

# Paap, Charles Albert (1873–1940), and Mary Ellen (Nash) (1878–1948)

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## ROSS GOLDSTONE

Ross Goldstone, M.A. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 1998 as Senior Pastor, Avondale Memorial Church, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia. New Zealand born, Goldstone has served the Church as a pastor, Conference Youth Director, teacher, and Sessional Lecturer at Avondale College. He has authored nine books relating to Adventist history, including *The Angel Said Australia*. He is also co-author of four other books on Adventist history in Australasia. In retirement Ross Goldstone continues to research and write Adventist Church history.



Charles and Mary Paap on their wedding day, May 16, 1900.

Photo courtesy of Ross Goldstone.

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Charles and Mary Paap together spent 27 years planting Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) churches in more Australasian communities than any other minister of their generation.<sup>1</sup>

## Early Life

Charles Albert Paap was born in Kaikoura, New Zealand, on May 30, 1873. His parents were John Joseph and Caroline Paap, farmers living to the south of the town.<sup>2</sup> They were parents to 10 children, 4 of whom entered either the ministry or the educational work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: John Henry, Frederic William, Leonard Gabbetis, and Charles Albert.<sup>3</sup> Prior to taking up farming, John Joseph Paap had served in the New Zealand Police Force.<sup>4</sup>

In 1890 Morgan Connell, a literature evangelist, had succeeded in placing *The Great Controversy* in many homes in Kaikoura, including the Paap home. This created quite a stir, and curiosity resulted in Caroline Paap

determining to keep the Sabbath.<sup>5</sup>

Pastor Stephen McCullagh, on a pastoral visit to Palmerston North, was informed of what was transpiring in Kaikoura and determined to travel south to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages in that town. There he met the Paap family. The four sons were rugged individuals, all being over six feet tall.

As a result of public presentations and personal visitation, McCullagh successfully established a new company of believers, the baptism taking place on March 22, 1892. Members of the Paap family, including Charles Paap, were among those baptized on that occasion. Charles's brother John particularly struggled to surrender his life to God and made his decision as other members of the family were being baptized.<sup>6</sup>

## Training for Ministry

Charles Paap's early education was in the New Zealand public school system. He then began training for the ministry while attending the Bible Training School in Saint Kilda, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, in 1893. He later attended the Avondale School for Christian Workers at Cooranbong, New South Wales, and, finally, Healdsburg College in California, United States of America.<sup>7</sup> From this institution, he received a diploma in biblical studies.<sup>8</sup>

## Early Years of Service: New Zealand

Paap began his ministry in New Zealand in 1899 as a licentiate. He married Mary Ellen Nash in Auckland on May 16, 1900, the celebrant being Pastor George Teasdale.<sup>9</sup> The members of the Nash family were deeply committed SDA Christians, and Mary worked closely with Charles throughout their years of service.

At the turn of the century, the New Zealand SDA leadership was focused on the South Island: first Christchurch, then Dunedin, the two major cities. Dunedin was a center of Presbyterianism, having been mainly settled by migrants from Scotland.<sup>10</sup> When Seventh-day Adventists first arrived in Australia, they had a selected team of workers operating out of a "mission headquarters." In anticipation of a strong resistance to Adventism in Dunedin, it was determined that a "mission station" be established, and a team consisting of a leader (Pastor A. T. Robinson) an evangelist (E. W. Farnsworth), a pastor (W. H. Pascoe), a "licentiate" (Charles Paap and wife), and Miss Maggie Hawkins was appointed.<sup>11</sup> Mary Owen, a literature evangelist, spent some months prior to the arrival of the mission team selling copies of the *Bible Echo*.

Public meetings were advertised in the Otago Daily Times to commence on January 12, 1902.<sup>12</sup> This newspaper continued to give favorable reports even though attendances were disappointing.

The opposition was intense, with even a none-too-veiled threat of physical violence against Charles Paap.<sup>13</sup> The combined churches of Dunedin had invited Dr. H. Gratton Guinness, the Irish-born evangelist, to conduct revival meetings in Dunedin, but when they tried to rent the Agricultural Hall, they discovered that the SDAs had already booked it for Farnsworth's meetings. This intensified the antagonism toward them. In order to placate

this negativity, Farnsworth delayed his meetings until Guinness had ended his series. Gratton Guinness publicly thanked Farnsworth and encouraged his audience to support Farnsworth's meetings, which recommenced on February 9.<sup>14</sup>

However, the results were meager, and it was determined to run the conference annual camp in Dunedin from January 15–26, 1903. Press releases in the Otago Daily Times alerted the public to the meetings, but also those in opposition. This intensified to the point where a meeting on the Saturday-Sunday issue with E. W. Farnsworth as the speaker could not continue because of unruly behavior and challenges to debate. The president of the New Zealand Conference later reported, "The adversary endeavored to draw us into controversy, but the counsel so timely sent by the Lord through His servant, Sister White, effectually thwarted his plans."<sup>15</sup>

