

Lichtenstein, Marcus B.

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Marcus B. Lichtenstein, the first Jewish convert to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was born in Poland in the 1840s or 1850s—although the precise date remains uncertain. His parents were Orthodox Jews, and he was reared in that tradition. After the “January Uprising” (1863-1865) and subsequent unrest in Poland, Lichtenstein immigrated to the United States in the late 1860s.

Around 1870, Lichtenstein appeared in Battle Creek, Michigan, at that time the headquarters town of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He began working in the Battle Creek printing office (later the Review and Herald Publishing Association) in December 1870.¹ The next month, on January 14, 1871, Lichtenstein was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist.² He would write about one of the vices he gave up for his new faith: an eleven-year addiction to tobacco.³

Lichtenstein was a charter member of the faculty of Battle Creek College when it opened in December 1874, teaching courses in the Hebrew language.⁴ He also worked as a proofreader at the Review and Herald Publishing Office and wrote for church periodicals, including several articles for the official church paper, the *Review and Herald*, from 1871 to 1877. In the articles, Lichtenstein deftly explained Hebrew words and concepts to his American Adventist readers, who were largely uneducated about the ancient language.⁵

Ellen G. White took a personal interest in Lichtenstein, having a conversation with him at her home in Battle Creek, then writing a four-page letter to him, and later attending at least one of his lectures. White believed that Lichtenstein’s conversion to Christianity was of singular divine providence, and she saw great potential in the young man, with his knowledge of the Hebrew language and culture and access to the Jewish people. She wrote in 1872:

In a most remarkable manner the Lord wrought upon the heart of Marcus Lichtenstein and directed the course of this young man to Battle Creek, that he might there be brought under the influence of the truth and be converted; that he might obtain an experience and be united to the office of publication. His education in the Jewish religion would have qualified him to prepare publications. His knowledge of Hebrew would have been a help to the office in the preparation of publications through which access could be gained to a class that otherwise could not be reached. It was no inferior gift that God gave to the office in Marcus. His deportment and conscientiousness were in accordance with the principles of the wonderful truths he was beginning to see and

appreciate.⁶

On several occasions, she commended Lichtenstein's personal piety in juxtaposition to some of his coworkers at the publishing office, who at times mocked Lichtenstein's accent and broken English:

Marcus Lichtenstein was a God-fearing youth; but he saw so little true religious principle in those in the church and those working in the office that he was perplexed, distressed, disgusted. He stumbled over the lack of conscientiousness in keeping the Sabbath manifested by some who yet professed to be commandment keepers. Marcus had an exalted regard for the work in the office; but the vanity, the trifling, and the lack of principle stumbled him. God had raised him up and in His providence connected him with His work in the office. But there is so little known of the mind and will of God by some who work in the office that they looked upon this great work of the conversion of Marcus from Judaism as of no great importance. His worth was not appreciated. He was frequently pained with the deportment of F and of others in the office; and when he attempted to reprove them, his words were received with contempt that he should venture to instruct them. His defective language was an occasion of jest and amusement with some.

Marcus felt deeply over the case of F, but he could not see how he could help him. Marcus never would have left the office if the young men had been true to their profession. If he makes shipwreck of faith, his blood will surely be found on the skirts of the young who profess Christ, but who, by their works, their words, and their deportment, state plainly that they are not of Christ, but of the world. This deplorable state of neglect, of indifference and unfaithfulness, must cease; a thorough and permanent change must take place in the office, or those who have had so much light and so great privileges should be dismissed and others take their places, even if they be unbelievers.⁷

Due to this ill treatment and the unserious behavior of those Adventists, Lichtenstein quit his job at the publishing office and left Battle Creek and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1875. Details on the remainder of his life are currently unknown.

SOURCES

Battle Creek College Bulletin, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, 1871-1872.

Byington-Amadon Diaries Collection (012), Box 2, Envelope 30, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University.

White, E. G. *Testimony to the Church at Battle Creek*. Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872.

Lichtenstein, M. B. *ARH* articles, 1871-1877.

NOTES

1. George W. Amadon diary, entry for December 14-16, 1870, Byington-Amadon Diaries Collection (012), Box 2, Envelope 29. Center for Adventist Research.
2. Amadon diary, entry for January 14, 1871, Byington-Amadon Diaries Collection (012), Box 2, Envelope 30. Center for Adventist Research.
3. M. B. Lichtenstein, "Effects of Tobacco," *The Health Reformer* June 1871, 283-284.
4. *Battle Creek College Bulletin*, 1871-1872, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University; Mary Alicia Steward, "The Beginnings of Our School Work," *ARH*, September 18, 1924, 31.
5. See M.B. Lichtenstein, "Did the Red Heifer Typify Christ?" *ARH*, April 11, 1971, 135; M. B. Lichtenstein, "Elohim, Singular or Plural," *ARH*, July 29, 1873, 53; M. B. Lichtenstein, "Quoting Words," *ARH*, February 8, 1877, 42-43; M.B. Lichtenstein, "Selah," *ARH*, April 5, 1877, 112; M.B. Lichtenstein, "Bible Butter," *Adventist Review*, April 26, 1877, 131.
6. Ellen G. White, *Testimony to the Church at Battle Creek* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872), 103.
https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_PH123.103.1¶=337.357
7. *Ibid.*, 24. https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_PH123.24.1¶=337.80

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