

“Give God the Best”¹: The Life of Irwin Henry Evans as General Conference Treasurer and North American Division President

by
Michael W. Campbell

This article provides a biographical overview about the contributions of Irwin Henry Evans (1862-1945), who was an influential administrator in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the late 19th century onward, with his key ministry occurring in the first half of the twentieth century. His life serves as a case study in the development of church organization, and was the primary focus of the formation of the North American Division (1913-1918). In this key role his leadership, and the early first phase of a specifically North American Division territory and level of organization within the denomination, is the primary focus of this article, with the events leading up to his tenure, that provides some context to help better understand both Evans' life as well as what he accomplished and the context for the North American Division.

It will be suggested in this article that Evans was, in effect, a victim of his own success, and yet in his many roles within the denomination he remained firmly committed to the worldwide mission of the denomination. Consequently, it was the need to sustain a worldwide mission and maintain a strong base of support in North America that would be a defining aspect of his administration, and a pivotal reason both for the creation and dissolution of the first iteration of the North American Division. Thus, while Evans' life is not well-known in Adventist history, no

¹ The title of a poem by Evans, see I. H. Evans, “Give God the Best,” *ARH*, February 8, 1917, 10.

biography exists, and his life is generally given only passing references in Adventist historiography, he deserves consideration as one of the most influential administrators in Adventist history. His background as a pastor, missionary, administrator, poet, author, and hymn writer show a complex individual who dedicated his life to the mission of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. He served as one of the key officers of the denomination, as treasurer (1903-1910), before he served in his role as the leader of the denomination in Asia and then as North American Division president. It is his leadership in these key positions that remains the primary focus of this article in an attempt to remedy this lacuna about his significant administrative and leadership contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Early Life & Ministry

Irwin was born April 10, 1862, in North Plains, Ionia County, Michigan, to William (1840-1914) and Ruth Ann née Locke (1843-1926) Evans. Irwin was converted and baptized at the age of 12. As a youth “he held the ministry in view as his goal.”² He “used to go out and preach to the stumps on his father’s farm.” This early training, according to A. W. Spalding, prepared him for his “gracious, winning form of address which made his preaching so charming and so effective.”³ He began ministry as a licentiate in 1882, teaching school in the winter. In 1884 he participated in evangelistic meetings in Michigan.⁴ He also received a ministerial license for the first time.⁵ The next year he was transferred to Kentucky. He arrived December 10, 1885, where he began to hold meetings at Leitchfield.⁶ He was successful at raising up several groups of believers.⁷ He became involved in the Kentucky Tract Society.⁸ He was ordained that summer at the 1886 Kentucky

² A. W. Spalding, *Captains of the Host: First Volume of a History of Seventh-day Adventists Covering the Years 1845-1900* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1949), 373, 374.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ I. H. Evans & H. P. Holser, “Michigan,” *ARH*, June 24, 1884, 411; *idem.*, “Gaines, Aug. 6,” *ARH*, August 19, 1884, 541; *idem.*, “Michigan,” *ARH*, September 9, 1884, 588.

⁵ See report on the Committee on Credentials and Licenses, *ARH*, October 21, 1884, 668.

⁶ I. H. Evans, “Kentucky,” *ARH*, February 23, 1886, 124.

⁷ See report for “Kentucky,” *The Gospel Sickle*, October 1, 1886, 135.

⁸ “Kentucky Tract Society Proceedings,” *ARH*, October 26, 1886, 662.

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Camp Meeting (October 7-12).⁹ He was afterward elected president of the Kentucky Sabbath School Association.¹⁰ By early 1887 Irwin was serving back in Michigan.¹¹ He worked actively in evangelism. He served as president of the Michigan Sabbath School Association¹² and secretary of the Michigan Health and Temperance Association.¹³ He would increasingly work on regional meetings to rouse confidence in the work. “When our people understand the workings of our institutions,” he wrote after one such gathering, “and the different branches of the cause, they will have more confidence in the work of God.”¹⁴

In 1887 he married Emma Ferry (1862-1903), who died in 1903. They had four children: Arthur Henry (1888-1956), Edith Evans (1890-1893), Jessie Ruth Corbett (1892-1981), and Jerome Fargo (1894-1971). His youngest child was named after the former president of the Michigan Conference, Jerome Fargo (1824-1899).

Michigan Conference President

In 1891 Irwin was elected president of the Michigan Conference.¹⁵ One of his first initiatives was to organize a special training institute for all church workers held from November 13 to December 15.¹⁶ Irwin traveled extensively holding regional meetings to encourage believers. He reported in 1892 that they had “not had a large attendance at any of the meetings, because of so much sickness [la grippe].” He added that these gatherings were “seasons of hard labor.” He added that such unbelief and doubt “do not exist so much in regard to the truthfulness of the great pillars of our faith, as they do to personal experience and a knowledge of acceptance with God. But when one is in doubt or uncertainty about his own standing with God, the great truths we

⁹ R. A. Underwood, “Kentucky Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, October 26, 1886, 669; “Kentucky Conference Proceedings,” *ARH*, November 9, 1886, 700.

¹⁰ “Kentucky Sabbath-School Association Proceedings,” *ARH*, November 16, 1886, 717.

¹¹ “Recommendations for Tent Labor in Michigan,” *ARH*, May 17, 1887, 313, 314.

¹² See under “Appointments,” *ARH*, November 4, 1890, 687.

¹³ “Michigan H. and T. Society Proceedings,” *ARH*, November 11, 1890, 701.

¹⁴ I. H. Evans, “General Meetings in Michigan,” February 10, 1891, 92-93.

¹⁵ O. A. Olsen, “A Good Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, September 29, 1891, 601; “Michigan Conference Proceedings,” *ARH*, September 29, 1891, 604-605.

