British Union Conference colporteurs in 1929. Frederick Spearing, third from left seated in front row.

Photo courtesy of Paul Lockham.

Spearing, Frederick Albert (1883–1952)

NATHALIE JOHANSSON

Nathalie Johansson, B.A. (English and History), M.A. (English) (University of Southern Denmark), currently (2019) serves as the management assistant to the Treasury Department the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventists in St. Albans, England. Johansson plans to complete a Ph.D. in Adventist History in the near future.

Frederick Albert Spearing served the church as a literature evangelist, tent master, Bible teacher, pastor, missionary, administrator, and conference president.

Early Years and the Beginning of a Career

Born in London on August 3, 1883,[1] Frederick Spearing had eight brothers and four sisters.[2] As a young man he went to South Africa to prospect for gold. In 1904 he gave up his search for gold and began working as a colporteur.[3] Shortly afterward church leadership asked him to join Martin A. Altman (on mission service from the U.S.A. and later to serve in the British Union[4]), who was holding evangelistic meetings in Durban as his "tent master". At the time the *South African Missionary* reported that "the Conference has been unable to furnish us with any Bible workers, our only help being Brother F. A. Spearing ..."[5] A canvasing group that Spearing cofounded helped the church's growth in Durban.[6]

In 1905, Spearing returned to England[7] where he joined the colporteur program, selling *The Great Controversy*. He reported two of his experiences in *The Missionary Worker:*

I am very pleased to let you know that there are now six Sabbath-keepers in Blaenavon, and there is one who is desirous of keeping it, but he is placed in a very awkward position. He is an official in one of the coal mines, and the manager has told him that he will have to leave the town and the house he lives in, as it belongs to the company he is working for. His wife is a Sabbath-keeper, and we desire your prayers especially on his behalf.

A Primitive Methodist minister seemed delighted to see me when I called at his residence on Monday last, not knowing who resided there. He said he knew the book and had recommended it to his flock to read. He says if only people would realize the controversy that is now going on between light and darkness, it would help the Gospel ministers very much. He concluded by writing a recommendation in my prospectus at my request. He will take the book from me in December, if he can afford it then.[8]

Spearing enrolled as a student at the Stanborough Park College in 1907.[9] In 1908 he started working as a minister for the South England Conference.[10]

On April 3, 1910, Spearing married Gertrude Brewer at St. Nichola's Church in Deptford.[11] He was pastoring in Hastings at the time and wrote that his work had some success.[12]

In 1912 *The Missionary Worker* reported that in addition to being a minister, Spearing was attending Livingstone College in Leytonstone, London, to prepare for mission service in British East Africa.[13] He and Gertrude left for Kenya that same year and on May 22 arrived at Gendia.[14] Less than a year later, however, they had to return to England for health reasons.[15] Back in England, Spearing returned to pastoring in the South England Conference.[16] The South England Conference annual meeting held in Southampton May 21-24, 1915, ordained him.[17] Two years later in 1917, Spearing became home mission secretary for the British Union Conference.[18]

Welsh-Midland Conference and Stanborough College

Although elected president of the Welsh-Midland Conference in 1920,[19] it would be a short-lived appointment, as he received a call to work as a Bible teacher and acting principal of Stanborough College. On March 2, 1921, *The Missionary Worker* observed,

We felt it to be regrettable to take Brother Spearing from his work as president of the Welsh-Midland Conference at a time when he was just getting hold of his work nicely. Though he had been president of this important conference but nine months, he had made it evident that his abilities were fully equal to the responsibility that had been placed upon him, and he had greatly endeared himself to both the conference workers and the church members. However, as Pastor W. H. Meredith was available to lake this place, it was felt that the change could be made without impairing the conference interests. This action was therefore taken and-the Welsh-Midland Conference Committee was asked to release Brother Spearing for the important post at the College which it was felt could be filled acceptably by him. When the matter was brought before that Conference Committee, they felt very reluctant to let Brother Spearing go, but in view of the urgent need of the College they finally gave their consent to the plan and accepted Brother Meredith as president in his place.[20]

South England Conference

In late 1922, Spearing again moved, this time to become the president of the South England Conference. The British Union committee meeting on October 5, 1922, had recommended him for the position.[21]

Supporting missions and missionaries was important to Spearing. During the Harvest Ingathering solicitation in 1924, he encouraged members of the South England Conference to give money for the construction of a hospital in Kenya.[22] Literature evangelism also remained important to him. He noted in *The Missionary Worker* that

We are apt to measure the work of the colporteur by the number of books he disposes of in a week, or by the number delivered, and certainly these items do enter very materially into the success of our book workers. But it must not be forgotten that 'personal influence,' before and after the book is ordered or delivered, counts for a great deal. Some colporteurs are always on the alert for opportunities of speaking a word for the Master, and the Lord is pleased to use them.[23]

North England Conference

The British Union Conference Session in Birmingham on August 2-7, 1928, elected him president of the North England Conference, his term to begin as soon as the South England Conference could release him.[24] By 1929 he was settled in the North England Conference and had visited a large part of the field.[25]

While president there, he embarked on a mission to evangelize the cities of the North and the Midlands. He encouraged evangelists and regular church members to get involved and support the work.[26]

Unfortunately, Spearing's health declined, and he debated whether to retire. After careful consideration, the North England Conference decided that he should put aside his administrative duties and take some time off to

rest. The hope was that he would recover quickly and be able to return to his presidential duties. It did not happen, and in December 1929, *The Missionary Worker* announced that Spearing had resigned as president due to poor health. He would return to pastoral work in the South England Conference once his health improved.[27]

Final Years

By the autumn of 1930, Spearing's health now allowed him to pastor in the Southampton area.[28] He continued working in Southampton until he retired in 1946.[29] During his retirement he helped in the Reading, Slough and Hove churches.[30]

Spearing died on January 2, 1952, at a hospital in Hove at the age of 68. He left behind his wife Gertrude, a son, Dr. Edward Spearing, and a daughter, Freda.[31]

Legacy

Serving the church for 48 years, Spearing displayed a firm belief in evangelism through missionary and colporteur work. He believed in the importance of total membership involvement in winning others for God's kingdom. Even after his retirement, Spearing continued to help various churches in their evangelistic outreach.

