better known for theological and generational conflict, Willie White gave the first Foreign Mission Secretary's report.¹⁴ We might call this the first Secretariat report on mission, though not given by the Secretary *per se*. His role at this time seems to have been primarily that of keeping the minutes and records of GC Sessions, following through on whether actions had been implemented, and loosely supervising the work of the corresponding secretary, whose role was increasingly redundant given that the Foreign Mission Secretary would correspond with mission stations and missionaries. The significance of White's role can partly be measured by the fact that in the winter of 1888-89 he was effectively acting GC president.¹⁵

By 1889, of 33 conferences, six were in Europe and the South Pacific, with missions in Britain and South Africa.¹⁶ The Missionary Board was attracting criticism from church leaders, including missionary leaders. John Corliss, for example, who had served in Australia, publicly identified a "painful contrast" between what the board "ought to [have] done" and what it did.¹⁷

Important decisions were taken at the 1889 Session, though only after considerable debate and after very active encouragement by GC President Ole Olsen. The Session voted to hold future GC Sessions on a biennial instead of annual basis, to increase both the responsibilities of the Executive Committee and its membership (from seven to nine), and to establish a Foreign Mission Board (FMB). This meant the end of the effectively moribund Missionary Board and the creation of an institutional basis for the foreign mission secretary. The Session approved a constitution for the FMB and established a Foreign Mission Committee, composed of six people, whose terms were to be of the same length as those of GC officers. The committee had minor duties in its own right, but its importance was that its members, meeting together with the Executive Committee, would constitute a "Foreign Mission Board" with the task of managing the foreign missionary program of the General Conference.¹⁸

For the next fourteen years, it was with the Mission Board, as it was often called, that responsibility lay for administering the church's foreign missionary program. The FMB initially had a positive impact.¹⁹ It also grew in importance and a manifestation of this came at the 1897 GC

Session, which abolished the education, home mission, and foreign mission secretaries. The term “foreign mission secretary” continued to be used for the next six years, but it referred actually to the secretary of the FMB: appointed by the Mission Board, not elected by the Session. The Board also elected a president, who in practice had taken over the foreign mission secretary’s role.²⁰

These could have been positive developments, but they were not. The problem was partly the toxic atmosphere that had developed in Battle Creek. This in turn owed much to the malign influence of Dr. John H. Kellogg. In addition, however, the GC president elected in 1897, George A. Irwin, was unduly protective of his power. The Foreign Mission Board began to be seen—began to see itself, even—as being in rivalry with the GC officers, at least when it came to the mission fields. Two bodies “at the top” responsible for mission planning, fundraising, and strategizing did not allow these functions to be carried out more efficiently; instead they were often not done at all. The lack of clarity about the respective powers of the Mission Board and the GCC resulted in inaction at the top and confusion on the ground. This resulted, in turn, in irate and exasperated mission leaders. For example, Edson White wrote from his Mississippi Valley mission station to his mother in Australia, expressing his frustration with leaders at the top. “In this part of the field where I am working, the principle seems to be . . . ‘Where there is a head, HIT IT.’ If the General Conference is so balled up that they cannot or will not do anything for [this field] then why not stand aside & let those who will help do something?”²¹ If this is how a leader who was the son of the propheticess and based close to Battle Creek felt, the frustration felt in Australia and Europe by dynamic leaders such as A. G. Daniells and L. R. Conradi can be imagined.²² Unsurprisingly, they began to contemplate radical reform.

In the meanwhile, however, the GC Secretary’s role increased, and he was given his own office in the Review and Herald Press building, which also functioned as the GC headquarters in Battle Creek.²³ The Secretary’s job had become a full-time one, keeping abreast of developments around the world, keeping minutes of GC Committee meetings, and informing the world church of its decisions as well as those of Sessions. In 1899, Secretary Lewis A. Hoopes told that year’s GC Session that, in the preceding two years, “the work of the Recording and Corresponding secretaries was put into the hands of one person” and that “it seems to me that it would be better if the two secretaries were merged into one”. Discussion ensued over the use of General Secretary versus Secretary, which is reminiscent of some debates we have had in the GC and division secretaries group, but fourteen years after the secretary’s position was split, it was reunited into one with the simple title of Secretary.²⁴

For the period 1863–1901, almost the first forty years of the church's life, the GC Secretary's role was essentially one of recording, collating, and presenting information and then communicating it to conference and mission leaders. It was not yet an executive role and neither was it especially closely identified with mission, although the Secretary's office was responsible for communicating with missionaries around the world.

Second Phase: 1901–c.1970

In 1901, an extraordinary, even radical, restructuring of the church's organization took place at the urging of Ellen White, who had recently returned from nine years' mission service in Australia and recognized that the system of organization that had worked for a sect limited to the Northeast and Midwest of the United States did not work well for a church that now had a foothold in all the world's inhabited continents and had designs to reach the world.²⁵ Reforms included the universal implementation of the union conference model that had previously been restricted to Australasia and Europe; the abolition of independent associations and societies and their transformation into departments, present at each level of structure; and the assignment of enhanced representation and authority to the GCC.

Although we often forget the fact, the reorganization was not completed in 1901. The final steps were taken in 1903, including the effective suppression of the Mission Board and its supersession by the Executive Committee (see below), along with the election of new officers to serve alongside the president elected in 1901, Arthur G. Daniells. The officers elected with him in 1901 were Howard E. Osborne as Secretary and Harvey M. Mitchell as Treasurer.²⁶ Both men served just one term and were then replaced—it is not entirely clear why. Osborne suffered a serious illness while Secretary, but it is likely that it was stress related, and it seems probable that neither he nor Mitchell had the same vision of worldwide mission as Daniells, who accordingly asked for and was given a different team.²⁷

The End of the FMB and the GCC as Mission Board

A new secretary and new treasurer who shared Daniells's passion for mission were elected in 1903. William A. Spicer served as Secretary until 1922 when he became president. Irwin H. Evans was Treasurer from 1903 to 1909 when he was elected president of the Asiatic Division (the first Adventist world division) and replaced by Walter T. Knox who then served as treasurer until he retired in 1922.²⁸

The year after the epochal 1901 Session, Daniells told a meeting of the GC officer group that “he believed the future work of the General Conference would be, primarily, that of a great Missionary Board; therefore, he thought that all work could be handled by one committee,” instead of requiring a separate Mission Board and General Conference Association. It was agreed to “suggest to officers of the General Conference Mission Board and General Conference Association that they form an outline of a plan for simplifying the organizations of the General Conference, and present the same to the next General Conference in Session.”²⁹

The following year’s GC Session voted the following: “The General Conference Committee shall have the supervision of the missionary operations of the denomination.” The FMB was suppressed: partly because it had tried to operate almost independently of the GC officers and Executive Committee; partly because church leaders, including Ellen White, had lost confidence in it.³⁰ The FMB effectively ceased operating in 1903. It retained a shadow existence in name, allowing it, as Willie White observed to the 1903 Session, “to be utilized for necessary legal business.” For a few years, the officers continued to speak of foreign mission-related matters as “mission board” affairs and GCC meetings concerning them as “Mission Board” meetings, either out of habit, or to distinguish them from the other business.³¹ But when the “Mission Board” was referred to after 1903, it meant the Executive Committee. It henceforth would oversee the church’s business relating to missions and missionaries, though.³²

I will come back to the significance of this later, but first I will say a little more about the other changes in organization and mindset that took place in 1901 and 1903. This period was a real watershed because it involved more than the adoption of unions and departments throughout the Adventist organization. Three other things were crucial, though they are often ignored. First was the way reformed organizational structures were implemented and how the GC administration related to them. To adopt a political metaphor used by Daniells and others in 1902 and 1903, much of the world church had been made self-governing; all agreed that this was positive.³³ Second was the development of new administrative structures *within* the GC, including the creation, largely by Secretary Spicer, of an infrastructure for recruiting, deploying, and maintaining missionaries from the North American homeland and the new European and Australian heartlands to Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and the islands of the Pacific. We still essentially use today the infrastructure developed during Spicer’s secretaryship. Third was the vision and passion for mission shared by the three officers, working together closely; each year from 1903 to 1922, all three were passionate proponents of worldwide mission.

I want to underscore the importance of this. The institutions and mechanisms were very important, and a few years ago, I used to stress those more. But on reflection, I have concluded that the personalities were very important: what really made the new regime work as far as the foreign missionary program was concerned was that the three officers were determined to transform the church's mission enterprise. Other officers would not have made as much of the organizational reforms as Daniells, Spicer, Evans, and Knox did.

