

House, Benjamin Longdon

(1880–1969)

MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

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Benjamin House served as an Adventist minister, educator, and author.

Early Life, Conversion, and Ministry

Benjamin Longdon House was born on August 24, 1880, the son of William R. (1840-1906) and Margaret Davison (1838-1899) House, who were affiliated with the Methodist and Christian Connection denominations, respectively.¹ He later traced his conversion to November 1896, and was baptized in January 1897 by W. H. Wakeham and subsequently attended Mt. Vernon Academy (1897-1901) graduating in the scientific course. On July 30, 1903, he married Mayme Harriet Wells (1882-1957). Between 1901 and 1905, he served in ministry, conducting evangelism and organizing several churches across Ohio, resulting in 75 people joining the Adventist Church. Then, in August 1904, he was ordained at Ohio Camp Meeting by E. W. Farnsworth, H. H. Burkholder, and D. E. Lindsey. In March 1907, he began ministry in the Washington, D.C., area for one year, and then moved to pastor in Richmond, Virginia (1908-1910).



Benjamin L. House

Benjamin House

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Education and Family

House then began studies at Union College, (and later completed a Bachelor of Theology degree from Pacific Union College). They had two sons: Harold F. House (1906-1976) and Leland R. House, M.D. (1908-2003), and two daughters, Esther (Evelyn) Ruth Gossett (1912-1982) and Evelyn Ruth Moran (1904-1997). They had a third son, Donald (1906-1910), who died at age 5. From 1913 to 1915, House served as the educational, missionary volunteer, and home missionary secretary for the Nebraska Conference. He later served as pastor of the Tabernacle Church at College View, Nebraska (1915-1917). In 1917, he received his A.B. from Union College.² From 1917 to 1920, he taught Bible at Southwestern Junior College and was an active participant in the 1919 Bible Conference.³ During the meetings, he argued for a more rigid view of Ellen White's inspiration and engaged in discussions about her role and authority. He believed differences were not so much a question about their views over verbal inspiration so much as they stemmed from different methodologies used in the preparation of her books.⁴ From 1920 to 1929, he headed the Bible department at Pacific Union College, and while there, wrote the textbook *Analytical Studies in Bible Doctrines for Seventh-day Adventist Colleges*. He noted how Ellen White's selection of "historical facts, and many quotations" represented an inspired selection from "uninspired writers" to bring out "the very cream of history."⁵ He added that "the selection of the very words of Scripture in the original languages was overruled by the Holy Spirit."⁶ Although House explained different theories of inspiration (referencing the Baptist Fundamentalist author William Evans' *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* [1912]), in essence, he emphasized divine accuracy and authority, while allowing for some variation so long as it did not diminish the Bible's ultimate authority.⁷ W. W. Prescott subsequently expressed concern about House's book, notably his advocacy of verbal inspiration.⁸ Historian Roy Graham observes that House had "a tendency to revert to the rigid view [of inspiration]."⁹ From 1929 to 1932, he served as the head of the Bible department at Union College. He left Adventism in 1932 following a student's confession of an affair.¹⁰

Later Years

He subsequently divorced and, in 1935, remarried Anna Elizabeth Ruby Burch (1890-1988), and helped raise two stepchildren: Charles Raymond Burch (1909-1991) and Thelma Juanita Kah (1911-1979), as well as his four surviving children. After leaving denominational employment, he worked as a state employee for twenty years. He was a member of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association and served as its secretary-treasurer for many years. Toward the end of his life, he had a rekindling of faith and was rebaptized and became a church member again in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He died in Coshocton, Coshocton County, Ohio, on October 13, 1969, aged 89.¹¹

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<https://cdm.llu.edu/digital/collection/blhaa>.

NOTES

1. For genealogical information, see: <https://www.ancestry.com/invite-ui/accept?token=f6dUIZYJ1s4ax9Yg-hko3O1Ez756tcOkzrb9AqNnydl=>
2. For an overview, see "Benjamin L. House," *Southwestern Union Record*, August 21, 1917, 1.
3. His name appears several times in the "Report of Bible Conference," July 18, 1919, 43; July 19, 1919, 31, 36; August 1, 1919, 20, 22, 28, 29.
4. Bert Haloviak with Gary Land. "Ellen White & Doctrinal Conflict: Context of the 1919 Bible Conference," *Spectrum* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 19-34.

5. Benjamin L. House, *Analytical Studies in Bible Doctrines for Seventh-day Adventist Colleges* (Berrien Springs, MI: College Press for the General Conference Department of Education, 1926), 65.
6. Ibid., 66. For additional context, see George R. Knight, "Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994," *Ministry*, August 1994, 10-13, 25.
7. Ibid., 68.
8. See Denis Kaiser, "Trust and Doubt: Perceptions of Divine Inspiration in Seventh-day Adventist History (1880-1930)," (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2016), 294; W. W. Prescott to W. A. Spicer, January 4, 1927, PGF box 3118, GCA; W. W. Prescott to W. A. Spicer, May 27, 1927, PGF box 3118, GCA; W. A. Spicer to W. W. Prescott, July 5, 1927, PGF box 3118, GCA; W. W. Prescott to W. A. Spicer, September 13, 1929, PGF box 3122, GCA. Kaiser (pg. 490) suggests that a more in-depth study of House's view of inspiration for fruitful research in the future.
9. Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White: Co-Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 161.
10. Phone interview by the author with Franklin House, M.D., June 19, 2006. House's name appears for the last time as a church employee in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, [1933]), 28.
11. "Benjamin L. House." *Findagrave.com*. Accessed May 12, 2026. https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/96288672/benjamin_l-house.

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