

# White, Albert Henry (1880–1956)

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## SHIRLEY TARBURTON

Shirley Tarburton, M.Litt. (Distinction) (University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 2008 after 40 years teaching church-school (mainly high school but including eight years at university). An Australian, she has taught in four mission fields, Australia, and New Zealand. She has authored five books and co-authored one on church history, biography and family history, as well as several magazine articles. She is married to Dr. Michael Tarburton with two adult children and four grandchildren.

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Albert Henry White was an evangelist and conference president in the Australasian (now, South Pacific) Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church for over forty years.

## Early Years

Albert Henry White was born in Southampton, England, on November 5, 1880, to Henry William Joseph White (1855-1940) and his wife, Annie Johns (1958-1935).<sup>1</sup> He was the eldest of the three children in the family, which included Harold Clement (1888-1928) who was also born in Southampton, became a pastor, and died in Perth, Western Australia;<sup>2</sup> and Rosalind, (1889-1959) who was born in Capetown and died in Perth,<sup>3</sup> Western Australia. In 1926, Rosalind White married Herbert Cecil Gardiner, who died 16 months later.<sup>4</sup> She then married Thomas Asa Hollingsworth in 1929.<sup>5</sup>

In 1889, the White family emigrated from England to South Africa, settling in Capetown.<sup>6</sup> There, in 1897, they attended evangelistic meetings run by Pastor F. I. Richardson, and as a result, Albert White and his parents were baptized and joined the Adventist Church.<sup>7</sup>

## Education



Pastor Albert White

Photo courtesy of North New South Wales Conference.

Henry and Annie White wanted each of their children to be educated in Adventist schools<sup>8</sup> and the following year, 1898, Albert White attended Claremont Union College<sup>9</sup> (fore-runner of Helderberg College) in Capetown. When Pastor A. G. Daniells visited Claremont, he gave such a glowing report “of the work in Australia and especially of the school at Avondale” that White was influenced, at age nineteen, to travel to Australia and enroll at the Avondale School for Christian Workers.<sup>10</sup>

## Marriage and Family

After leaving Avondale at the end of 1902, White became a literature evangelist in the South Australian Conference,<sup>11</sup> moving to a different town every few months.<sup>12</sup> In May 1903, he married Ada Hannah Marina Davey in Adelaide.<sup>13</sup> She was the eldest daughter and second child of the nine children of Charles Davey (1850-1919)<sup>14</sup> and his wife, Mary Hannah Marina Knuckey (1855-1924)<sup>15</sup>

The Daveys were two of the very early converts of Adventist evangelism in South Australia in 1886, when Ada Davey was about five years old, and all of their children grew up in the Church.<sup>16</sup> Their other children were Edgar Charles (1879-1951), Elsie Sophia (Mrs. Thomas Asa Hollingsworth, 1883-1926), Bertha Lilian (Mrs. Walter John Bowhey, then Mrs. Allan Finla Battye, 1885-1957), Myrtle Lulu (Mrs. Alfred John Sperring, 1887-1952), Tessie Johanna Ruby (Mrs. John Hammond Crocker, 1889-1956), Alfred William George (1891-1974), Stella Mitylene (Mrs. Walter Edwin Battye, 1893-1979), and Chrystabel Edna (Mrs. Arthur Holmes Battye, 1897-1948).<sup>17</sup>

Ada Davey studied at Avondale in 1901-1902 and commenced literature evangelism at the same time as Albert White.<sup>18</sup> They continued with their canvassing for the rest of 1903, then in April 1904 Ada gave birth to their first child, Mareta Annie Marina (1904-1972).

## Mission Service

When Mareta was just a month old, the Whites sailed for South Africa where Albert White was to work at the Solusi Mission. They arrived at Capetown on May 4, 1904.<sup>19</sup> White was assigned to canvass in Bulawayo until the planting season commenced, and then to work at Solusi.<sup>20</sup> He continued canvassing in Bulawayo, selling mainly health books, until October when he joined his family at Solusi over the year-end.<sup>21</sup> In February, he was asked to take charge of the new Somabula Mission (fore-runner of Lower Gwelo Mission) as its superintendent, Elder Armitage, was ill in the Cape Sanitarium.<sup>22</sup> He immediately took up this posting and his family joined him in April.<sup>23</sup> When Elder Armitage returned in November, White set off on his bicycle, canvassing in Rhodesia<sup>24</sup> while his family stayed at Somabula as Ada White was teaching there.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, her health deteriorated,<sup>26</sup> so the decision was made to return to Australia. The Whites left Africa in July 1906.<sup>27</sup>