Spicer and Daniells were officers of the General Conference together until 1926. They and Evans, the treasurer from 1903 to 1909, were visionaries of global mission, as was W. C. White who continued to exercise very considerable influence behind the scenes, and who now had several years of foreign mission service under his belt (in contrast to when he was elected foreign mission secretary!).

Acting as a team, together with the Treasurer and the GC Committee, which had become the Adventist Church's foreign mission board, Daniells and Spicer planned strategically for mission advances in an unprecedented way. We will come back to this point in a moment but first let us pick up again the thread of the importance of the supersession of the FMB by the GCC.

As GC president and chair of the GCC, Daniells became the head of missions for the church with Spicer as his able deputy. It was during his and Spicer's administrations, from 1901 through 1930, that Adventism truly became a worldwide movement, and this was the case because the head of the church was also the head of its missions. In fact, Daniells and Spicer both essentially viewed the two roles as one. No longer was there lack of clarity about the respective powers of the Mission Board and the GCC, resulting in paralysis. The GC Committee now *was* the Mission Board (and at times used that title).³⁴ This meant that all the authority and resources of the Executive Committee and of the GC presidency and office administration, as well as the personal influence of the top leaders, was dedicated to missions. As a result, 1901 to 1930 was a golden age of Adventist missions and the foundation of the modern mission program.

The GC Committee had attempted to function as a missionary board in the 1860s and 1870s and failed. Why did it succeed in the 1900s? It was because there was now a sound organization that devolved operational authority to the unions, instead of the GC administration and Executive Committee having to relate to and supervise an ever-increasing number of conferences. It was, in sum, because of the structural changes introduced at the 1901 and 1903 Sessions that the GCC could dedicate itself to being a missionary board.

This was what veteran leaders had been desiring and urging. At the time of the 1901 reorganization, Uriah Smith articulated his view that the GC Committee should “distribute its administrative responsibilities among the union conferences, and to get into a position where it could give all its time and influence and power to missionary problems.” If Daniells and the GCC did this, Smith believed, it would enable the Church “to send forth in this generation this gospel of the kingdom, for a witness to all nations.”³⁵

At the 1903 GC Session, W. C. White expressed similar views, rhetorically asking, “What is there left for a General Conference to do?” in the aftermath of the 1901 reforms and the implementation of the union conference model of structure. Having posed the question, he provided the answer.

Why, the General Conference has to look after the mission fields; the General Conference, by this system of organization, is forced to become a mission board; and our General Conference must . . . let Union Conferences attend to the work of their Union Conference. And the only thing that is left for the General Conference Committee is to do the mission work; and I pray God that its full strength may be given to that part of the work.³⁶

The GC officers did not accept any rival, however, to the authority of the “GC” (in White’s terms) at supra-union level or over the mission enterprise. This is reflected in Daniells’s determined and successful bid to suppress the “General European Conference,” which was “discontinued” by vote of the GCC in 1907, so that there would be no resurrection of the divided control over mission that characterized the FMB years.³⁷

One could say the Secretary’s duties were lessened, for, with the spread of unions, there was greater devolution of responsibilities for church governance to other levels of denominational authority. In fact, the secretary’s responsibilities were increased, for, with more sophisticated governing structures, increasing membership, and expanding mission, ultimately there was more for the GC headquarters to oversee, and many new duties were assigned to the Secretary’s office. During this era, it took responsibility for recruiting, dispatching, coordinating, and caring for missionaries, as well as for publicizing and promoting foreign mission among church members in the denomination’s original North American heartland and its new European and Australian heartlands.

Secretariat as “Mission Control”

The end result was the creation of the GC Secretariat, though during the Daniells–Spicer years the term seems to have been used collectively for the leaders of departments (then titled secretaries), instead of for the

staff of the GC Secretary.³⁸ At the 1936 GC Session, the Secretary, M. E. Kern used “Secretariat” in his report as a collective term for his department—this seems to have been the first time the term was used in this way.³⁹ Certainly, however, regardless of nomenclature, both the number and the responsibilities of the Secretary’s staff had significantly expanded in the early 1900s.

In 1905, two new positions subordinate to the Secretary were created: those of Home Secretary and Statistical Secretary. Unlike the innovations of extra secretaries in the 1880s, however, these positions were to assist the GC Secretary, rather than to compete with him (and were listed in the *Yearbook* under the Officers as “Appointed Assistants”).⁴⁰ The Statistical Secretary started publishing the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* in 1904 and the stand alone *Annual Statistical Report* in 1907. This was important, for, as the Secretariat accumulated more data, it took over the role of planning—deliberately and purposefully—for expanding mission. In 1913, the position of Home Secretary was retitled: General Conference Assistant Secretary; and in 1916 the post of Office Secretary, essentially a second assistant secretary (and not a clerical position) was added.⁴¹ The 1918 Session created (and filled) the post of Associate Secretary who, unlike the Assistant and Statistical Secretaries, was one of the officers of the General Conference (though like them he was, as his title implied, certainly junior to the Secretary).⁴² The Assistant Secretary appointed in 1916, J. L. Shaw, became the first ever Associate Secretary in 1918 and the Assistant Secretaryship was then left vacant until filled in January 1921 by C. K. Meyers.⁴³ Four years later, the 1922 Session made the Statistical Secretary one of the officers; in moving to amend the constitution, Spicer with typical warmth affirmed his longstanding colleague, Rogers: “We have but one Statistical Secretary in the denomination.”⁴⁴ Four years on again, the 1926 Session amended the Constitution again to provide for multiple (initially two) Associate Secretaries.⁴⁵

The Secretary’s staff played a role in administering denominational organization, to be sure, but the increase in staff was largely a result of the need to administer the fast-growing foreign mission program. In the 1890s, expansion both in mission fields and in numbers of missionaries had stalled. After 1901, the number of missionary appointees increased until World War I, then spiked again in 1920, before remaining buoyant for a decade until the coming of the Great Depression (figure 1). In the first twenty years after the GC Committee replaced the Foreign Mission Board, the Adventist Church sent 2,257 “laborers to foreign fields.” Even in the fifteen years from the start of the Great Depression until the end of World War II, there were 1,597 new appointees.

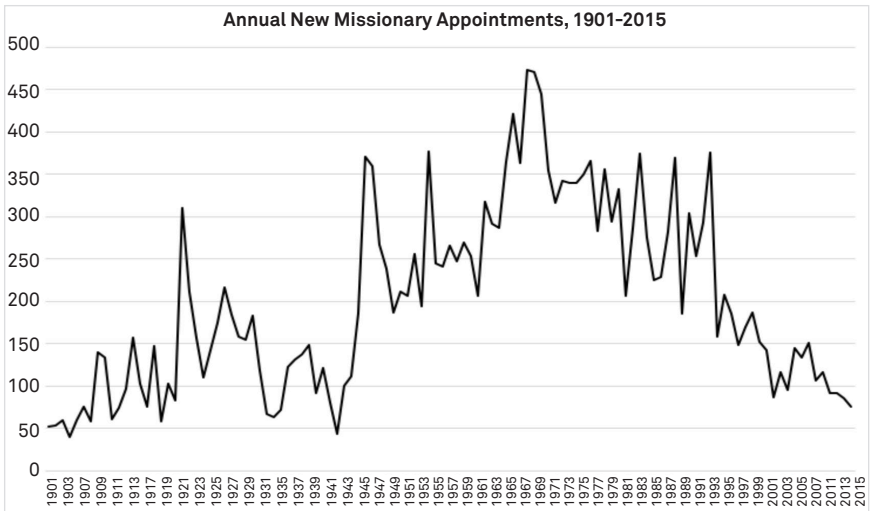


Figure 1

Figure 1 reveals considerable oscillation (annual fluctuations are inevitable), but the overall picture emerges more clearly in figure 2, which charts the annual number of new appointees using ten-year moving averages. From the 1901 reorganization, there was a steady growth, checked only by the Great Depression and Second World War, followed by remarkable growth that plateaued at the end of the 1960s, since when there has been steep decline.