¹⁶ I. H. Evans, “To Michigan Workers,” *ARH*, November 3, 1891, 686.

have held so long soon lose their luster and strength, and it is easy then to lose hold upon them.”¹⁷

During the 1890s he became increasingly interested in the publishing work. From March 15 to April 23, 1893 he organized a six-week canvassers’ institute—the largest gathering of its kind up to that point with at least 200 in attendance, to more thoroughly train and equip people to disseminate Adventist literature.¹⁸ Teachers, in addition to Evans, included J. O. Corliss, F. D. Starr, E. E. Miles and F. L. Mead. By the time the institute was over the participants had contributed \$26.48 toward the Adventist mission in India.¹⁹ This strong sense of mission can be seen in an evangelistic initiative by Evans to plant a church by the Michigan Conference across the border in the Canadian province of Ontario. After holding evangelistic meetings, in 1893 they organized a church in Albuna, Ontario. A. T. Jones was the featured evangelist, and the Michigan Conference sponsored two full-time Bible workers to help establish an Adventist presence in the city of Toronto where there had recently been organized a Sabbath School. “We trust the work in Ontario will have the prayers and sympathy of all the brethren and sisters in Michigan.”²⁰

Evans was a frugal administrator. In 1893 he was trying to find ways to help reduce costs and sustain the city mission in Detroit. He came up with a plan to have churches from across the state send them canned food, one of their most expensive foods they had to buy, to help make the outreach work more sustainable.²¹ He was one of the earliest for developing the practice of holding workers’ meetings right before camp meeting each year.²² He urged for better planning when holding camp meetings, whether that was arranging for your tent ahead of time, or the practicality of making “a good sheet-iron stove” which was more cost effective than renting one.²³ This “white city of the tents of

¹⁷ See under “Michigan,” *ARH*, March 8, 1892, 153.

¹⁸ I. H. Evans, “Canvassers’ Institute for Michigan,” *ARH*, March 7, 1893, 160; F. L. Mead, “Notes from the Canvassing Field,” *ARH*, March 21, 1893, 188; see note *ARH*, April 25, 1893, 272.

¹⁹ See note *ARH*, April 25, 1893, 272.

²⁰ I. H. Evans, “The Dedication at Albuna, Ontario,” *ARH*, June 13, 1893, 380-381.

²¹ I. H. Evans, “To the Brethren and Sisters in Michigan,” *ARH*, June 25, 1893, 477.

²² “NOTICE TO MICHIGAN!” *ARH*, August 8, 1893, 509.

²³ I. H. Evans, “Tens for the Lansing Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, August 22, 1893, 541.

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Israel” with an estimated “constant attendance” of from four to five thousand persons “was thus the largest camp-meeting ever held by our people.”²⁴

In 1893 Irwin was elected as a member of the executive committee of the International Tract Society.²⁵ From April 4-16 1894²⁶ he held another canvassing institute in which he worked to train more workers to sell Adventist literature, works such as *Bible Readings, Two Republics, Volume 4 [Great Controversy]*, or *Patriarchs and Prophets*.²⁷ He appealed for “men and women who love hard work” to “sacrifice for the truth’s sake” by working as canvassers.²⁸ Later that year he developed a second camp meeting in Frankfort, on the shores of Lake Michigan.²⁹ He happily reported that about the growth of the “mission work in Detroit” that resulted in most nights in a “nearly full” chapel.³⁰ At the time the mission had 14 Bible workers.³¹ He added that there were now “four tent companies” doing evangelism in Ontario and enough interest from the Bible workers in Toronto that he believed it would soon be time to “have a house of worship in Toronto.”³² By 1895 he was happy to announce that they dedicated a new church building with 41 members at Selton, Ontario.³³ During that year they raised \$5,000 toward a church building and added two more Bible workers to assist in building up a church in Toronto.³⁴ Irwin was a passionate evangelist who loved to both share his faith and equip others to do the same. He loved to preach, for example, on the verse “Ye are my witnesses” showing how important it is to rightly represent God when sharing the truths we profess.³⁵

Through the 1890s his administrative responsibilities began to expand. In 1895 Irwin was elected as a member of the General

²⁴ See editorial note, *ARH*, October 3, 1893, 628.

²⁵ See *ST*, March 20, 1893, 318.

²⁶ I. H. Evans, “Michigan Canvassers’ Institute,” *ARH*, March 27, 1894, 205.

²⁷ I. H. Evans, “Michigan Canvassers,” *ARH*, January 23, 1894, 62.

²⁸ I. H. Evans, “Michigan Canvassers’ Institute,” *ARH*, March 6, 1894, 158.

²⁹ I. H. Evans, “Northern Michigan Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, August 7, 1894, 510.

³⁰ I. H. Evans, “The Work in Michigan and Ontario,” *ARH*, August 21, 1894, 539.

³¹ See note under “Field Notes,” *ST*, March 26, 1894, 332.

³² I. H. Evans, “The Work in Michigan and Ontario,” *ARH*, August 21, 1894, 539.

³³ “General Meeting in Ontario,” *ARH*, April 9, 1895, 239; A. O. Burrill, “Ontario,” *ARH*, June 18, 1895, 396.

³⁴ I. H. Evans, “Ontario,” May 21, 1895, 332.

³⁵ See description of his sermon in *ARH*, October 30, 1894, 688.

Conference Association Executive Board.³⁶ That year seven new churches were organized with a total of six new church buildings that were also dedicated in the Michigan Conference.³⁷ In 1896 Irwin requested that the missionary work in Ontario be transferred to the General Conference.³⁸ That same year he was also elected as a member of the Board of Trustees for the S.D.A. Educational Society.³⁹ He again organized another canvassers' institute (April 9-25, 1896), which became a vital part of his leadership training.⁴⁰

Growing Administrative Responsibilities

In 1897 Irwin was chosen as "business agent" for the General Conference Association (the business arm of the General Conference) and relinquished his role as Michigan Conference president.⁴¹ He remained a member of the General Conference Committee until his death. He proposed a "self-denial week" for individuals to give additional funds for overseas church mission projects.⁴² With mounting debts, he pled with church members to loan the General Conference money without interest to provide more working capital.⁴³ This ultimately led to "a special season of seeking God for the prosperity of the work" on July 2-3, 1898.⁴⁴ Also, in 1898, he became vice-president of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association as well as continuing as a member of the S. D. A. Educational Society and GC Executive Committee.⁴⁵ That summer he spoke at a series of camp meetings

³⁶ G. C. T[enney], "The General Conference," March 12, 1895, 171.

³⁷ J. S. Hall, "Proceedings of the Michigan Conference," *ARH*, October 15, 1895, 668.

³⁸ General Conference Committee Minutes, Spring Session, March 15, 1896, 2 [126].