SOURCES

Altman, M. A. "The Work in Durban." *South African Missionary*, May 1904.

Campbell, M. N. "Important Changes." *The Missionary Worker*, March 2, 1921.

Campbell, M. N. "Recent Changes." *The Missionary Worker*, October 18, 1922.

Dorland, O. M. "Notes from the President." *The Missionary Worker*, October 17, 1930.

Edmed, Herbert J. "Natal-Transvaal." *South African Missionary,* December 1904.

Lowe, H. W. "Veterans Retire." *British Advent Messenger*, February 8, 1946.

Lowe, H. W. "South England Conference." *The Missionary Worker*, June 25, 1915.

Maxwell, A. S. "In Heavenly Places." *The Missionary Worker*, August 24, 1927.

McMillan, J. A. "At Rest, Pastor F.A. Spearing." *The British Advent Messenger*, January 25, 1952.

Meredith, W. H. "Forward into 1929." *The Missionary Worker*, January 11, 1929.

Meredith W. H. "Fruits of the Summer's Work." *The Missionary Worker*, December 7, 1910.

Meredith, W. H. "Important Changes in the Field." *The Missionary Worker*, December 13, 1929.

Morse, B. L. "Wonderful progress in British East Africa." *The Missionary Worker*, July 29. 1912.

Nethery, Jay J. “M. A. Altman, obituary.” *ARH*, January 19, 1933.

Spearing, F. A. “Notes from the President.” *The Missionary Worker*, February 25, 1927.

Spearing, F. A. “Notes from the President.” *The Missionary Worker*, January 11, 1929.

Spearing, F. A. “On the eve of the Campaign.” *The Missionary Worker*, August 8, 1924.

The Missionary Worker, April 27, 1910.

The Missionary Worker, January 15, 1912.

The Missionary Worker, September 7, 1917.

White, W. R. “Good News.” The Missionary Worker, October 25, 1905.

Wilcox. F. M. “Incidents of European Travel.” *ARH*, October 21, 1920.

NOTES

1. J. A. McMillan, “At Rest Pastor F.A. Spearing,” *The British Advent Messenger*, January 25, 1952, 7.
2. Ibid
3. “Natal-Transvaal Canvassing Report for March 1904,” *South African Missionary*, April 1904, 7.
4. Jay J. Nethery, “M. A. Altman, obituary,” *ARH*, January 19, 1933, 3.
5. M. A. Altman, “The Work in Durban,” *South African Missionary*, May 1904, 2.
6. Herbert J. Edmed, “Natal-Transvaal,” *South African Missionary*, December 1904, 3.
7. J. A. McMillian, “At Rest, Pastor F.A. Spearing,” *The British Advent Messenger*, January 25, 1952, 7.
8. W. R. White, “Good News,” *The Missionary Worker*, October 25, 1905, 176.
9. J. A. McMillan, “At Rest, Pastor F.A. Spearing,” *The British Advent Messenger*, January 25, 1952, 7.
10. Ibid
11. *The Missionary Worker*, April 27, 1910, 68.
12. W. H. Meredith, “Fruits of the Summer’s Work,” *The Missionary Worker*, December 7, 1910, 186.

13. *The Missionary Worker*, January 15, 1912, 16.

14. B. L. Morse, "Wonderful progress in British East Africa," *The Missionary Worker*, July 29. 1912, 114.

15. J. A. McMillan, "At Rest, Pastor F.A. Spearing," *The British Advent Messenger*, January 25, 1952, 7.

16. Ibid

17. H. W. Lowe, "South England Conference," *The Missionary Worker*, June 25, 1915, 51.

18. "South England Conference Annual Session–Resolution 8," *The Missionary Worker*, September 1, 1917, 96.

19. M. N. Campbell, "Changes to the Welsh-Midland Conference," *The Missionary Worker*, May 19 1920, 8;
F. M. Wilcox, "Incidents of European Travel," *ARH*, October 21, 1920, 2.

20. M. N. Campbell, "Important Changes," *The Missionary Worker*, March 2, 1921, 7, 8.

21. M. N. Campbell, "Recent Changes," *The Missionary Worker*, October 18, 1922, 2.

22. F. A. Spearing, "On the eve of the Campaign," *The Missionary Worker*, August 8, 1924, 1.

23. F. A. Spearing, "Notes from the President," *The Missionary Worker*, February 25, 1927, 2.

24. A. S. Maxwell, "In Heavenly Places," *The Missionary Worker*, August 24, 1928, 2.

25. W. H. Meredith, "Forward into 1929," *The Missionary Worker*, January 11, 1929, 1.

26. F. A. Spearing, "Notes from the President," *The Missionary Worke*r, January 11, 1929, 3.

27. W. H. Meredith, "Important Changes in the Field," *The Missionary Worker*, December 13, 1929, 2.

28. O. M. Dorland, "Notes from the President," *The Missionary Worker*, October 17, 1930, 2.

29. H. W. Lowe, "Veterans Retire," *British Advent Messenger*, February 8, 1946, 3.

30. J. A. McMillan, "At Rest, Pastor F. A. Spearing," *The British Advent Messenger*, January 25, 1952, 7.

31. Ibid.

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000