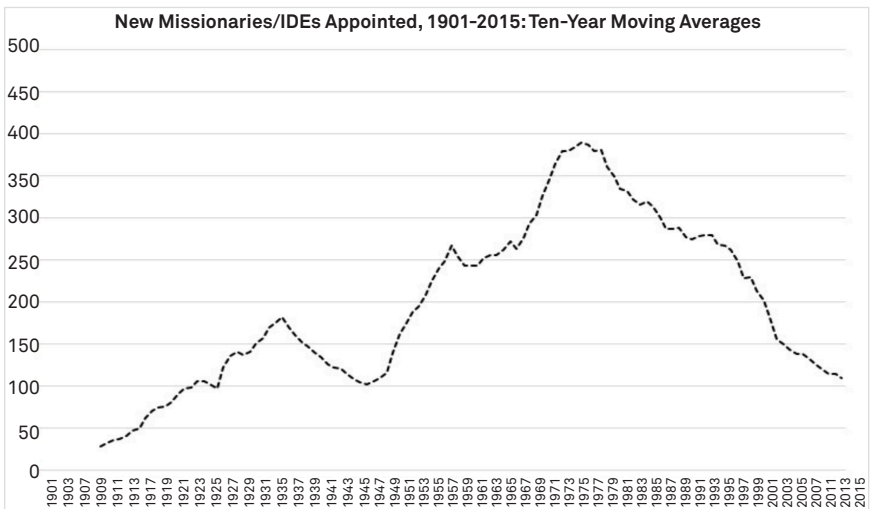


Figure 2

Planning Strategically

The growth of the early twentieth century prompts two questions: What was Secretariat seeking to do? Did it have an overarching concept underpinning growth?

The answer to the second question is that they did. As to what they were trying to do: Spicer and his successors in the secretaryship, Kern, Meyers, Dick, and Rebok (and also, I think, Beach, though perhaps to a lesser degree), all had as their chief desire to enter unentered territory and to preach Christ to those who did not know Him. This view was shared by Daniells and Spicer as president, and later by long-term President J. L. McElhany (and probably by C. H. Watson, the one-term Depression-era GC president). All were of course happy to see Catholics and nominal Christians of other Protestants converted to a more authentic branch of Christ's followers. They had a particular burden, however, for adherents of what we would now call "world religions."

Daniells set a strategic vision: it was during his presidency that, for the first time, we can speak of strategic planning in any meaningful sense. At the 1905 GC Session, for example, Daniells set out a strategic vision of greater efforts in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. He puts stress not only on Africa, traditionally understood as a mission field, but also on strongholds of Islam, Confucianism–Daoism, and Buddhism.

Who can tell [he asked delegates] why 720 of our ministers should be located in America among one-twentieth of the world's population while only 240 of our ministers are sent forth to work for the other nineteen-twentieths? What good reason can be given for spending annually \$536,302.76 tithes among seventy-five millions, and only \$155,516.57 among fourteen hundred millions of the world's perishing? We rejoice that we are able to name so many lands in which we have opened missions; but we deeply regret that in many of them our laborers are so few, and our efforts are so feeble. We should materially strengthen our missions in Nyassaland [sic] [Malawi], Rhodesia [Zambia and Zimbabwe], China, Korea, Ceylon [Sri Lanka], Turkey, and Egypt. We should not delay longer to enter such lands as the Philippines, Madagascar, Greece, Uganda, and Persia [Iran]. All that started this movement at the beginning, and has urged it onward to its present position, urges us with increasing emphasis to press on until this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world for a witness unto all nations. Then, and not till then, will the end come, for which we so earnestly long.⁴⁶

This approach was not limited to Daniells. Two years later, W. W. Prescott, then president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association and editor of the *Review*, urged its readers to consider "what a privilege

they would feel it to be to give of their means for the extension of this message in all lands!" He bade them:

Think of the four hundred millions in China! Think of the three hundred millions in India! Remember that one half of the population of the world is found in China, India, and Africa. Our workers who are toiling beyond their strength in these heathen lands are under no greater obligation to minister to these benighted people than are those who are adding farm to farm or thousands to thousands while surrounded with all the comforts and conveniences which money can furnish.⁴⁷

For Spicer, not only was it the role of the GC mission leaders to set strategic priorities—it was also above all else their role to channel world-church funds and personnel resources to those who had never heard of Jesus. This was his top priority. This is how he summarized the attitudes of church leaders in the early 1890s, when he had been secretary of the FMB.

We didn't have much of an idea of going to the heathen. We didn't expect to go in any really strong way. We never expected to go to the Catholic countries, We thought: We will get a few along the edges, and the Lord will come; but the Lord all the time had in mind this purpose, of calling the heathen, of calling through all the Catholic lands for His people to come.⁴⁸

Spicer's own attitudes to "heathen" people changed by going as a missionary to India. He began to encourage North American Adventists to feel responsibility for remote fields, populated by non-Christians. A characteristic appeal is this: "The world is one field and the harvest surely will not be gathered in any place until the whole is ripened."⁴⁹ He was passionate about "fields like India and China where surely we ought to run through with the message, telling the people what these things mean before the very closing scenes are upon us."⁵⁰

At the 1903 Session, having been newly elected GC Secretary, Spicer made an appeal to delegates to do more in China, where the first Adventist minister, John Anderson, had only arrived the year before. Spicer shared with the delegates a letter from Anderson proposing "that every conference in America send one of its laborers to enter that great land." Some administrators might have dismissed this as impracticable and simply said nothing about it, but Spicer not only shared it, he continued: "It may be thought too much, and that it is not a practical suggestion; but surely it would not be too much for China's four hundred million. These fifty

years we have heard of the woes and sorrows of China; but during these fifty years, we have never told suffering China of the glorious message of salvation that God has given to us.”⁵¹ This is typical of his approach. What is also notable, however, is the emphasis on numbers in the statement quoted here and those of Daniells and Prescott. This reflects the increasing importance of the Statistical Secretary and the extent to which, in planning for mission, church leaders used data.

Depression and World War

The Great Depression inevitably led to some retrenchment and a decline in the numbers of missionaries sent out, but less than might have been, for church leaders during the Depression ensured that missionaries and mission stations faced as few cuts as possible. Unquestionably important in protecting the mission enterprise were two largely forgotten GC Secretaries, Cecil K. Meyers (in office 1926–33 and the first Secretary born outside the United States),⁵² and his successor, Milton Kern (Secretary 1933–36).⁵³ In 1930 and 1931, the denominational workforce in North America was cut by 10%; in the foreign mission fields, however, the workforce decreased less than 5%, though salaries were cut.⁵⁴ There were 628 new mission appointments from 1930 to 1935; significantly, too, as Kern pointed out in his report to the 1936 GC Session, 45% of the new missionaries were from outside the North American Division, a much higher percentage than normal. While the figure of 628, in a six-year period, stood in contrast to the 714 appointed in the preceding four years, it was, as Kern observed, still a sizeable number, given that, in his words, “we have been passing through most serious times, with cut budgets and depleted working forces.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Kern stressed, “not one mission station has been abandoned during these hard years.”⁵⁶ The focus of GC Secretariat was on maintaining mission stations and missionaries in areas that had access to “tribes and kindreds.”

Understanding the need for extra efforts to motivate North American church members to give generously to support mission stations and to volunteer for service overseas, the GC Secretariat innovated in mission promotion. Meyers pioneered the use of documentary movies of mission fields to educate North American members (and non-members, since the Church appealed for funds more widely, through Ingathering) about the reality in those fields. One showing in Battle Creek, at the time of the 1932 Annual Council, as part of a public lecture by Meyers, won praise from the local newspaper (in a town that was no longer solidly Adventist), and Meyers continued to make films about Adventist mission fields.⁵⁷ Kern, who replaced Meyers soon after, appealed to the 1936 Session for “greater

efforts [to] be put forth” to promote mission service by the youth in North America, founded on “well-planned cooperation between the schools and the General Conference Committee.”⁵⁸ This bore long-lasting fruit, as will be seen below, but in addition, the use of motion pictures to promote mission became characteristic of Secretariat. Kern’s successor, Ernest D. Dick, helped to supervise the editing of a film shot of the 1936 GC Session. Two years later, the GC invested funds in a project by several Protestant mission boards to cooperatively create “a comprehensive set of motion pictures of missions in Africa,” while in response to a request from the GC officers—prompted by members of Secretariat—unions in mission fields made films “on the most outstanding features of [their] work,” which were produced into composite motion pictures by the respective divisions.⁵⁹

The Second World War had a major negative impact, but as soon as the war was over, there was a huge increase in the number of mission appointees sent out, thanks in large part to the men who served from 1936 to 1950 as GC President and Secretary: respectively J. L. McElhany and E. D. Dick.⁶⁰ In the spring of 1942, when Allied victory in World War II was by no means assured, indeed at the height of the military success of the Axis powers, Dick pushed forward an extraordinarily bold agenda, as one of the associate secretaries described soon afterwards.