³⁹ "S. D. A. Educational Society," *ARH*, March 10, 1896, 158.

⁴⁰ I. H. Evans, "Michigan Canvassers' Institute," *ARH*, March 24, 1896, 191.

⁴¹ See description in *ARH*, April 13, 1897, 240. The term "business agent" is used by church president Geo. A. Irwin in description his role. See G. A. Irwin, "The Special Season of Fasting and Prayer," *ARH*, May 11, 1897, 297. The explanation of the role of the General Conference Association as the "business arm of the General Conference" appears in *ST*, December 16, 1897, 11.

⁴² General Conference Committee Minutes, June 17, 1897, 5.

⁴³ I. H. Evans, "Read This," *ARH*, February 22, 1898, 132.

⁴⁴ I. H. Evans, "The Coming Season of Prayer and Special Donation," *ARH*, June 21, 1898, 398.

⁴⁵ See minutes, "The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association," *ARH*, April 5, 1898, 222-223; "Twenty-First Annual

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from Michigan to Maine. His message was “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁶ He both appealed and opined that the General Conference had to borrow money, but continued to appeal to church members, if possible, to loan money to the church without interest. If he had to, the General Conference Association could pay up to 4 percent.⁴⁷ When one person at the 1899 GC Session proposed making this year of Jubilee (50 years since the founding of the *Review*) as a way to forgive debts, such as the \$47,000 the Review and Herald Publishing Association held against Battle Creek College, it was Evans who noted how one could not rejoice in such financial bondage, but “it was a fine thing to forgive, and also a fine thing to pay.”⁴⁸ He proposed instead remitting the interest instead of the principal. Another idea he had was to close out the last full week of 1899 (Dec. 23-30) with a week of prayer:

Why not let a real missionary spirit come in to our hearts to go to the disheartened ones and make them a visit? In many churches there are those who never, or at least seldom, attend services. Why not arrange to have all such visited? Invite them to the meetings, and show them your love. Get them to join in prayer and song, and invite them to speak a word for the Lord. . . . Pray for the work in other lands. Pray for our foreign missionaries. Pray that God will give success to the missionaries we have, and will raise up many more. Pray for money to carry on God’s work. Pray that his people may have liberal hearts, hearts of sacrifice, to give for perishing souls. And, lastly, pray him to tell you just what he wishes you to do.⁴⁹

In 1899, Irwin continued as a member of both the General Conference Committee, International Tract, Society, and then served as president of the Foreign Mission Board.⁵⁰ He appealed for church members to become more aware of the 1.4 billion people on the planet. “The Gospel is due to the world . . . Christ’s representatives cannot confine their labors to one nation or tongue. It is not to be confined within state lines or national

Meeting of the Seventh-day Adventist Educational Society,” *ARH*, April 5, 1898, 223.

⁴⁶ Eugene Leland, “The Maine Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, October 18, 1898, 672.

⁴⁷ I. H. Evans, “Help Needed,” *ARH*, November 29, 1898, 774.

⁴⁸ See quote under “Fourth Meeting,” *ARH*, March 21, 1899, 188.

⁴⁹ I. H. Evans, “The Week of Prayer,” *ARH*, December 19, 1899, 322.

⁵⁰ See “Officers of S. D. A. Societies and Boards,” *ST*, March 22, 1899, 10.

boundaries; but extended to the uttermost parts of the earth.”⁵¹ The providential rise of the Adventist movement in New England has grown into strong conferences across most of the United States. “It is but natural, and we believe in the order of God, for the work to be firmly established in America that it may supply laborers and means for the entire world.”⁵² The cosmopolitan nature of the United States made it unique for sending out missionaries to the world. With a membership of 57,000 and a tithe of \$350,000 they employed 842 workers, but only employed 250 workers for overseas missionary work. He believed that the amount invested in missions should exceed that being used in the home field. He proposed that every church member raise 10 cents a week for missions that would expand the number of overseas workers by 300 workers. This was a bold proposal to expand the missionary presence of the denomination.⁵³

In 1900 church leaders sent him to resolve the bankrupted Christiana Publishing House. He discovered that the Skodsborg Sanitarium was in even worse financial shape. They came up with a plan to liquidate the property and repay creditors over three years.⁵⁴ The funds needed were a staggering \$65,986 (approximately \$2.4 million in 2023).⁵⁵ He also proposed a special week of prayer focused on mission to take place from December 22-29, 1900.⁵⁶ By early 1901 the lawyers on behalf of the creditors of Skodsborg demanded a mortgage on the property. Evans would negotiate one of the largest early financial crises of the denomination.⁵⁷ In order not to lose the property it required \$22,000 paid semi-annually for three years. Evans believed that they could meet these demands and other requests for mission projects with this 10 cents a week plan. He urged: This *can be done*. Only let the *whole denomination* take hold and *pull together*.⁵⁸

⁵¹ I. H. Evans, “Our Work World-Wide,” *The Missionary Magazine*, August 1899, 331.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 332.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ See plan dated September 26, 1900, in General Conference Committee Minutes, October 14, 1900, 160-162.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁶ I. H. Evans, “Are We Planning for It?” *ARH*, November 27, 1900, 764.

⁵⁷ General Conference Committee Minutes, April 30, 1901, 29.

⁵⁸ I. H. Evans, “Systematic Giving,” *ARH*, March 26, 1901, 203.

Review and Herald Manager

The 1901 General Conference session was a turning point in Irwin’s life as he took on many new responsibilities, not least of which were his growing responsibilities in the publishing arm of the denomination. At the 1901 General Conference session, in addition to previous committees mentioned, Irwin was added to the General Conference Finance Committee.⁵⁹ He was also placed in charge of the publishing work for the Lake Union when the General Conference was re-organized in 1901 and the administrative level of unions was created between the General Conference and conferences (divisions would be created later).⁶⁰ Then on May 28, 1901, he was elected president and general manager of the Review and Herald.⁶¹ Later that year he participated in the organization of the Canadian Union Conference.⁶² He would facilitate giving the Toronto Branch of the Review as a gift to the Canadian field (with half the expenses shared by the Foreign Mission Board); and a gift of the Atlanta Branch in the South.

