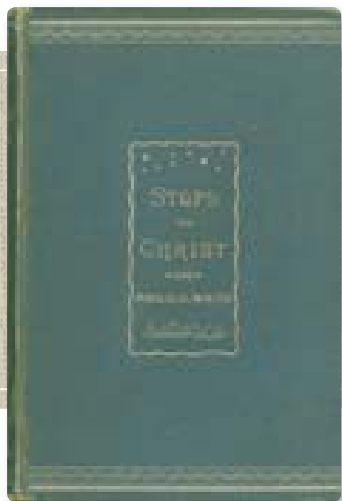


The original  
*Steps to Christ*  
published in  
1892 by the  
Fleming H.  
Revell  
Company



# *Steps to Christ* at 125

By JAMES R. NIX

*A Christian classic still inspires.*

Ellen White's most printed and widely translated book, *Steps to Christ*, turns 125 years old in 2017. How did such a powerful little volume happen to be published, and what can all of us do next year to share even more widely the blessings of this spiritually uplifting book?

Originally printed in 1892, *Steps to Christ* was one of several Christ-centered books that Ellen White produced during the 1890s.<sup>1</sup> Following the 1888 General Conference session, with its renewed emphasis on righteousness by faith, Ellen White and others spoke on that topic in churches and at camp meetings.

As a result, several ministers asked Ellen White to produce a small Christ-centered book that could be sold by evangelists and in bookstores.<sup>2</sup> She had written a number of articles on conversion and the Christian life that had been published in various denominational publications. The request now was that those materials be incorporated into a book for wider distribution.

Ellen White's longtime secretary Marian Davis was assigned the task of finding and assembling White's various writings on Christian experience into a book manuscript. Davis searched through Ellen White's published articles in the *Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*) and *Signs of the Times*, as well as chapters in her

previously published books, personal letters, and her unpublished manuscripts, looking for the best material for the new book. In some instances Ellen White wrote new material to complete chapters, or rewrote things she had written earlier so they would fit better in the book.

The work of preparing the manuscript took place in 1890 and 1891. The origin of the title, "Steps to Christ," is unknown. However, in the summer of 1891, when the completed book manuscript was circulated at an educational convention in Harbor Heights, Michigan, it was well received.

Discussions were held concerning how best to achieve the widest distribution for the new book. Having it printed by a non-Adventist publisher was suggested. George B. Starr, who as a young man prior to becoming an Adventist had worked in 1875 for Dwight L. Moody in Chicago,<sup>3</sup> suggested that Moody's brother-in-law, Fleming H. Revell, be contacted to determine if he would be willing to publish the book.<sup>4</sup>

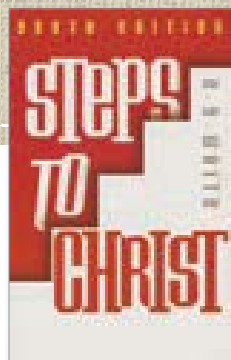
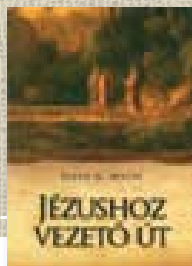
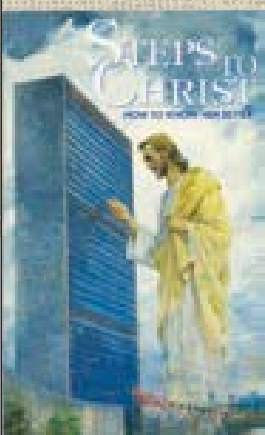
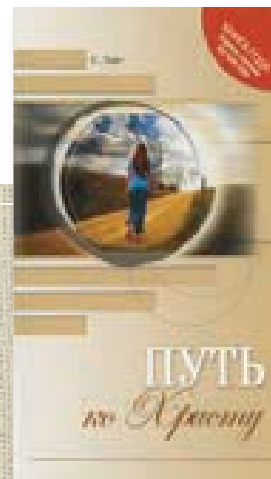
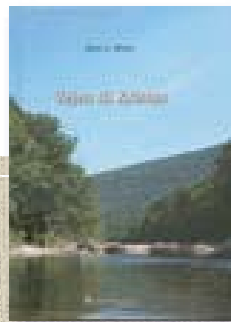
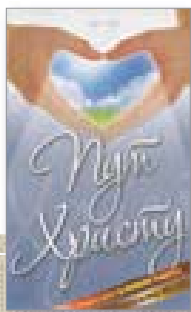
When originally published in 1892 by the Fleming H. Revell Company, *Steps to Christ* contained only 12 chapters. The following year, the International Tract Society in London wanted to publish the book in the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> In order to secure a British copyright for the book, Ellen White added a