At . . . the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee earnest consideration was given to the necessity of having missionary families under appointment and securing such preparation as is available here in the homeland for work . . . when this present conflict ceases or when the Lord otherwise indicates that the way is open for missionaries to be sent forward once more. One section of the world field which received particular attention at that time was the Near East, consisting of several important Moslem countries.

The General Conference has decided that ten families should be immediately placed under appointment and definitely earmarked for work in the Moslem lands in the Near East with the understanding that arrangements would be made for these missionary appointees to study the language of the field and other subjects here in this country in preparation for the time when they can go forward to those mission fields. It is understood that it may be a year or two or possibly longer before the Lord opens up the way for missionaries to go to those fields once more.⁶¹

Church leaders set aside funds, and arranged for training of missionary families, against the day that peace returned. Some were initially sent “to attend the Kennedy School of Missions [at Hartford Seminary], in preparation for work among the Moslems.”⁶² George Keough, pioneer missionary to the Middle East and contextualizer of mission *par excellence*,

was brought to Washington from the Arabic Union Mission to head a program on Islamic culture and Arabic language the Seminary. Within twelve months of the end of the war, considerable numbers of new missionaries began arriving in the Middle East; several families travelled to Egypt even before the war was over, Neal C. Wilson's among them.⁶³

But the other priority was China. There was an extraordinary resurgence in missionary numbers after 1945. Missionaries who had stayed on through the war were being taken home on well-deserved furloughs (and then being brought back), and new missionaries were sailing for China in late 1945 and 1946, when Asia was still in chaos and transportation extremely difficult. By the end of 1946 there were 93 missionaries working in the China Division, including 41 ordained ministers; twelve months later, the total number had increased almost 50 percent to 135, of which 55 were ministers; 1948 saw another increase to 158 foreign missionaries, 52 of whom were ministers.⁶⁴ The Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War meant these numbers collapsed in 1949 and 1950. But it is striking that the world Church's top priorities after the destruction of the Second World War—priorities set *during* the war, so that the Church could (and did) seize the missional initiative as soon as the war ended—were the heartlands of two of the world's great religions, Islam and Confucianism-Daoism.

Post-war Mission Boom

In the 1950s and 1960s, initially under Dick as Secretary, briefly under Denton E. Rebok (1952-54), and then for 16 years under Walter R. Beach (1954-70), GC Secretariat continued to be responsible for the church's foreign mission program, while the Secretary himself played an ever more important role as one of the three premier GC officers.⁶⁵ These were the golden days of Adventist mission, with a weekly column listing new "missionary sailings" in the *Review* and annual numbers of new appointees climbing steadily. Secretariat remained "mission control." In addition, part of the role of the Secretariat was to look inwards and help coordinate the departmental work. However, during this era, there was a willingness to subordinate all to the demands of mission.

For example, in the mid-1960s, a working group on missionary recruiting submitted a report on "unifying our procedures in the various departments of the General Conference which deal specifically with securing commitments to overseas service." The committee's report singled out for praise "the loyal support to the mission program which is offered by the General Conference Departments, especially . . . the Medical, Missionary Volunteer, and Education Departments." At this time, "the various departments" were vigorously engaged in recruiting for missionary service.

So active were they, indeed, that the Committee on Appointees, which received the report, felt it necessary to formally recommend that, when departments heard “from individuals who indicate[d] a definite, immediate interest in dedicating their lives to mission service,” they should “be turned in to the office” of the Secretary, who would then allocate names to the associate secretaries. The committee also recommended that, after applications had been passed on to the Secretary, only “the Secretarial Department” (as they called it) should communicate with candidates, transmitting the various appropriate forms and guiding them through appropriate stages of the process.⁶⁶ What is notable is how actively the departments were involved in promoting missionary service and soliciting candidates for it. There was no sense, such as would creep in later, of missionary service being the sole prerogative of Secretariat. And indeed, there was no attempt by the Committee on Appointees to defend Secretariat’s turf, while trying to ensure a systematic approach once people offered to serve, one of its recommendations was to facilitate continued promotion, by departments, of mission service.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, a regular item at Secretariat Staff meetings was promoting mission. Kern’s call for a carefully planned effort to enthuse young people in North America for mission service (see pp. 12-13, above) had born distinct fruit. My staff and I have found literally dozens of references in the minutes of the 1950s and 1960s, some of them brief, but some several pages in length, to associate secretaries making regular visits to all the colleges and most of the hospitals in North America. The visits were planned to ensure that each campus was visited by a member of the

Secretariat. The aims were to recruit, but also to build awareness of mission worldwide and thus to inculcate a spirit of sacrifice and generosity. Those who could would go; those who could not would pray or give. But all this was driven by Secretariat, albeit with the strong support of the Public Relations Bureau (as it was known at the time) and other GC departments.

Third Phase: c.1970-2010

From the 1970s, however, perhaps even the late 1960s, the role of Secretariat has evolved yet further. In the church’s first forty years the GC Secretary’s role had been one of collating and corresponding; in the next seventy-odd years, it was one of joint chief planner for mission expansion and chief executive of the foreign mission program. But in the last 45 years, it has, I suggest, become one of chief bureaucrat and guardian of *Policy*.

The whole focus of the GC headquarters had once been on recruiting and supporting missionaries, and on planning to expand missions. But gradually Secretariat shifted to policing policy, Presidential focused on administration and governance, and GC departments likewise gradually moved away from seeing foreign missionary work as a priority. For example, in 1981, a meeting of two associate secretaries with the North American Adventist college and university chaplains, to plan for Mission Emphasis Week, prompted a prolonged, almost philosophical, discussion within GC Secretariat of its role in the denomination's mission program. According to the minutes: "It was pointed out that there is a philosophical aspect that affects . . . Secretariat. We are not a 'promotional' office, we are an 'administrative' office." Some attendees expressed concern that suggestions arising from the chaplains' meeting "include quite a bit of promotion." This prompted comments that the "Communication Department *should* be the arm of all GC areas [and] *should* provide a 'service' to us."⁶⁸

The concern expressed about the lack of promotion of missionary recruiting by the GC Communications Department is, I suggest, an early manifestation of the attitude still evident today in a number of GC entities that mission is the business of Secretariat and the Office of Adventist Mission. As we have seen, this had not been the case earlier in the twentieth century, when virtually all departments regularly contributed to missionary recruiting and promotion. But what is also striking is Secretariat's attitude: "We are *not* a 'promotional' office, we are an 'administrative' office." This was a remarkable shift in mentality: as we saw earlier, from the 1930s if not earlier, the Secretariat absolutely regarded itself as engaged in promoting as well as administering the Church's mission enterprise—and it was particularly committed to promotion in the 1950s and 1960s. A change in the Secretary and the passage of little more than a decade had been sufficient to effect a sea change in mentality; but the decade in question was the 1970s, which saw a major shift in emphasis for the world headquarters as a whole, and for Secretariat in particular.

This partly was a result of the expansion, in every sense, of the denomination. By 1970, 107 years after the General Conference was founded, it had 75 member unions, comprising 379 conferences and missions, employing a workforce of over 26,000, with more than 2 million members of 16,505 local churches. It was inevitable that administration would grow in size and complexity as well. In 1973, GC President Robert Pierson and Secretary Clyde Franz created the first permanent committees with significant authority delegated from the Executive Committee: the President's Administrative Council, or PRADCO; the President's Executive Advisory, or PREXAD; and the GC Administrative Committee, or ADCOM. Ten years later, PRADCO and ADCOM were merged. Meanwhile, the number of standing and *ad hoc* committees at the world headquarters multiplied.

Nobody loves bureaucracy, but the truth is, administration is necessary. Secretariat provided the indispensable administration of the expanding committee system; and the leader of the burgeoning GC bureaucracy was the Secretary. Increasingly, too, many division and union secretaries had their own snowballing administrative loads and needed assistance and advice. GC Secretariat had played a key role in the preparation and publication of *Working Policy* in 1926 when it was 63 pages long. But *Working Policy* became ever larger, and divisions adopted their own localized versions.

At the GC Session of 1975 the position of Undersecretary was created. Duties specific to the Undersecretary were serving as the agenda secretary for the GC Session, Annual Council, Spring Meeting, and officers' meetings; responsibility for *Working Policy*; and providing oversight to administrative and personnel matters within the office of the Secretariat. The creation of this new officer position and its assigned responsibilities speaks volumes about the trajectory of the Secretariat in the 1970s. Yet policy-related duties could not be restricted to the Undersecretary. Increasingly, the Associate Secretaries spent more and more time advising and training their counterparts at other levels of church structure, helping them to ensure they were in accordance with world church policies and practices, and assisting them to improve the professionalism and effectiveness of division and union Secretariats.