Under the Evans administration he cast a new vision for the Review and Herald, which had grown from a “small scale” operation to a turnover with three million dollars in sales. He believed the “object” was the “advance the Third Angel’s Message.”⁶³ And while there had been some “incidental” commercial work, this was “not the leading object of its existence.” Irwin shared how the new Review Board was “anxious” that the Review “should fulfill the mission upon which it started in the beginning.”⁶⁴ Change, he admitted, had been “slow” which he believed was hampered by being unable “to secure competent help.” They opened a new dormitory and began to offer a special

⁵⁹ He remained a member of the General Conference Committee, Mission Board, Publication Committee, General Conference Association, and as a Trustee of the Foreign Mission Board. See “Directory of General Conference and Union Conference Organizations,” *ARH*, May 14, 1901, 318.

⁶⁰ “Directory of Union Conference Organizations,” *Supplement ARH*, May 21, 1901, 338.

⁶¹ “Organization of R. & H. Board,” *ARH*, June 11, 1901, 386.

⁶² “Organization of the Canadian Union Conference,” *ARH*, December 17, 1901, 820.

⁶³ [I. H. Evans], “Remarks of Elder I. H. Evans,” *ARH*, February 18, 1902, 106.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

“night school for our apprentices” with free tuition.⁶⁵ He believed that as a consequence this would “put us upon right lines, and bring this institution, as it ought to be, into perfect harmony with the different movements of the Third Angel’s Message.”⁶⁶ He did believe you could find more “loyal” and dedicated workers “than the employees of the *Review and Herald*.” Despite “mistakes and failures” he believed “there are brighter days” ahead for the *Review and Herald*.⁶⁷

Irwin was at the church headquarters when the Battle Creek Sanitarium tragically burned to the ground on Feb. 18, 1902. Afterward Irwin appealed to *Review* employees to donate a portion of their wages to help the sanitarium rebuild and offered to create a special souvenir booklet on the history of the institution as a fund raiser to help their “sister institution in distress” toward their building fund.⁶⁸ He facilitated a redesign of the *Review and Herald* periodical making it slightly smaller size would still contain the same amount of content.⁶⁹ He also happily reported that thanks to the generosity of church members they were able to repay the debt on the Christiana Publishing House early. Although not legally obligated, he believed this was the right thing to do, even “unheard-of” to the creditors, giving increased confidence in the “integrity” of the denomination to back its institutions.⁷⁰

Tragically the *Review and Herald* building burned to the ground on December 30, 1902. Through this “disaster” the offices of the *Daily Moon* allowed them to set their type and the *Review* continued to be printed at the office of *The Pilgrim*.⁷¹

Treasurer of the General Conference (1903-1910)

On April 11, 1903, Irwin was elected as treasurer of the General Conference.⁷² The re-structuring of the denomination

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See description in *ARH*, February 25, 1902, 128.

⁶⁹ I. H. Evans, “Announcement,” *ARH*, April 8, 1902, 24.

⁷⁰ I. H. Evans, “Why Not?” *ARH*, May 20, 1902, 24.

⁷¹ “Sympathy and Help,” *ARH*, January 6, 1903, 16.

⁷² “The General Conference: Summary of Daily Proceedings, April 6 to 11,” *ARH*, April 14, 1903, 24; “Report on Nominations,” *ARH*, May 5, 1903, 14. The General Conference Archives lists the date of his appointment as March 27, 1903, but this date does not correspond with primary sources. To compare see: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-treasurers> [accessed 8/16/23].

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allowed for more financial stability. At the same time Irwin reminded church members of the critical need to raise funds to facilitate the expansion of the denomination into new territories around the globe.⁷³ Tragically, hardly had he been elected as an officer of the General conference when his wife, Emma, died on May 13, 1903, from endocarditis. A memorial service was held in the home of Henry Nicola after which the body was taken back to the family cemetery in Ovid, Michigan, and another funeral held.⁷⁴ The dual loss of the Review through fire and that of the death of his wife meant this was a time of incredible personal loss. Yet even in the midst of that, Irwin remained ever the missionary-minded administrator, Irwin planned for a special offering on July 4, 1903, to help expand the work of the church in Australia.⁷⁵ He also worked to dispel rumors about the demise of the Review noting that all financial obligations will be honored, and although it would take some time, he continued to serve as General Manager working on plans to relocate the Review to the east coast⁷⁶ Irwin was part of a delegation that visited two sites: New York City and Washington, D.C. The relocation committee met first in New York City on May 18.⁷⁷ The committee met again in Washington, D.C., in late July.⁷⁸ Ultimately the committee opted to move to Takoma Park, on the border of Maryland and Washington, D.C. Once the new location was decided, Irwin went to work requesting stockholders of the previous corporation assign their stock to the new corporation.⁷⁹

Irwin spent the winter of 1903 through 1904 working on closing up any remaining business at Battle Creek, Michigan. He tied the knot with Adelaide Bee Cooper (1870-1958) on April 13,

⁷³ I. H. Evans, “Important Resolutions,” *ARH*, May 12, 1903, 6-7.

⁷⁴ See announcement of her death, *ARH*, May 19, 1903, 24.

⁷⁵ I. H. Evans, “The Offering for July 4,” *ARH*, June 9, 1903, 24.

⁷⁶ I. H. Evans, “The Review and Herald Publishing Company,” *ARH*, June 23, 1903, 24.

⁷⁷ A. G. Daniells, “The Removal to Washington,” *ARH*, August 11, 1903, 5-6. Other members of the committee included H. W. Cottrell, S. N. Haskell, J. E. Jayne, S. N. Curtiss, C. D. Rhodes, D. W. Reavis, and A. G. Daniells.

⁷⁸ A. G. Daniells, “The Removal to Washington (Concluded),” *ARH*, August 20, 1903, 4-5.

⁷⁹ “Assignment of Stock,” *ARH*, November 19, 1903, 24; A. G. Daniells, “To the Stockholders of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association,” *ARH*, December 10, 1903, 21; “Another Call,” *ARH*, February 4, 1904, 24; “An Important Matter,” *ARH*, April 21, 1904, 24.