## Ministry

Back in South Australia, White joined the conference evangelistic work by 1908<sup>28</sup> and moved from town to town, assisting on evangelistic teams and then running series of meetings himself.<sup>29</sup> Between 1908 and 1912, he worked on evangelistic teams in Adelaide,<sup>30</sup> Yorktown,<sup>31</sup> Edithburg,<sup>32</sup> Beverly,<sup>33</sup> Broken Hill,<sup>34</sup> Gawler,<sup>35</sup> Strathalbyn,<sup>36</sup> Goolwa,<sup>37</sup> and back to Adelaide<sup>38</sup> again. There, at the camp meeting on April 8, 1912, Albert White was ordained to the gospel ministry.<sup>39</sup> About the same time, he received a transfer to New Zealand as vice president of the conference,<sup>40</sup> so immediately after the camp meeting he and his family travelled to Sydney from which they sailed for Auckland on May 1.<sup>41</sup>

During his time in New Zealand, although based in Christchurch,<sup>42</sup> White travelled widely, taking meetings in towns all over the North Island<sup>43</sup> and the length of the South Island.<sup>44</sup> At the 1913 New South Wales Conference session, held in October, White was elected vice-president of that conference,<sup>45</sup> and the White family arrived back in Sydney on November 12, 1913.<sup>46</sup>

In Sydney, White continued his practice of meeting the people where they were, to encourage and strengthen church growth.<sup>47</sup> Ada White also became involved, joining a team that worked with impoverished children and their families in Sydney.<sup>48</sup> In June 1915, White was running an evangelistic series in North Sydney when he was asked to take over the presidency of the Tasmanian Conference.<sup>49</sup> The family sailed from Sydney on July 14,<sup>50</sup> arriving in Hobart two days later.<sup>51</sup> He immediately commenced travelling around his constituency, meeting as many church members as he could and appraising himself of the situation in the conference.<sup>52</sup> By December 1915, it was stated that he had "the confidence and cooperation of the believers."<sup>53</sup> On January 30, 1917, the Whites' second child, Albert Roumaine (1917–1978), was born, completing their family.<sup>54</sup>

At the Quadrennial Session of the Australasian Union Conference in October 1918, the North Queensland-Papua Mission was created<sup>55</sup> and White was asked to be its first superintendent.<sup>56</sup> Early in the new year, he left Tasmania and established his headquarters in tropical Charters Towers, Queensland.<sup>57</sup> The mission incorporated all the territory of Queensland north of Rockhampton<sup>58</sup> and had a high population of Aboriginal Australians.<sup>59</sup> He had a staff of two licensed ministers and two licensed missionaries.<sup>60</sup> White immediately set about organizing the mission, visiting as many centers as possible,<sup>61</sup> and establishing a mission church of 68 members to which he added fourteen by baptism.<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, Ada White contracted malaria, which was complicated by succumbing also to dengue fever, severely impairing her health, and necessitating a return to a temperate climate.<sup>63</sup> So in March 1920, White was replaced, and the family moved to the New South Wales Conference until a permanent placement was assigned at the next conference council meeting.<sup>64</sup> During this interim, White assisted with the Ingathering for Missions collection campaign, firstly in Queensland,<sup>65</sup> and then in South Australia.<sup>66</sup>

At the New South Wales Conference Session held in October 1920, White was appointed to be the home missions secretary for the South New South Wales Conference,<sup>67</sup> which resulted from a reorganization of the New South Wales Conference into two conferences. When the South New South Wales Conference held its first

session in October 1921 it was mentioned that “the report from the Home Missions Secretary, Pastor White, was also very encouraging.”<sup>68</sup>

When the next session of the Australasian Union Conference was held in October 1922, White was requested to join the newly formed North New South Wales Conference, as secretary of the Home Missions, Missionary Volunteer (MV), and Sabbath School departments.<sup>69</sup> He held this position until the end of 1925, when the South New South Wales Conference requested his return as Home Missions Secretary.<sup>70</sup> In October 1926, when the staffing for 1927 was organized, White left departmental work to engage in his love, public evangelism,<sup>71</sup> which course he followed for a productive five years.<sup>72</sup>

On January 30, 1927, White commenced a tent mission at Willoughby (northern Sydney)<sup>73</sup> and, by April, he and his two assistants were holding Bible studies with a number of interested attendees.<sup>74</sup> This culminated in a baptism on December 11 of nine people.<sup>75</sup> A second baptism with five candidates was held on December 24 at Hurstville, the result of interest initiated by another evangelist and fostered by White.<sup>76</sup>