All these are worthy and valuable contributions to the global Seventh-day Adventist Church. But somewhere along the way, something had to give—and it was what for seventy years had been the most important function of the GC Secretary and Secretariat: foreign mission as it had been called, or global mission as it became known in 1990, when, tellingly, it was placed under Presidential. Distracted by heavy administrative responsibilities, Secretariat was not able to stop the world church's mission program experiencing mission drift. The record number of foreign missionaries (or "interdivisional employees" [IDEs] as they became in 1983),⁶⁹ recruited and dispatched in a single year was 473, in 1969; in 1970, the number was 470. But in the 45 years since then—the period in which Secretariat's focus gradually shifted—the number of IDEs sent to serve has steadily decreased. Only once (1986) did the number for one year exceed 400; and in five of the last eleven years the annual total was in double, rather than triple digits.⁷⁰ This decline is partly due to changes in the wider missional environment within the Seventh-day Adventist Church; but it is also a symptom of a larger problem.

This becomes especially clear if we consider not the annual totals of missionary appointees, but at the trend in appointee numbers expressed as a ratio of missionaries per 10,000 members, as shown in figure 3 (p. 17). This

shows the extent of support for the Adventist missionary enterprise in terms of the potential personnel resources available, which have risen, like total membership, year on year for over a century. If one looks at the figures thus, then the high point of Adventist missionary *commitment* was in 1920, when there slightly more than 16 missionaries for every 10,000 members, though there is still a spike in the figures in the immediate aftermath of World War II, reflecting the post-war mission expansion. In considering this ratio it is appropriate, again because of the inevitable fluctuations in annualized statistics, to view the data as ten-year moving averages. The trend thus revealed in figure 4 confirms the picture shown in the annual figures in figure 3.

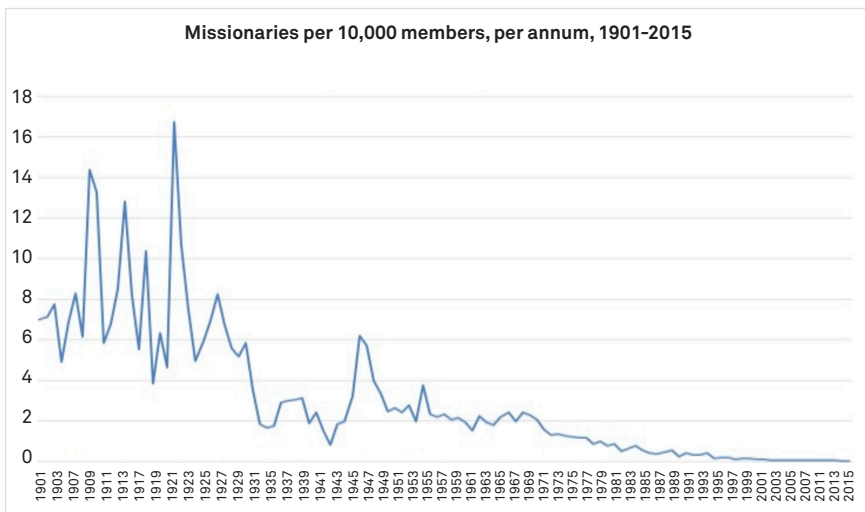


Figure 3

Indeed, the trend in the ten-year moving-average figures illustrates even more clearly the steady growth and stability from 1903 through 1930 and sharp decline during the Depression and World War II. In terms of resources available to the world church, the 25 years from the end of the war no longer appear quite as remarkable, while the decline since the late 1960s is even more marked. In sum, the collective missionary effort relative to world church membership is but a fraction of what it was half a century.

By the late twentieth century, Seventh-day Adventist mission was “on autopilot,” as Dr. Ng put it in 2010.⁷¹ Now, nobody took a conscious decision that Secretariat should downplay the world church’s mission program; nor did anyone deliberately decide to shift the focus away from

entering new territories and reaching unreached people groups. Rather, both happened gradually. One reason was that the growing strength of the church in what once had been mission fields meant that the nature of global mission changed. But “as the church grew, mission appeared to lose its intentionality and attention.” As a result, in the early 21st century, “mission appear[ed] to be running by default, without a strategic focus.”⁷² In the world headquarters, leaders often affirmed that the Church’s focus was on reaching the unreached. Yet the great majority of baptisms from the “1000 Days of Reaping” and “Harvest 90” quinquennial programs and the various Net initiatives of the nineties came in areas that were *already heavily reached*. These global programs did little to advance Adventism where it was unrepresented or significantly under-represented. We said one thing, did another, concentrating on evangelizing easy territory.

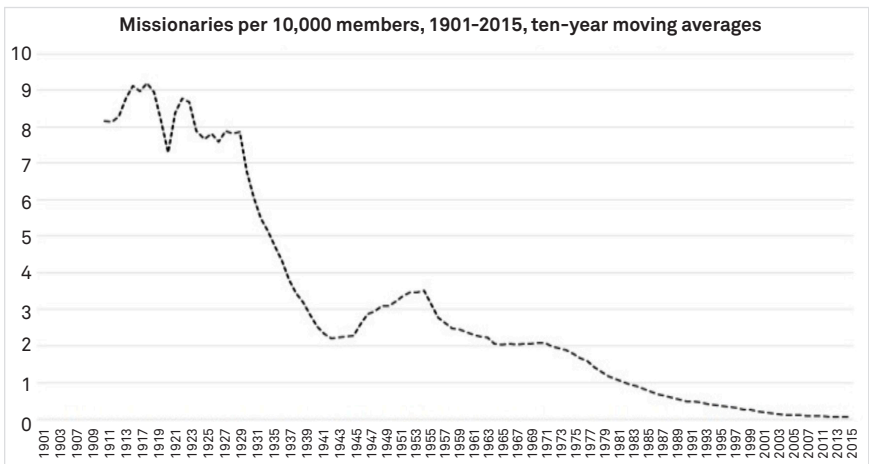


Figure 4

There was some awareness among church leaders of this problem. The “Global Strategy” document was an attempt at a corrective. As Wagner Kuhn points out, however, the Global Mission initiative stemmed from a realization of lack of missional success in certain territories, but missiological reflection on methods to realize the global mission strategy, and in particular about critical contextualization, came later and followed slowly. This hampered efforts to reach adherents of world religions (who once had been Secretariat’s self-assigned primary target), in contrast to nominal Christians and animists who fueled Adventist conversion rates in the late 20th century.⁷³ At the same time, despite the creation of the Offices of Global Mission and of Mission Awareness, in 1990 and 1994 respectively, which helped to funnel GC resources and church-member donations to

the 10/40 Window, there was no major reallocation of resources by the world church from areas that have effectively been reached to those that have not (which include but are not limited to the 10/40 Window). As a result, while the Global Mission strategy has produced impressive church growth in some areas, it has achieved little in many others, and virtually nothing in West Asia and Northwestern Africa.

In sum, since c.1970, the world church, to a great extent, continued patterns of planning for and resourcing worldwide mission that reflect the mission needs of the early and mid-twentieth century, rather than of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. And, without anyone realizing it, those patterns became ruts that we just followed, repeating what we had done before without thinking about whether honoring our original goals meant doing something different.

Adventists in fact kept doing the same thing because it brought extraordinary success in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the islands of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. But as a result, we lost sight of the fact that across most of the 10/40 Window and much of Western and Central Europe, there were many unreached or under-reached people groups, especially (though not only) in large cities.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the post-Christian culture poses new missional challenges to the Church in regions with large concentrations of church members, such as North America, Australasia and, increasingly, Latin America. Globally, during Secretariats third phase, we shifted from an emphasis on “pioneer mission to mission of least resistance.”⁷⁵

Secretariat: The Present

In the last quinquennium, at the world headquarters, things have started to change. By 2010 it had become plain that more collaboration and unity of purpose was needed. And so, the General Conference Mission Board was created, to exercise oversight of the world church’s mission program. It is fair to ask whether the Mission Board is having the far-reaching impact that had been hoped for it, which also prompts questions about whether increasing its scope of authority and the number of standing committees responsible to it, might produce a change for the better.