1904, in Battle Creek. On May 18, 1904, Irwin participated in the closing of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association which was replaced by a new corporation known as the Review and Herald Publishing Association.⁸⁰ On July 12, 1904, the courts official dissolved the old publishing house “declaring its existence as having ceased.”⁸¹ All remaining assets in Battle Creek were auctioned off on January 10, 1905.⁸² With the new re-organization Irwin stepped aside as general manager of the Review and focused solely on his role as the General Conference Treasurer. Irwin remained supportive of continued outreach efforts in Canada. He participated in the June 16-26, 1904, Ontario Camp Meeting at which he facilitated finding a new conference president since the General Conference had recently called Elder George B. Thompson to church headquarters (they settled on A. O. Burrill in his place).⁸³ Of special note was a new school, known as the Lornedale Academy, that had recently started by an Elder Leland on fifty acres of land about thirteen miles outside of Toronto.⁸⁴

The December 1, 1904, *Review* reported that Evans had now made Takoma Park, D.C., his permanent home.⁸⁵ In the meantime he spent most of December 1904 through January 1905 assisting with the Guadalajara Sanitarium and Mexican Mission.⁸⁶ Irwin began a fundraising campaign for \$100,000 so that the denomination could establish a new General Conference building, a sanitarium, and a school.⁸⁷ There were sufficient assets from which to rebuild the new publishing house. J. S. Washburn was appointed as a “soliciting agent” to receive these funds. Until the new headquarters building was constructed the temporary General Conference headquarters would be located at 222 North Capital Street in Washington, D.C.⁸⁸ Irwin was placed in charge of plans for erecting the new General Conference building.⁸⁹ A significant

⁸⁰ “Review and Herald Publishing Association of Washington, D.C.,” *ARH*, June 9, 1914, 19.

⁸¹ I. H. Evans and W. W. Prescott, “The Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association,” *ARH*, July 21, 1904, 19-20.

⁸² See announcement, *ARH*, December 22, 1904, 24.

⁸³ I. H. Evans, “Ontario Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, July 14, 1904, 16.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ See *ARH*, December 1, 1904, 24.

⁸⁶ See *ARH*, December 22, 1904, 24.

⁸⁷ See announcement *ST*, March 23, 1904, 13.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ General Conference Committee Minutes, June 8, 1905, 31.

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new development was the “purchase of the adding machine” to assist the accounting department. This was the first time such a machine was purchased by the denomination’s treasury to help secure great accuracy in keeping the church books.⁹⁰ Irwin also worked with the District of Columbia to establish postal facilities in Takoma Park.⁹¹

Irwin remained firmly committed to the missionary outreach of the denomination. He appealed to members that it wasn’t enough to sustain existing missions, but this was a critical time to give more so that the work of the church could expand.⁹² This included setting aside a parcel of land, for farmers, the proceeds of which could be used for missions. This plan was called the “Missionary Acre Fund.”⁹³ In due course, Irwin was elected as a trustee of the new Washington Training College and Washington (D.C.) Sanitarium Association.⁹⁴ In what has to be one of the more unusual surprises in Adventist history was a Washington “Surprise Party” that brought a report to General Conference leaders on May 12, 1905. The impetus was a woman who felt called to serve as a missionary, and the response by Daniells that the church treasury was in such a deplorable state that there just wasn’t enough funds to send more missionaries. This was the catalyst for a lay-led fundraising campaign.⁹⁵

At the 1905 General Conference session Irwin was re-elected for a second term as General Conference treasurer. He also established more clearly principles, in light of several financial crises (Skodsborg Sanitarium, the destruction of the Review and Battle Creek Sanitarium, and the move to Takoma Park) that made it clear, along with church re-organization, that as the denomination grew larger that it had to institute clear financial principles. One such principle was that the General Conference could no longer assume financial responsibility except when “specifically assumed by action of the General Conference or its executive committee.” He added:

⁹⁰ General Conference Committee Minutes, June 14, 1905, 34.

⁹¹ General Conference Committee Minutes, September 28, 1905, 60.

⁹² I. H. Evans, “The Support of Our Mission Work,” *ARH*, January 12, 1905, 6.

⁹³ I. H. Evans, “Missionary Farming,” *ARH*, March 9, 1905, 17-18.

⁹⁴ See *ARH*, June 1, 1905, 32.

⁹⁵ A. G. Daniells, W. A. Spicer, I. H. Evans, “An Inspiring Occasion,” *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, May 24, 1905, 2 (238).

We want it understood that this General Conference declares before the world that, so far as this denomination is concerned, it will not be responsible for obligations that it has not assumed by its own action. It has been suggested that the whole denomination is responsible for anything done by any organization associated with the denomination. We ask the delegates to make it known to their local conferences that the responsibility rests upon those who are operating local enterprises to handle their business affairs in such a way as to take care of their obligations. This placing of local responsibility will develop local resourcefulness.⁹⁶

Among other resolutions at the 1905 GC session was that Irwin was included in an official church deputation of 40 individuals “to wait upon President [Theodore] Roosevelt.”⁹⁷ The delegation presented greetings on behalf of the denomination in a formal greeting to the president on May 22, 1905.⁹⁸ It also remained significant that at this session the executive committee was expanded to include 31 individuals.⁹⁹ Another significant development in Adventist giving history was the innovation of a tithe envelope in which people could submit their tithes and offerings. This practice of using tithe envelopes would become ubiquitous in the twentieth century in Adventist churches.¹⁰⁰ While there were earlier examples of offering boxes, and even envelopes, for special sacrificial mission offerings, it was at the 1905 GC session that church leaders realized the importance of distributing regular envelopes with “Tithe,” “Mission Offerings,” “Church Expenses,” “Home Literature,” “Donations for the Poor,” etc. to help encourage regular and systematic giving. Church leaders ordered one million such envelopes to be distributed to churches across North America to encourage and increase regular giving of its members.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ See discussion on “The General Conference: Thirty-Sixth Session, May 11-30, Twenty-Eighth Meeting,” *ARH*, June 8, 1905, 5.

⁹⁷ “Deputation to the President,” *ARH*, June 8, 1905, 27.

⁹⁸ “Adventists at White House: Conference Committee Offers Greeting to the President: Views on Civil Government Embodied in Memorial Presented at the White House,” *ST*, June 14, 1905, 5-6.

⁹⁹ “Officers of the General Conference,” *ARH*, June 8, 1905, 32.

¹⁰⁰ I. H. Evans, “Annual Offering Envelopes,” *ARH*, November 23, 1905, 24.