As a result of the camp meeting and the follow-up work of Charles Paap and others, a church of 28 members was established in Dunedin and a chapel built, the whole experience being a steep learning curve for the young evangelist.<sup>16</sup>

Later in 1903 the Paaps moved to Dannevirke in the North Island, a town not far from Ormondville, where, in 1893, Stephen McCullagh had established a church. In Dannevirke, Paap was associated with Frank Lyndon in running a campaign before moving north to New Plymouth for the 1904 New Zealand camp meeting. At this meeting, Charles Paap, Frank Lyndon, and Albert Piper were ordained to the ministry.<sup>17</sup>

As in Dunedin, Paap was left to consolidate the interests developed at the camp meeting. This was not an easy task because once the main camp meetings were over, many interests fell away, and even some who had begun to keep the Sabbath "gave it up almost immediately."<sup>18</sup> As in Dunedin, Paap and his associate workers were able to gather converts and build a house of worship. Later that year, leaving Frank Lyndon to care for the work in New Plymouth, Charles and Mary Paap moved north to the nearby town of Waitara, where they pitched their new mission tent and conducted a new series of meetings.<sup>19</sup> From there it was south to Stratford at the base of Mount Egmont.

By this time Charles Paap had established his method of procedure. He would pitch the mission tent in a central urban location and from there travel to nearby villages and the surrounding hinterland, meeting interested people and proclaiming with holy boldness Christ's soon return. Paap published summaries of his sermons in local newspapers, thus spreading the gospel to a wide circle of readers. The Paaps distributed SDA literature and enjoyed helping out on farm activities such as hay making in order to win a convert.

## Pioneering in Eastern Australia

On being called to Australia, the Paaps served for a short time in Queensland before being transferred to Sydney, New South Wales. They found city evangelism to be very unresponsive in spite of intensive visitation supplementing their public preaching.

In 1911 the Paaps were invited to conduct an evangelistic program in Merewether, Newcastle, New South Wales,<sup>20</sup> and then in 1912 they were appointed to Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales.<sup>21</sup> Two ladies (the Pearce sisters) had been distributing literature in that town during 1911.<sup>22</sup> Knowing that earlier Mrs. White had indicated these towns should be evangelized,<sup>23</sup> the Paaps pitched their mission tent in Muswellbrook (1912), followed by Quirindi (1913), Tamworth (1914), and Manilla (1915). They met with much success at Quirindi, largely due to the impact of Brother Pollock, an SDA businessman in that community.<sup>24</sup> But there and in other places, they met with strident opposition and, at times, threats of violence.<sup>25</sup> While working in the Tamworth-Manilla area, the Paaps sometimes spent several days away from home, camping by the side of the road and cooking their evening meal over an open fire.<sup>26</sup> Fortunately, they both loved life in the open, particularly as they saw their work resulting in souls being saved for the kingdom and churches being established.

Early in 1916, Charles and Mary Paap received an invitation from the General Conference to take up evangelistic work in South Africa. They sailed from Australian shores on board the Mooltan, departing on April 12, 2016.<sup>27</sup>

## Service in South Africa

On arrival in Cape Town, South Africa, the Paaps labored under the jurisdiction of the Cape Conference. Taungs, a small town in the North West Province (now Taung), was their designated field of evangelistic endeavor, and they focused their attention on English-speaking people.

By June 16, 1916, the mission tent was pitched and the meetings commenced, and opposition arose. This did not deter the evangelists. Rather, the opposition aroused a degree of curiosity, which was to their advantage. As in their work in Australia, the Paaps published summaries of their sermons and, together with appropriate other literature, circulated the printed material widely throughout the community. As a result, the surrounding farmers invited them to hold Bible studies in their homes. This was the opportunity Charles and Mary Paap thrived on, and their ministry resulted in a strong church being formed in the town, and eventually a house of worship was dedicated.<sup>28</sup>

Although Paap received wages from the General Conference, he was able to meet a large part of his travel costs from the sale of literature. But with such widespread interest, transport became a difficulty. Charles Paap wrote to the South African Missionary, appealing for financial help in purchasing a motorbike and sidecar.<sup>29</sup> The other difficulty the Paaps faced in their years in South Africa was obtaining suitable rented accommodation. Initially, they could find accommodation in Taungs only in a boarding house.