But in the world headquarters, meanwhile, all the GC’s mission-related entities have been placed under the Secretary: the Office of Adventist Mission (created in 2005 by the merger of Global Mission and Mission Awareness), Adventist Volunteer Services, the Institute of World Mission, the renamed and reshaped International Personnel Resources and Services (formerly TRIPS), and the renamed and reconceptualized Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. Together with the Associate Secretaries

(the Secretariat proper), all these form the GC “Mission Family” of entities, headed by the Secretary. In 2012, the Office of Membership Systems was added. Vitally, all these entities work together, utilizing their different areas of expertise collaboratively, intentionally, and very amicably. There is a regular meeting of the senior management of these entities, the “Mission Leadership Council,” a continuation, in effect, of the regular Secretariat Staff Meeting which had taken place from the 1950s through the 1990s, but which had been suspended during Matthew Bediako’s Secretaryship (2000-2010). The leaders of these entities also serve on the Mission Board’s Strategy and Funding Committee, though there are perceptions that it spends rather more time on funding than on strategizing for mission.

Have all the problems been solved? No. Much still remains to be done. But it does seem that the GC Secretariat has at least changed course.

Wider Conclusions

The chief conclusion of this study, undertaken for Dr. Ng and the Mission Leadership Council is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the “Great Second Advent Movement,” has departed from the original goals and aspirations of its collective mission project. Change is natural and inevitable, but there is good reason to regret the shift that has taken place over the last fifty years. The changes, on the whole, were inimical to both the original goals of Seventh-day Adventist mission and to our current aspiration which is to reach the world. Furthermore, the changes were not the result of a conscious decision to alter course. They crept in, gradually, and by default, though we cannot say they took church leaders completely unawares. For, as we have seen, at various times, members of the Secretariat explicitly recognized that the church’s missionary workforce was shifting from a primarily soul-winning one to a primarily technical one, much of it located in countries that already had a significant Adventist presence, and dedicated largely to maintaining institutions that were increasingly themselves corporately uncertain of how they related to the denomination’s soul-winning objectives. But though Secretariat periodically identified the trend that was taking place, there seem to have been too few opportunities for thinking in big-picture terms, or asking almost philosophical questions about “what are we doing”; instead, the constant operational and administrative needs to respond to calls for employees from outside North America and to advise about policy and governance left insufficient time for reflection, and so Secretariat dealt with business at hand. It was, as Dr. Ng characterized it seven years ago, “on autopilot.” Consequently, Secretariat proved unable to reverse the trend. Nobody took a decision; it just happened. The position we find ourselves in that reminds one of the old joke about the foreigner in Ireland, lost, asking a local

“How do I get to Dublin?” and being told “I wouldn’t start from here.” But here is where we are, without ever having intended to be here.

We also find ourselves in a position that perhaps mirrors that of church leaders in 1896, when Ellen White posed a rhetorical question. She asked whether “the men and women that God has appointed to do the most solemn work ever given to mortals, [are] in partnership with Jesus

Christ in His great firm?”⁷⁶ Christ’s business is making disciples. Is that the real goal of the ISE program? Really, I mean, not rhetorically? Or has managing successful businesses become the real goal? If so, can we truly say we are partners with Jesus in His great firm whose business is to seek and save the lost?

Once it was easier: missionaries once took picture rolls and magic lantern shows into the wilds, in order to convert savages. Today the so-called savages are likely to be sending their best and brightest as missionaries to the worldly-wise overly sophisticated secular nations of what was once Christendom. There is no need to send Americans to Zimbabwe or Kenya to proselytize and do pastoral ministry, because we have local Adventists who do it better. Some would say that it is inevitable that most missionaries have become professors, managers, and technical specialists, since expertise in higher education, in high-tech medicine and nursing, in accounting, IT, and management, is what Adventism in the Global South still needs but cannot supply in sufficient quantity, and is what the Global North *can* supply.

But there *are* still parts of the world where local Adventist communities cannot supply the pastors and evangelists needed to proclaim the gospel or where clinics, in which medical personnel get personal with local people, would be cost-effective and socially appropriate ways of helping people towards good health. Is the problem, then, one of priorities? Should world church financial resources be deployed in countries where there are sufficient members (even sufficient funds, by local cost of living standards) to preach, teach, and make disciples? Ought they not instead be committed to those areas of the world where Adventists lack the critical mass to successfully evangelize? In words spoken by Gottfried Oosterwal to a Secretariat Staff Meeting in 1983, we “need to [have a] burden” ourselves and we “need to lay the burden on the Division leadership [for] pioneer missionary work.”⁷⁷

We also, however, need to ask ourselves what the role of Secretariat should be in the 21st century: What is its special mission, the function that it can particularly, perhaps uniquely, fulfill? The administrative duties it has taken on in the last forty years are important, but only at the world headquarters can planning that is truly strategic—planning for mission advances, of the kind that characterized the early 20th century Adventist

Church—take place. There is an unparalleled concentration of expertise in the “Mission Family” because of its responsibilities for recruiting, training, sending, sustaining, supporting and returning international service employees; for planning and resourcing global church planting; and for promoting cross-cultural mission service around the world. What, however, do we do with that expertise?

This is the conversation we have been having among the Mission Family entities. But the conversation has to be not just about how we do business. It has, we concluded, to be about how we can, as a Church, get back closer to the vision of church leaders a century and more ago, who ambitiously took on a whole-world approach to mission, something that rational minds would have deemed crazy, but our forefathers and foremothers thought all things possible by faith.

If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to make significant advances in North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe, then in Secretariat we need to recapture the boldness and vision of church leaders in the past. We need to break out of the ruts we corporately fell into in the late 20th century. The world church would do well to give further, far-reaching consideration to how resources are distributed worldwide. There is a need for innovative, less bureaucratic structures and processes for mission and for international, intercultural service, so that church members with a passion for mission, as well as those with specialized technical or administrative skills, can be drawn from everywhere, and sent everywhere. The GC Secretariat should resume its historic place in shaping and directing the Seventh-day Adventist mission enterprise, and focusing its efforts once again on areas and people groups where the church’s work is not well established. Church leaders cannot be content with the progress we made in the late 20th century. Our mission must never again be set to autopilot.

Abbreviations

ARH	<i>Adventist Review & Sabbath Herald/Review & Herald/Adventist Review</i>
ASH	<i>Annual Statistical Report</i>
DB	<i>Daily Bulletin of the General Conference</i>
FMB	Foreign Mission Board
GC Ar.	General Conference Archives
GCB	<i>General Conference Bulletin</i>
GCC	General Conference (Executive) Committee
RC	Record Group
SDAE	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia</i> , 2nd. rev. [ie., 3rd] ed., 2 vols. (1996)