¹⁰¹ Evans, I. H. “How to Increase Our Tithes and Offerings,” *ARH*, October 26, 1910, 10.

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As an administrator, Irwin had a strong spiritual focus. He encouraged church members to remember the power of prayer and to pray for the church leaders as they strive in turn to serve God:

The most of the battles that have ever been won for Christ have been gained by prayer. A genuine revival was never known till some one had a burden of prayer, and who ever heard of a great harvest of souls till there was all-night wrestling with the Angel? . . . There is no power on earth so strong as the power of prayer.¹⁰²

This strong spiritual focus as the denomination re-organized meant that mission was paramount for Evans in his view of church organization. An ever expanding global denomination meant, for Evans, that church leaders at headquarters could not, and should not, micromanage the decision making processes:

The time was when the General Conference Committee could look after every branch of the work, and know all the plans set on foot for prosecuting the same; that day is past. Local autonomy must be given to all these different fields, and local responsibility for the success or failure of the enterprises started must be assumed.¹⁰³

As economic prosperity picked up in 1905 across the country, Evans appealed for church members to loan the General Conference funds so it “could pay off its interest-bearing notes, and thus save a large sum each year to the denomination.” This was especially important as a stopgap measure while “it is compelled to secure temporary loans, until it can sell some of its real estate in Battle Creek, Mich.”¹⁰⁴

The early part of 1906 found Evans traveling to a series of union conference constituency meetings.¹⁰⁵ Increasingly, under his administration, there were calls for the offerings on specific Sabbaths to be designated for special purposes. For example, April 7, 1906, was designated for the support of orphans and

¹⁰² I. H. Evans, “Brethren, Pray for Us,” *ARH*, February 9, 1905, 6-7.

¹⁰³ I. H. Evans, “Loyalty and Responsibility,” *ARH*, April 6, 1905, 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ I. H. Evans, “One Way to Help,” *ARH*, October 5, 1905, 24.

¹⁰⁵ See note, *ARH*, January 25, 1906, 24, which notes that he was leaving for the Central Union Conference and expected to be away two to three months.

orphanages.¹⁰⁶ Evans next traveled with J. S. Washburn to attend the executive committee of the Southern Union Conference in Graysville, Tennessee.¹⁰⁷ Upon his return he was part of a delegation, and asked to chair a meeting, between General Conference leaders (other GC representatives included A. G. Daniells and G. A. Iriwn) to meet with Lewis Sheafe and his church in Washington, D.C. Their first meeting occurred April 1, 1906.¹⁰⁸ When the 1906 earthquake hit San Francisco (April 18) Evans organized relief efforts including a special offering, again, to assist with rebuilding Adventist churches and damage done to the Pacific Press.¹⁰⁹

After these meetings Evans traveled to the West Indies (arriving in late June¹¹⁰) where he worked on organizing the West Indian Union Conference with three thousand believers.¹¹¹ By late 1906 Evans was attending the Lake Union Conference Committee.¹¹² He also suggested that congregations hold a special Thanksgiving worship service focused on mission with an opportunity to raise more funds for mission. He believed this was an especially critical time where there was now more people willing to go serve than there were funds available.¹¹³ Next was a month-long campaign to raise an additional \$150,000 if every church member could only contribute each day ten cents per capita for thirty days.¹¹⁴ The church was continuing to grow rapidly and need new resources to support a variety of burgeoning mission opportunities. At the same time, the church was also rapidly expanding in Takoma Park. By late 1906 Evans was calling for 10 carpenters and joiners to help with building the many new buildings the church had under construction (notably the new college and sanitarium). Wages were 40 cents per hour.¹¹⁵

The year 1907 started off with some rather shaky beginnings. Not least of which was the final departure of Sheafe and his

¹⁰⁶ I. H. Evans, "The Collection for Orphanages," *ARH*, March 15, 1906, 6-7.

¹⁰⁷ See note *ARH*, March 15, 1906, 24.

¹⁰⁸ K. C. Russell, "The Work Among the Colored People," *ARH*, April 12, 1906, 18-19.

¹⁰⁹ I. H. Evans, "An Appeal," *ARH*, May 17, 1906, 6.

¹¹⁰ See "East Caribbean Conference," *The Caribbean Watchman*, July 1, 1905, 12.

¹¹¹ A. G. Daniells, "A Sign of a Short Work," *ARH*, December 13, 1906, 7-8.

¹¹² See note in *ARH*, October 25, 1906, 24.

¹¹³ I. H. Evans, "A Suggestion for Thanksgiving," *ARH*, November 15, 1906, 7.

¹¹⁴ I. H. Evans, "A Daily Offering for Thirty Days," *ARH*, December 6, 1906, 7.

¹¹⁵ "Wanted," *ARH*, December 6, 1906, 31.

congregation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Evans left with E. W. Farnsworth and Luther Warren in early January to participate in the new West Indian Union Conference to hold worker’s meetings (January 11-26).¹¹⁶ On January 14 a devastating 6.2 earthquake shook Kingston and its surroundings.¹¹⁷ Tragically the mission treasurer, Norman Johnston, lost his life.¹¹⁸ On the day of the earthquake Evans was with a group of about 30 church leaders who were inspecting the Bog Walk school about 23 miles outside of Kingston. For some who remained behind, providentially he believed, the walls of the Kingston Chapel “did not fall to the ground.”¹¹⁹ Evans reported how the city laid in ruins.

In the midst of this tragedy, Evans was happy to report that for the first time the denomination would convene its first meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee for Spring Council.

Transition from Administration to Missionary

In 1909 Evans attended the second biennial council of Adventist works across China. At this meeting the work in China was divided into ten great mission fields and they requested twenty more families to come over the next two years to support the aggressive missionary expansion. On this same trip, Evans participated in meetings in Korea that established Korea to be known as the Korean Mission field of Seventh-day Adventists. At this meeting the publishing and educational work was also organized and plans laid for raising funds to purchase a property in the country where students could work their way as they obtained an education.¹²⁰ Similar plans for starting a school were laid while he visited Japan.¹²¹ As Evans traveled across Asia, he urged for the people met to go to school so they “quickly learn the whole truth, and lay hold of it by faith.” He felt a special burden that these converts were the best and most effective way to do

¹¹⁶ See note in *ARH*, January 10, 1907, 32.