Also during 1927, White assisted in the establishment of a brass band sponsored by the conference MV department, and agreed to be its president in order to provide an outlet for young people with musical talent.<sup>77</sup> Other activities included collecting for the Appeal for Missions Campaign,<sup>78</sup> and the New South Wales Prohibition Alliance, where he was the representative for the Adventist Church on the Alliance executive committee.<sup>79</sup> This involved much work because a referendum was going to be held on September 1 in New South Wales on the sale or prohibition of alcohol.<sup>80</sup>

White’s public evangelistic meetings for 1928 were scheduled to run in the suburb of Woollahra, however, the attendance was small. Not to be discouraged, White found people in other areas with whom to study the Bible and soon had a full program.<sup>81</sup> This was followed by public meetings in Bankstown from November<sup>82</sup> to July, which resulted in a number of conversions<sup>83</sup> and he conducted a baptism on March 30, 1929.<sup>84</sup> Another baptism was held March 1, 1930, while he worked with the Lakemba and Marrickville churches during the rest of the year<sup>85</sup> and extending into 1931, resulting in another eleven baptized.<sup>86</sup> In September of 1931 he was asked to move to Melbourne, Victoria, to minister there.<sup>87</sup> Before leaving at the end of September, he held three baptisms, with a total of nineteen candidates.<sup>88</sup>

In Melbourne on December 20, White participated in a baptism of twenty-three, which included converts from several evangelistic programs in the city.<sup>89</sup> On January 7, 1932, he baptized the first seven from a baptismal class that he had commenced upon arrival three months previously.<sup>90</sup> Another baptism of fourteen followed at camp meeting on January 24.<sup>91</sup> In addition to his pastoral work, later in the year White commenced a series of evangelistic meetings in Windsor.<sup>92</sup>

White had been in the Victorian Conference for barely a year when he was requested to return to the North New South Wales Conference as president.<sup>93</sup> So, once again the Whites packed up and moved north, to locate in Newcastle, New South Wales, in October 1932.<sup>94</sup> White held this position until the North New South Wales camp

meeting in November 1935 when he was asked to assist in the Home Missions Department of the Australasian Union Conference.<sup>95</sup> This necessitated a move back to Sydney, and here he stayed for the remainder of his forty-four and a half years' service, apart from four months on Norfolk Island in 1948.<sup>96</sup> During these twelve and a quarter years in Sydney, he spent much of his time in pastoral ministry,<sup>97</sup> some time in public evangelism,<sup>98</sup> and rarely passed up an opportunity to engage in the Appeal for Missions campaign, travelling to other conferences to lend them an experienced hand.<sup>99</sup>

On July 15, 1944, Ada White died at Wahroonga, New South Wales. She was sixty-three, had been a devoted worker for the Lord for forty-two years, and had been in the Adventist Church for fifty-eight years, having the distinction of being a member of the first Adventist Sabbath School organized in South Australia when she was five.<sup>100</sup>

Albert White continued to be in demand for preaching, celebrating weddings<sup>101</sup> and officiating at funerals.<sup>102</sup> In 1948, he had the pleasure of spending from May until August on Norfolk Island, relieving C. J. Boulting.<sup>103</sup>

## Retirement

On March 7, 1949, Albert White married Alice Mary Davison (nee Lay 1890-1980)<sup>104</sup> who had been widowed six months previously.<sup>105</sup> After White retired on April 30, 1949, he continued assisting with funerals for several years, including that of his dear friend and colleague, A. W. Anderson, in September 1949.<sup>106</sup> He also enthusiastically continued soliciting for the Appeal for Missions, collecting a creditable total of £400 in 1951.<sup>107</sup> In 1954, at aged 73, he broke his own record, soliciting over £500 from businesses in Sydney and Newcastle. For some businesses, it was the twenty-second annual call he had made on them.<sup>108</sup>

## Final Years and Death

Around 1953, Albert and Alice White moved to Warrimoo in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. Here they began mission work among their neighbors. They were joined by another retired pastor, H. C. Harker, and their combined work with the small church group swelled their numbers until they were too many to meet in either of the pastors' homes.<sup>109</sup> They were able to purchase land for a church and commenced construction.<sup>110</sup> It was with great satisfaction that White participated in the dedication service of this church on November 24, 1956.<sup>111</sup> The following evening, on November 25, he suffered a stroke and died.<sup>112</sup> Alice White later moved to the Charles Harrison Home in Cooranbong and died on June 28, 1980.<sup>113</sup>

Albert Henry White may have retired from the paid workforce, but he never retired from doing the Lord's work, having a passion that was shown through his personal evangelistic endeavors and his collecting for the Appeal for Missions. His final recorded Appeal total was £600 collected in 1955.<sup>114</sup> This was the equivalent of the cost of a car (automobile) at the time.

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