new introductory chapter, "God's Love for Man," that has been retained in all copies of the book published by the denomination. Although three editions of the book were produced by Revell within the first six weeks following its publication, and a total of seven editions were published during its first year, in 1896 Revell agreed to sell the copyright to the Review and Herald Publishing Company. Several years later the Review transferred the copyright to Ellen White.<sup>6</sup>

No accurate count of the total number of copies of *Steps to Christ* printed during the past 125 years exists. Millions of copies of the book (long out of copyright) have been published, both by the denomination and by private organizations and individuals. Likewise, the exact number of languages into which it has been translated is also unknown. However, the Ellen G. White Estate is aware that this powerful little life-changing book has been translated into more than 165 languages.

### **Favorite Quotes**

Although *Steps to Christ* can be profitably read and reread, with something new discovered each time, another reason for its ongoing popularity is the many choice quotes found in it. Here is a sampling that illustrates the simple yet practical nature of the book. Read the book for yourself to



Over the years, *Steps to Christ* has been published in dozens of languages and scores of formats.

discover many more similar insights for growing in Christ:

“Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.”<sup>7</sup>

“Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?”<sup>8</sup>

“Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work.”<sup>9</sup>

“When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed.”<sup>10</sup>

“God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.”<sup>11</sup>

“Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him.”<sup>12</sup>

### 2017 and Beyond

After being around for more than a century, what are some simple things that all of us can do next year to

introduce—or reintroduce—this wonderful book? Here are a few suggestions:

Read the book yourself. It has only 13 chapters, so everyone can find some time during the year to read the book. Imagine what an impact would be felt in our churches if every Adventist worldwide prayerfully and thoughtfully read *Steps to Christ* in 2017! You can read it, along with the Bible and other readings, for family worship.

Small groups (either at church or in individual homes) can study the book, pastors can preach sermons based upon the themes found in the book (what about a sermon a week for one quarter?), teachers can use the book for class workshops, school chapels, etc. Likewise, the book can be the focus of employee workshops in conferences offices and health-care institutions.

Share the book with family, friends, neighbors, work associates, or in other ways.

*Steps to Christ* is available for free download in multiple languages at [www.egwwritings.org](http://www.egwwritings.org). It is also available as an audio book in a few languages.

For well more than a century *Steps to Christ* has proved to be a great

blessing to the millions of people who have read it. As Tim Poirier summarized in his article written on the centennial of *Steps to Christ*: “We don’t know who first suggested to Ellen White the idea of a simple book on Christian experience. But one thing is certain: that person had no idea of the millions who would have their first introduction to Christ through that one little volume.”<sup>13</sup>

Equally certain is that we can again be blessed, and continue to bless others, by reading and sharing *Steps to Christ* in 2017. ■

<sup>1</sup> *Steps to Christ* (1892), *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (1896), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900).

<sup>2</sup> W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, *The Story of a Popular Book “Steps to Christ”* (St. Helena, California, “Elmshaven” Office, August 1933 [mimeographed]), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), vol. 11, p. 702; Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds., *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2013), pp. 519, 520.

<sup>4</sup> *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, p. 1198.

<sup>5</sup> The Fleming H. Revell Company had waived all international publishing rights. See Tim Poirier, “A Century of *Steps*,” *Adventist Review*, May 14, 1992, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, p. 1198; White and Robinson; Poirier, pp. 14, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Poirier, p. 15.



**James R. Nix** is director of the Ellen G. White Estate.