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WILLIAM AMBROSE SPICER.

A Personal Tribute by J. L. McElhany

It was during the 1903 session of the General Conference, <sup>I was one day</sup> standing at the entrance to the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist church <sup>when a man</sup> ~~we were~~ approached by a <sup>me</sup> man with a smiling face and a friendly demeanor. <sup>by shaking my hand</sup> With a cordial ~~handshake~~ he announced "I am W. A. Spicer, and what is your name and field?"

That was the beginning of an acquaintance that ~~has~~ lasted nearly a half a century. During these years <sup>the</sup> acquaintance ~~has~~ ripened into a warm friendship, and ~~has also given us~~ <sup>gave me</sup> the opportunity and privilege of being closely associated in Christian fellowship and labor with one of God's truly great men. This statement is not intended to be a life sketch of ~~our dearly beloved~~ <sup>but</sup> Elder Spicer. ~~It is~~ rather a personal tribute to a <sup>man who</sup> long and worthy life that ~~has been~~ lived to the glory of God, and <sup>was ever devoted</sup> ~~that has been devoted consistently and~~ <sup>entirely</sup> to promoting the growth and expansion of the cause he ~~has~~ loved so well.

There were certain outstanding characteristics in the life and experience of Elder Spicer that made him the well-known and much beloved man he was. Particular emphasis can be laid upon the fact that he was a man of the people. He had the common touch. Regardless of where he served or the position he held he was always a man of humble attitudes. He often said that it was not the position or office that a man held that mattered, but that any office or line of service to which one was called was simply a means of helping to finish God's work. He never assumed an attitude of officialism, self-importance or arbitrary authority. He never manifested a pride of opinion, but was a man of clear and definite convictions. He was always ready to join any body of counsellors in seeking solutions to all problems.

He was as ready to lay down any office or official position as he was to take it up. His humble christian character as a servant of Jesus Christ was never better exemplified than during the 1930 session of the General Conference, when after serving as General Conference president for eight years, he presided at

the session where his successor was elected. It was a thrilling sight to see this truly great but humble man so graciously and with such fitting words place, as it were, his mantle on the shoulders of one of his fellow workers. Since laying off the responsibilities of office he has given to the cause of God a rich and full service. His attitude toward his successors has always been that of a benign and helpful counselor, always ready to render any service within his power.

Another outstanding quality was his great ability to inspire courage in the hearts of believers. A favorite illustration he used frequently was the couplet, "The waves may be beaten back, but the tide is sure to win." His unwavering faith in the triumph of the Advent Movement was ~~an outstanding feature of~~ <sup>prevalent in</sup> all his labors. He was invited to give the opening Bible study of the 1946 session of the General Conference. As he stood before the delegates and visitors on that first morning he opened his address with these words: "Let us talk this morning about the advent message, this advent movement, and this advent people. You know, the message has brought out a wonderful people. You will find them in all the world, preaching the message of preparation for the coming of the Lord. And really, you find them just as the prophecy of Isaiah foretold, and so they are in all the world. I am so thankful to God to be one of them. I pray that by His grace I may be with them in representing His love and power to sinners!" His ability to use countless incidents and illustrations made him a unique type of preacher, as is illustrated in this <sup>1946</sup> ~~same~~ Bible study. He told that when a boy he attended a meeting in Battle Creek where the few believers of that day were holding a conference. They were facing perplexities and spirits were drooping. ~~Elder~~ James White called his wife Ellen to the platform. Together they sang with ringing voices;

"When faint and weary toiling, with  
sweat drops on my brow,  
I long to rest from labor, to drop the  
burden now.

There comes a gentle chiding that  
stills each mourning sigh:  
Work while the day is shining;  
there's resting by and by."

Elder Spicer's comment on that was, "And so gathering courage those early workers, laying the foundations and blazing the paths in which we walk today, believed and trusted and sang as they marched forward." He always placed tremendous emphasis on the Word of God, and the power of that word to change the lives of men and to transform savages and heathen into children of God. At the General Conference Session of 1936 he conducted one of the morning Bible studies. Listen to his own words as he addressed that gathering: <sup>G</sup>"This is a wonderful Book--this Bible. It is a true book. But a man may write a true book. This book is more than true--it is a living book. And only the living God can write a living book. It is a wonderful book. It speaks, it moves, it acts, it does things in the world. I love it. It talks to us.... Years ago in a little fishing port, because of the breakdown of the steamer, I was compelled to wait for nine or ten days with nothing to do. I couldn't speak the language of the country, so I read my Bible--six, eight, ten, twelve hours, perhaps fourteen or sixteen hours a day. I read it in the morning, and I read it in the afternoon, and I read it at night till I knew I ought to go to sleep. I didn't want to go to sleep, for I wanted to see what came next. Why, it is just as interesting as a story book. Somehow all alone in my room, I rejoiced in this Book, and I found myself patting it, stroking it; I said, You are a good book. Oh, it is a wonderful book!"

Yes! our brother was a man of the Book. He loved to recite the experiences of our missionaries in heathen lands who saw believers by the hundreds springing up as a harvest <sup>from the</sup> ~~as a result of~~ <sup>of</sup> preaching the Word. His familiarity with the <sup>Bible</sup> ~~word of God~~ had a marked effect on his style of preaching. He was always simple and direct. Even children delighted to listen to him. His sermons were modeled after those of the Master Himself. He never attempted to charm his audiences by a show of philosophy or erudition, but his preaching always brought spiritual consolation and encouragement to his listeners.

One of Elder Spicer's most remarkable gifts was his ability as a writer and author. If it was a letter on routine office business it would sparkle with his vivacious spirit of courage and zeal. If it was an editorial for the Review

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and Herald it reflected his desire to inspire hope and faith in all his readers. If it was a book manuscript one would find great spiritual consolation in his expositions of Biblical truth, or an increased zeal in behalf of foreign missions. Scores of our older missionaries still remember the inspiration and encouragement his letters brought to them.

During the many years he served as secretary of the ~~Foreign Mission Board and~~ ~~of the~~ General Conference he acquired a profound knowledge of all our world-wide mission fields. Constant travel and a voluminous correspondence with the fields made him a real authority on mission problems. He was always vigilant in searching for new mission recruits. To his earnest efforts in behalf of missions, especially in the early years of the present century, there is much credit due for the rapid development and expansion of our foreign mission program.

Elder Spicer was a man of simple habits and was frugal of both time and money. Believing himself to be a steward of God's means he always sought to save in every possible way. But it was his delight <sup>(to generously)</sup> support the cause to the extent of his ability.

As <sup>we</sup> think back over the years <sup>I have known</sup> ~~in connection with the life of~~ this man of God and attempt to appraise his work <sup>we</sup> realize the inadequacy of ~~our~~ <sup>my</sup> own words. But <sup>we</sup> know that when the records are thrown open it will be seen that he had fully dedicated his long life, all his talents and gifts and his influence to the cause and service of God for the saving of men and women for the kingdom.

~~We join a large circle of relatives, friends and fellow workers in mourning the death of our dear brother.~~ How fitting are the words of Scripture; "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev.14:13)

~~J.L. McElhany~~