¹¹⁷ “1907 Kingston Earthquake,” available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1907_Kingston_earthquake [accessed 8/22/23]

¹¹⁸ “The Report From Jamaica,” *ARH*, January 31, 1907, 24.

¹¹⁹ I. H. Evans, “The West Indian Union Conference,” *ARH*, February 7, 1907, 12-13.

¹²⁰ I. H. Evans, “Our Work in Korea,” *ARH*, January 14, 1909, 16-17.

¹²¹ W. D. Burden, “Another Forward Step for Japan,” *ARH*, January 21, 1909, 16. [Note title page has typo stating 1908]

missionary work. These converts, instead of “foreigners,” were strategically the best way forward to spread the Adventist message.¹²² On February 10, 1909, Evans sailed from Japan to return to America.¹²³ After traveling for six months, he was ready to return home. The first Sabbath back he gave an extensive report to the Takoma Park Church about the great needs for the support of missions in Asia.¹²⁴

Evans was not forgetful to raise funds for other important projects as one of the leading fundraisers in the denomination. He reminded church members about the need to contribute to the offering on April 3 for the annual offering to provide relief for orphans and those in need. He also raised funds to develop the Oakwood Sanitarium and Rock City (Nashville) Sanitarium reminding believers of Ellen White’s strong and emphatic support for such institutions.¹²⁵

Ever the mindful administrator and as treasurer of the General Conference he was looking at how to be good stewards of church finances. He reminded delegates traveling to the 1909 General Conference session to secure the most economical means of travel, including working with agents and others to secure private cars whereby delegates could travel together from different sections of the country.¹²⁶ During his treasurer’s report he noted that during the quadrennial period (1905-1908) the church had spent \$1,655,137.53 and disbursed \$1,641,199.55 leaving a balance in the treasury on Dec. 31, 1908, of \$13, 937.98. During this time he had retired a debt of \$47,965.50, and now resources exceeded liabilities by \$6,770.71. This was all the while maintaining a posture of expansion and growth while seeking fiscal responsibility.¹²⁷

That summer, at the 1909 General Conference session, the importance of expanding the presence of Adventism across Asia was vividly impressed upon the delegates. From China came a

¹²² See description of Evans work and talk in John J. Westrup, “Honon, China,” *ARH*, February 11, 1909, 14.

¹²³ See note in *ARH*, February 18, 1909, 24.

¹²⁴ See report in *ARH*, March 11, 1909, 24.

¹²⁵ W. A. Ruble, D. H. Kress, G. H. Heald, “Two New Sanitariums for the Colored People: How We Can Help,” *ARH*, April 15, 1909, 19.

¹²⁶ I. H. Evans, “Rates to the General Conference,” *ARH*, March 25, 1909, 22.

¹²⁷ General Conference Proceedings: Fourth Meeting, Friday Morning, 10:30,” *ARH*, May 20, 1909, 17.

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delegation that requested 42 additional missionary families be sent over the next two years so that there could be at least two families of foreign workers across the 18 provinces of China proper and the 4 Chinese dependencies (Mancuria, Chinese Turkestan, Mongolia, and Tibet).¹²⁸ In order to accomplish this herculean task, he believed the church needed to come back to the Great Commission of Christ and earnestly pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁹ Evans was re-elected as treasurer of the General Conference, but then with the creation of a new position, was also elected to lead this new division and serve as vice-president of the General Conference. During the meeting, on Sabbath May 29, Evans gave a “stirring discourse . . . on the needs of the great mission fields, and the inability of the Mission Board to supply these needs, since its treasure is empty.” As a result, \$11,000 was raised so that the work could move forward.¹³⁰ With the significant leadership change, as he prepared to serve in Asia, through the end of 1909 he continued to serve as “acting treasurer” of the General Conference while they searched for a replacement.¹³¹ In this role he both continued legally as treasurer of the denomination while he trained in his replacement, prepared to go overseas, and began to undertake aggressive plans for missionary expansion. Ever the fundraiser, he made aggressive plans to raise money for missions in November 1909 by printing 350,000 copies of the Harvest Ingathering special “mission” edition.¹³² This was an unprecedented campaign to raise funds to support and send out missionaries as part of the worldwide missionary program of the denomination.

The creation of this new division of the world church followed the model of having a similar vice-president for Europe and North America. This new world division now included the territories of China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Burma, and India.¹³³ At the time when the nominating committee approached Evans, he was at first hesitant to go, on account of the hurried sale of his home which he estimated would sustain a loss of \$1,000, after an

¹²⁸ I. H. Evans, “China,” *ARH*, September 9, 1909, 6-7.

¹²⁹ I. H. Evans, “The Great Commission,” *ARH*, September 2, 1909, 6.

¹³⁰ “Eleven Thousand Dollars,” *YI*, June 22, 1909, 16.

¹³¹ See note *ARH*, December 30, 1909, 24.

¹³² I. H. Evans, “Object of the Harvest Ingathering,” *ARH*, October 14, 1909, 6; I.

H. Evans, “The Plan,” *ARH*, October 28, 1909, 7.

¹³³ “In the Asiatic Division,” *ARH*, June 16, 1910, 18.

earlier loss from the sale of his home in Battle Creek. Church leaders agreed to share half of the loss of \$1,000 in light of the urgent need for his leadership in Asia.¹³⁴ Evans continued to function in his capacity as treasurer of the General Conference until January 16, 1910, when he turned over the responsibility to W. T. Knox who had the previous summer accepted the position on a “provisional” acceptance.¹³⁵ This included a final audit and power of attorney for bank accounts.¹³⁶

During the first part of 1910 Evans attended a number of constituency sessions. Of special note was the Pacific Union Conference meeting held January 25-30, 1910, at which church members voted to give an additional \$10,000 to the General Conference for missionary work and also voted, under the advisement of Ellen White, to start a medical school at Loma Linda. Evans went with E. E. Andross and H. W. Cottrell to interview Ellen White¹³⁷ asking for clarity about whether they should have doctors who qualify for State board examinations and become “registered, qualified physicians,” Ellen White replied: “The medical school at Loma Linda is to be of the highest order.”¹³⁸

He chaired the last General Conference Committee meeting in his capacity as an officer of the General Conference on May 26, 1910.¹³⁹ Evans left on June 7, 1910, from San Francisco headed to Japan and then to the new headquarters in Shanghai, China.¹⁴⁰ His family would follow nearly a year later.¹⁴¹ He traveled with F.