Endnotes

- ¹Daniells to E. E. Andross, June 12, 1906, Presidential Outgoing Letters, GC Ar., RG 11, box 0147–48, Letterbook, no. 38, p. 864.
- ²The constitution text is in *ARH 21* (May 26, 1863): 204–5.
- ³*Yearbook 1884*, p. 73.
- ⁴Twenty-Second Session, 9th, 12th, and 13th meetings, Nov. 14 and Nov. 19, 1883, minutes in *Yearbook 1884*, pp. 38–39, 41; GC Constitution as amended in 1883, *ibid.*, p. 69.
- ⁵Twenty-Fifth Session, 9th and 14th meetings, Nov. 29 (p.m.) and Dec. 6, 1886, minutes, *Yearbook 1887*, pp. 32, 41.
- ⁶Twenty-Sixth Session, 8th meeting, Nov. 20, 1887, *Yearbook 1888*, p. 37 (and *ARH 64*, 49 [Dec. 13, 1887]: 777); GC Constitution as amended in 1887, in *Yearbook 1888*, p. 91.
- ⁷Fourth Special Session, 5th Meeting, April 18 (2:30 p.m.), 1879, minutes, *ARH 53*, 17 (Apr. 24, 1879): 133.
- ⁸Eighteenth Session, 3rd and 13th meetings, Nov. 10 and 25, 1879, minutes, *ARH 54*, nos. 21, 23–24 (Nov. 20, Dec. 4 and 11, 1879): 161–62, 184, 190. See Jerry Allen Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), pp. 27–28.
- ⁹E.g., Twenty-Sixth Session, 9th meeting, Nov. 22, 1887, minutes in *Yearbook 1888*, p. 39. Note: A report from an ad hoc committee to the 1887 Session twice refers to “Mission Board(s),” but missions had boards instead of executive committees (cf. *Yearbook 1886*, p. 11, list of “European Mission Boards”) and it is clear from the minutes that the references are to these governing committees, not to the GC Mission Board: Twenty-Fifth Session, 12th meeting, Dec. 5, 1886, minutes in *Yearbook 1887*, pp. 36–37.
- ¹⁰Fourth Special Session, 5th Meeting, April 18, 1879, see n. 7, above.
- ¹¹Twenty-Sixth Session, 8th meeting, Nov. 20, 1887, *Yearbook 1888*, p. 37.
- ¹²The educational secretary’s position had been discontinued, after a decade, by the 1897 GC Session. The creation of a department along the lines we currently understand that took place at the 1903 Session: cf. Thirty-Fifth Session, 19th meeting, Apr. 9 (p.m.), 1903, proceedings in *GCB 5* (Apr. 10, 1903): 158; *SDAE*, I, 495–96.
- ¹³Twenty-Sixth Session, 14th meeting, Nov. 27, 1887, *Yearbook 1888*, p. 46.
- ¹⁴Twenty-Seventh Session: Rreport published in full in *Yearbook 1889*, pp. 72–78.
- ¹⁵W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, Presidential Incoming Letters, GC Ar., RG 11, box 3059, folder 11; see Moon, *W. C. White*, pp. 85–86.
- ¹⁶See *Yearbook 1890*, p. 59,
- ¹⁷J. O. Corliss, “The demands of foreign fields,” *ARH 67*, 24 (June 17, 1890): 374.
- ¹⁸Twenty-Eighth Session Minutes in *DB 3*, nos. 1, 5, 6 and 14 (1889): 1, 45, 59, 139.
- ¹⁹B. L. Bauer, “Congregational and Mission Structures and How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Has Related to Them,” unpublished DMiss diss. (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1982), 104–40; *SDAE*, II, 97.
- ²⁰For actions of the thirty-second Session, see *GCB*, 2, nos. 1, 3 (1897–1898): 67, 129; and, for developments with the FMB see, e.g., thirty-third Session, 20th meeting, Feb. 25 (p.m.), 1899, *DB*, 8, 11 (1899): 102.

- ²¹J. E. White to E. G. White, June 18, 1899 (capitals in original), Ellen G. White Estate, Correspondence.
- ²²Cf. Daniells speech at thirty-eighth GC Session, 13th meeting, May 22, 1913, *GCB* 7, 7 (1913): 108.
- ²³A. L. White, "The Story of the Review and Herald Fire," *ARH* 154, 49 (1977): 3.
- ²⁴Thirty-Third Session, 26th meeting, March 1, 1899, *DB* 8, 14 (March 3, 1899): 139.
- ²⁵See the definitive study, Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989).
- ²⁶"General Conference Officers": <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gcofficers>.
- ²⁷Osborne was only 27 when elected secretary and may well have found the post too much for him. His life sketch from 1908 states: "He was two years secretary of the General Conference, when a severe attack of pleuropneumonia caused him to resign his position, and go to California for his health, which was quite rapidly restored." This may suggest a stress-related breakdown in health (he died at age 34, but of typhoid fever, leaving it open as to whether he had a weak constitution). See "Obituaries," *ARH* 85, no. 14 (April 2, 1908): 31. Mitchell may have suffered illness in office as well, since he died in 1904 (aged only 55) and his life sketch noted that he had been "suffering for several months with a complication of diseases," but as his death occurred 20 months after the 1903 Session, it seems unlikely that the illness from which he died was the cause of his replacement in 1903 (and the absence of GC representation at his funeral service may point to a falling out with Daniells). See "Obituaries," *ARH* 81, no. 52 (Dec. 29, 1904): 23.
- ²⁸There is no authoritative biography of Spicer but see Godfrey T. Anderson, *Spicer: Leader with the Common Touch* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1983), which does draw on Spicer's correspondence. There are no biographies of Evans or Knox. See E. D. Dick, "Death of Elder I. H. Evans," *ARH* 122, no. 49 (Dec. 6, 1945): 24; H. A. Morrison, "I. H. Evans," *ARH* 122, no. 51 (Dec. 20, 1945): 1, 20, 23; C. H. Watson, "Death of Elder W. T. Knox," *ARH* 108, no. 48 (Nov. 26, 1931): 24; and A. G. Daniells, "Elder W. T. Knox," *ARH* 108, no. 51 (Dec. 17, 1931): 1, 21.
- ²⁹"Informal Minority Council of General Conference Committee", [morning] Oct. 17, 1902, in *GCC Proceedings* (GC Ar., RG 1), vol. V, p. 115a.
- ³⁰For Ellen White's critical view, see Oliver, *SDA organizational structure*, 133n.
- ³¹Thirty-Fifth Session, 23rd meeting, April 11, 1903, *GCB* 5, 13 (April 14, 1903): 195. For instances of continuing "Mission Board" usage, see Daniells to Conradi, June 24, 1904, and Daniells to Spicer, June 14, 1906, Presidential Outgoing Letters, GC Ar., RG 11, boxes 144-45 and 147-48, Letterbook no. 34, p. 196, and Letterbook no. 38, p. 938.
- ³²There is no comprehensive study of this process but Bauer, "Congregational and Mission Structures" (cited in #19, above), is a key work that explores a number of the relevant issues.
- ³³E.g., A. G. Daniells, "The Southern Union Conference," *ARH* 79, 5 (Feb. 4, 1902): 75; A. T. Jones, speech to thirty-fifth GC Session, 19th meeting, Apr. 9 (2 p.m.), 1903, in *GCB* 5 (Apr. 10, 1903): 154; A. G. Daniells, "The Canadian Union Conference," *ARH* 81, no. 42 (Oct. 20, 1904): 17; cf. Willie White's speech to the 1903 Session, cited below (n. 36).

- ³⁴E.g., *Manual for Missionary Appointees: Issued by the General Conference Committee of Seventh-day Adventists* (the Mission Board of Seventh-day Adventists) (1927).
- ³⁵A. G. Daniells, tribute to Smith, in *ARH* 80, no. 10 (Mar. 10, 1903): 4.
- ³⁶W. C. White, Speech at the Thirty-Fifth Session, 19th meeting, April 9 (2 p.m.), 1903, *GCB* 5, no. 10 (April 10, 1903): 158.
- ³⁷E.g., see Daniells to Andross, June 12, 1906 (cited in n. 1, above); GCC Council (in Gland, Switzerland), May 16 [p.m.], 1907, *GCC Proceedings*, VII, 291–94 (“discontinued” at p. 291). For the background (but a slightly cynical view of Daniells’s motivations), see George Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, 2nd ed. (Hagerstown, MD: *Review & Herald*, 2006), pp. 134–35.
- ³⁸A. W. Spalding, *Christ’s Last Legion: A History of Seventh-day Adventists, Covering the Years 1901–1948* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing, 1949), p. 491; *SDAE*, I, 460–61.
- ³⁹M. E. Kern, “The Secretary’s Report.” *ARH* 113, no. 24, *General Conference Report*, no. 3 (May 31, 1936): 59.
- ⁴⁰The date of the creation of the Statistical Secretary’s position is unclear. According to *SDAE*, II, 702, Harvey Edson Rogers, who had been statistical clerk from 1901, was appointed Statistical Secretary in 1905. Certainly both his appointment and that of Estella Houser as Home Secretary were voted by GCC on June 5, 1905, which also voted to “release . . . Professor Bland” from the “assistant treasurership” and to call Harvey A. Morrison to that post (*GCC Proceedings* [GC Ar., RG 1], VII, 24). Yet Rogers, Houser, and W. T. Bland were all listed in the previous year’s *Yearbook*, by the titles voted in 1905, as the “appointed assistants” to the three officers (*Yearbook 1904*, p. 11). The most likely explanation is that the officers (rather than GCC) made these appointments in 1904 and they were retrospectively formalized by the GCC (except in the case of Morrison, who decided to remain at Union College—the position of Assistant Treasurer was not revived until the 1919 GC Session (see n. 42, below).
- ⁴¹*Yearbook 1913*, p. 5, *Yearbook 1916*, p. 5. A position of Assistant Secretary for Europe had been created in 1908 (GCC, Spring Council, April 22, 1908, *GCC Proceedings* [GC Ar., RG 1], VII, 469; it is listed in the *Yearbook* for that year (1908 p. 10) and up to the 1913 edition. However, this official was based at the European Division headquarters and was in effect the predecessor of a division secretary, rather than the later Assistant Secretary in GC Secretariat; indeed, he appears in the *Yearbook* under the European Division as Secretary after 1913, reflecting the reforms made to church structure at that year’s Session (*Yearbook 1914*, p. 93).
- ⁴²Thirty-Ninth Session, 16th meeting, April 10 (p.m.), 1918, *GCB* 8, 11 (Apr. 12, 1918): 162–63; cf. *Yearbook 1919*, pp. 5, 264. The Assistant Treasurer position was also created at the 1918 Session, also an officer position (unlike the short-lived 1904 predecessor). However, a “Second Assistant Treasurer” was one of the “Appointed Assistants” and both positions were filled not at the Session but at the Autumn Council that followed: see GCC, Autumn Council, Oct. 14 (9 a.m. and 5 p.m.), 1919, *GCC Proceedings* (GC Ar., RG 1), XI, pt. ii, 433–34, 441; *Yearbook 1920*, p. 6.