Before the end of that first year, they had bought an Enfield motorbike and moved into a three-room mud hut. Charles laid the flooring, lined the ceilings, and fitted the doors. He records, "We are comfortable and enjoy our new home."<sup>30</sup>

While based in Taungs and gaining accessions as a result of his preaching, Paap followed the same method he had adopted so successfully in New South Wales. Vryburg was a community only 77 kilometers (48 miles) north of Taungs. There he rented the town hall for evangelistic meetings. He was also invited to hold meetings at Dieve Draai, a diamond mine some distance from Taungs, an invitation he accepted with pleasing results.<sup>31</sup> Paap found a warm acceptance as a preacher as he moved among both the English-speaking and Dutch-speaking residents. Repeatedly he expressed regret that there were not more ministers to meet the real interests that were brought to his attention.<sup>32</sup>

In September 1917 the Paaps rented the town hall in Mafeking, the capital city of the North West Province (now Mahikeng), and ran a series of meetings, supported by the few church members resident in that town. In 1918, at the direction of the conference committee, the Paaps went to Queenstown, an Eastern Cape town now known as Komani. Again the Paaps printed articles that they circulated door-to-door to create interest in their public meetings. When a local minister preached against the fourth commandment, Charles Paap reviewed his sermon, and the ensuing debate was continued in the local newspaper, resulting in decisions for the Sabbath. Writing concerning the situation, Pastor Paap recorded,

In all my nineteen years' experience as an S.D.A. pioneer preacher I have never seen the truth published more thoroughly in any town than in this one. We now hold a service on Sabbath morning, and have an attendance of from ten to fifteen.<sup>33</sup>

While pioneering the evangelistic work in the Cape Conference of South Africa, Charles Paap had a burden to proclaim the Adventist message in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Running an evangelistic campaign in Bulawayo, the second largest city, he was the first Seventh-day Adventist minister to publicly proclaim Adventism in that country.

Difficulties were faced from the inception in 1919. Finding a suitable hall and, even when the Exchange Hall was secured, having to rent and transport seating because there was no seating in the hall were problematic. All these and other issues had to be overcome by the starting date of June 15.

Compared with attendances in South African towns, the interest in Bulawayo was disappointing, but the Paaps faithfully visited from home to home and saw some results for their efforts before returning to South Africa.<sup>34</sup>

Charles's father, John Paap, died after a brief illness on September 22, 1920, and because Charles's mother was in poor health, the Paaps temporarily returned to Australia to provide support in time of need.<sup>35</sup> At the request of the Natal-Transvaal Conference, they returned to South Africa on July 18, 1921, and commenced a public campaign in the center of the city of Pietermaritzburg on August 14. As with other city campaigns, the residents showed little interest in Adventist preaching, but as a result of an intense visitation program, 14 candidates of mixed ethnic backgrounds were baptized in early January 1922.<sup>36</sup>

## Later Life

Having spent six years in South Africa, the Paaps returned to the North Island of New Zealand, where they continued in public evangelism and pastoral ministry. They moved from city to city and town to town in search of interested people. Mary Paap wrote: "Our hearts are hungry for souls. We'll gladly live anywhere, in anything, if only the dear Lord will give us some fruit for the labours expended."<sup>37</sup> Her husband wrote,

My wife and I, during our thirty years of married life, have moved into fifty-seven homes built by other people, and, taking the average of £1 per week, have paid away £1,560 in rent. We have lived in fifty-five different cities, towns, and villages.

During those same years we have given our time wholly to evangelistic work. We have worked in fifty-seven missions, either associated with other workers or alone. We have conducted eighteen missions by ourselves and have been associated with eighty-two other workers in carrying on the remaining thirty-nine missions. As I survey the whole, I recall only two of those efforts which produced no direct results. Of the fifty-seven missions mentioned, fifty have been pioneer efforts in virgin territory.<sup>38</sup>

They spent their final years pastoring churches in the North New Zealand Conference. Childless in marriage, they were spiritual parents to their many converts. Pastor Charles Albert Paap died on January 10, 1940, as a result of a motorbike accident while returning from the North New Zealand camp meeting. His wife and fellow evangelist, Mary Ellen Paap, died on August 10, 1948 at the age of seventy.<sup>39</sup>

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## NOTES

1. C. A. Paap, "After Many Days," *Australasian Record*, September 19, 1927, 6–7.
2. Charles Albert Paap Biographical Records, General Conference Archives, Box 1950 P to Pet 00114936, Document: "Charles Albert Paap Biographical Information Blank, September 25, 1905."
3. John entered the teaching profession and was at one time the principal of Avondale College; Fred was an evangelist who ministered in Australia and America; Leonard became a minister and later entered the field of education.
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5. C. A. Paap, "How the Message Entered South New Zealand," *Australasian Record*, December 16, 1935, 2.



6. Stephen McCullagh, "Notes from New Zealand," *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, May 1, 1892. 140.
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9. Ibid.
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29. I. J. Hankins, "Wanted—A Motor Cycle," *South African Missionary*, July 24, 1916, 4.
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31. Ibid.; C. A. Paap and M. E. Paap, "Taungs," *South African Missionary*, November 20, 1916, 1–2.
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