- ⁴³Meyers was appointed by the GCC in April 1920 but he had first to be released by the Australasian Union Conference and then travel to the USA; while Australian leaders forecast that he would arrive in Washington, DC in January 1921, he disembarked at San Francisco, Feb. 22, 1921 and did not arrive in Washington, DC, until late March. See GCC, meetings of Apr. 5 and June 27, 1920, and March 21, 1921 (the first meeting at which Meyers is listed “present” with the addition: “Just in from Australia”). GCC Proceedings (GC Ar., RG 1), XI, pt. ii, pp. 680, 757 and pt. iii, p. 1006; *Yearbook 1921*, p. 6; and Meyers’s naturalization petition, Oct. 28, 1928, US National Archives and Records Administration, RG 21, NAI no. 654310, *Federal Naturalization Records, 1795–1931* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2016): <https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/61200/007797160-00544?pid=15775>. Uniquely (for an Associate or Assistant Secretary), J. L. Shaw later became GC Treasurer: see obituary, *ARH* 129, no. 35 (Aug. 28, 1952): 22.
- ⁴⁴Fortieth Session, 26th meeting, May 28 (p.m.), 1922, in “Twenty-Sixth Meeting,” *ARH* 99, no. 29, “General Conference Special,” no. 9 (June 22, 1922): 30.
- ⁴⁵Forty-First Session, 4th and 15th meetings, May 30 (a.m.) and June 3 (a.m.), 1926, in “General Conference Reports,” *ARH* 103, no. 23 (May 31, 1926): 8, and no. 26 (June 4, 1926): 12; cf. *Yearbook 1927*, p. 321.
- ⁴⁶Presidential address, in *ARH* 82, no. 19 (11 May 1905): 9.
- ⁴⁷W. W. Prescott, “Editorial,” *ARH* 84, no. 38 (Sept. 19, 1907): 3.
- ⁴⁸W. A. Spicer, “I Know Whom I Have Believed,” *ARH* 107, no. 37 (June 26, 1930): 3.
- ⁴⁹W. A. Spicer, “Literature for India,” *ARH* 76, no. 33 (Aug. 15, 1899): 18.
- ⁵⁰W. A. Spicer, “From India,” *ARH* 77, no. 7 (Feb. 13, 1900): 11–12.
- ⁵¹Spicer, speech to the thirty-fifth Session, 8th meeting, April 2 (a.m.), 1903, *GCB* 5, 5 (Apr. 3, 1903): 65.
- ⁵²Meyers was born in Calcutta: see his 1928 naturalization petition (n. 43, above) and listing in the 1930 US Census, Takoma Park, MD, Roll 877, p. 3B, District 0034, microfilm 2340612, in *1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2002), https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4606974_00327?pid=105510765. Meyers resigned in 1933 (see GCC, Annual Council, Oct. 17, 1933, GCC Proceedings [GC Ar., RG 1], XIV, iv, 1068) and was so completely forgotten that he has no *SDAE* entry.
- ⁵³Kern had been the first Missionary Volunteer Department Secretary, 1907 to 1930, when he was elected GC Associate Secretary; in 1936, E. D. Dick became Secretary and Kern became President of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary: see Kern’s obituary, *ARH* 139, no. 8 (Feb. 22, 1962): 21; *SDAE*, I, 863–64; and, for his election as Secretary, GCC, Annual Council, Oct. 22, 1933, GCC Proceedings (GC Ar., RG 1), XIV, iv, 1097.
- ⁵⁴Calculated from ASR 1931.
- ⁵⁵Kern, “Report,” p. 59.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 60.

- ⁵⁷“Council adjourns Saturday evening for public movie!” *Battle Creek Enquirer*, Oct. 20, 1932, p. 16. The subheader summarizes: “World traveler [i.e., Meyers] who convinced Adventists of value of educational films to give lecture at Sanitarium Union.” A few months later, the GCC voted to authorize him to spend time in New York City “in work on his Ethiopian film” (perhaps on the soundtrack and/or editing): GCC, May 29, 1933, GCC Proceedings (GC Ar., RG 1), XIV, iii, 987.
- ⁵⁸See Kern, “Report,” pp. 60–61.
- ⁵⁹GCC, July 20, 1936, GCC Proceedings (GC Ar., RG 1), XV, i, 37. GC Officers meeting, March 11, 1938, Officers Minutes, p. 2608 (and *cf.* meeting of Oct. 19, 1938, *ibid.*, p. 2992); South American Division Executive Board, Dec. 18, 1938, in SAD Executive Committee Minutes (GC Ar., RG SA1), II, 1484–85 (quotation at p. 1484).
- ⁶⁰See *SDAE*, II, 1–2 (McElhany) and on Dick (who, like Meyers, has no *SDAE* entry), see C. O. Franz, “Former GC Secretary Dies,” *ARH*, 154, no. 31 (Aug. 4, 1977): 23; and the longer life sketch in *ARH*, 154, no. 48 (Dec. 1, 1977): 23.
- ⁶¹T. J. Michael to A. G. Zytoskee, 13 Aug. 1942, GC Ar., RG 21, missionary appointee file no. 29973.
- ⁶²GCC meeting, July 9, 1942, GCC Proceedings (GC Ar., RG 1), XVI, ii, 507.
- ⁶³D. J. B. Trim, “Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Middle East” (Office of Archives and Statistics; Report, January 2011), pp. 28–29.
- ⁶⁴D. J. B. Trim, “Adventist Mission in China in Historical Perspective” (Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research; Report, April 2015), p. 12.
- ⁶⁵Beach unquestionably played crucial roles in decision-making processes during Figuhr’s presidency and in Pierson’s first term (at which point Beach retired), but, again, there is no biography. For brief views of his life and significance, see “Former GC Secretary dies,” *ARH* 171, no. 1 (Jan. 6, 1994): 6; “Beach,” *North Pacific Union Conference Gleaner*, 89, no. 2 (Jan. 17, 1994): 24; and “Beach, Walter R.” *Pacific Union Recorder* 94, no. 13 (Sept. 5, 1994): 29.
- ⁶⁶Committee on Appointees, April 15, 1965: report of *ad hoc* “Committee on Procedures in Recruiting,” and accompanying actions, in Committee on Appointees Minutes (GC Ar., RG 21), 1965–66: 1544.
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, point no. 5.
- ⁶⁸Staff Meeting, May 4, 1981, GC Ar., RG 21, Minutes 1981: 90 (emphasis supplied).
- ⁶⁹GCC, Oct. 11, 1983, GC Ar., RG 1, GCC Minutes 1983: 359.
- ⁷⁰D. J. B. Trim, “Adventist Church Growth and Mission Since 1863: An Historical–Statistical Analysis.” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 8, no. 2 (2012): 51–74; and see fig. 1, p. 9, above.
- ⁷¹G. T. Ng, “Mission on Autopilot,” in *Encountering God in Life and Mission: A Festschrift Honoring Jon L. Dybdahl*, ed. R. Maier (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2010), pp. 203–24.
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 203.
- ⁷³Wagner Kuhn, “Adventist Theological–Missiology: Contextualization in Mission and Ministry.” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 27 (2016): 186–87.
- ⁷⁴See *ibid.*, p. 180; Ng, “Mission on Autopilot”; Marcelo Dias and Wagner Kuhn, “Adventist Mission: From Awareness to Engagement—Part 2,” *Ministry* 87, no. 9 (2015): 23–26.

⁷⁵Ng, "Mission on Autopilot," p. 221.

⁷⁶Ellen G. White, Letter 8, 1896 (Feb. 6, 1896), p. 6; published in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (1923), p. 397.

⁷⁷Secretariat Staff Meeting, June 1, 1983, GC Ar., RG 21, Minutes 1983: 96.



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