¹³⁴ See General Conference Committee Minutes, July 22, 1909, 67. See also earlier conversation for context, General Conference Committee Minutes, July 4, 1909, 59.

¹³⁵ A. G. Daniells describes the story of this “provisional” acceptance at the following General Conference session. See “North American Division Conference,” *ARH*, June 12, 1913, 17.

¹³⁶ See “Auditor’s Statement to January 16,” General Conference Committee Minutes, April 6, 1910, 103. The voted action turning over power of attorney can be seen in the General Conference Committee Minutes, January 10, 1910, 163.

¹³⁷ The background and identity of the three persons doing the interview are mentioned by George I. Irwin, “An Important Council,” *ARH*, June 9, 1910, 15-16. This story is recounted at the 1913 GC Session. See “Twenty-Third Meeting: May 29, 10 A.M.,” *ARH*, June 12, 1913, 7-8.

¹³⁸ I. H. Evans, “Pacific Union Conference Meeting,” *ARH*, March 17, 1910, 18-19.

¹³⁹ General Conference Committee Minutes, May 26, 1910, 242-243.

¹⁴⁰ See note in *ARH*, June 16, 1910, 64.

¹⁴¹ See note *ARH*, June 2, 1910, 24.

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H. DeVinney and his wife, Dr. Kawasaka and Brother Miyaka.¹⁴² They stopped for a day of refreshment in Honolulu en route.¹⁴³ After seventeen days at sea, he finally reached the harbor of Yokohama, Japan, on June 24, 1910. The next morning was Sabbath and he preached at the Tokyo Church, which met in the spacious living room of Brother Burden.¹⁴⁴

Missionary to Asia (1910-1911)

Now that Evans was in Asia he was a man of action. After landing in Tokyo he left July 6, 1910, with F. W. Field and F. H. DeVinney, for Kobe where upon arrival he spent five days in meetings. He was happy to report that despite most of the foreign workers dispersing across Japan, the attendance at the church had remained strong. He was especially impressed with the sanitarium run by Dr. Noma as all the rooms remained full.¹⁴⁵ On July 13, Evans left Kobe for Hiroshima where there had recently been evangelistic meetings leading to seven baptisms. Evans laid plans for a ten month training school for workers to begin in November 1910. F. W. Field would take charge of the school as they worked to train more workers.¹⁴⁶ On July 28 Evans left Seoul for Pieng-yang and then onward to Soonan as he continued his tour. Here in a small Korean house was a dispensary run by Dr. Riley Russell and his wife, and assisted by Miss Mae Scott. Up to that point some nine thousand patients had been treated in the humble clinic.¹⁴⁷

From August 5-13, 1910, the “Korean General Meeting” was held to gather all the workers across Korea. At the conclusion, just after the Sabbath was closed, Dr. Riley Russell was ordained to the gospel ministry. Although a physician, he had proven himself “a real soul winner” leading “the brethren” to make a unanimous recommendation to be ordained. Also at this meeting it was voted to start a regular periodical to circulate among the believers in Korea with Mimi Scharffenberg was the first editor. The limited printing that had been done was on an old Washington Hand Press. As soon as they received a special mission appropriation, Evans wanted to remedy this situation with better equipment and

¹⁴² See note *ARH*, June 16, 1910, 64.

¹⁴³ I. H. Evans, “A Day in Honolulu,” *ARH*, July 28, 1910, 15.

¹⁴⁴ I. H. Evans, “Our Work in Tokyo,” *ARH*, September 8, 1910, 10.

¹⁴⁵ I. H. Evans, “Japan,” *ARH*, September 15, 1910, 11.

¹⁴⁶ I. H. Evans, “The Hiroshima (Japan) Meeting,” *ARH*, September 29, 1910, 8.

¹⁴⁷ I. H. Evans, “Soonan, Korea,” *ARH*, October 20, 1910, 7.

working conditions. Also at this meeting the Korean field was divided into four parts. With the fledgling school that was started under Dr. Russell's supervision, they hoped to see a significant expansion happen in the near future.¹⁴⁸

Next Evans participated in a Council for the work in China (August 25 to September 4, 1910) at the mountain retreat in Mokanshan. Here there was a treatment room where missionaries could recuperate their health. At the nearby chapel, at the end was a modest dispensary for the Chinese. The chapel seated about fifty persons and the Seventh Day Baptists worshiped with them on the Sabbath. The Chinese had meetings in the mornings; and the foreigners had theirs in the afternoon. Here new plans were laid were the expansion of the work in China, especially the need for a better location and equipment for the press.¹⁴⁹ Evans next made his way down to Singapore and the Straits Settlements.¹⁵⁰ Following that, he continued on another extensive trip to the north reaching Mukden, in Manchuria, traveling some 4,000 miles. As a result of these travels and assessments, Evans concluded that the church needed better facilities for the publishing work. In fact, he called for someone to urgently come and coordinate the work of publishing in China right away.¹⁵¹ Writing home to a relative, Evans described: "Never have I seen such wonderful opportunities for service as here [China]; never have I seen such possibilities for gathering in fruit [converts] as here. . . . It seems as if in the whole world there is no place that holds such promise of a mighty ingathering of souls as China."¹⁵²

By early April 1911 Evans left next on a trip to the Philippines.¹⁵³ On the way he spent two weeks in Korea where he organized the very first Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Seoul with 31 members. With the teachers and 70 students at the fledgling school, they also circulated the first special edition of the Korean paper. The expanding need for print meant the purchase of a cylinder press to keep up with the calls for literature.¹⁵⁴ Once

¹⁴⁸ I. H. Evans, "The Korean General Meeting," *ARH*, November 24, 1910, 9.

¹⁴⁹ I. H. Evans, "The Council at Mokanshan, China," *ARH*, December 1, 1910, 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ See note in *ARH*, February 9, 1911, 24.

¹⁵¹ See announcement in *ARH*, March 16, 1911, 24.

¹⁵² "One of the Last Things," *ARH*, March 30, 1911, 12.

¹⁵³ See announcement, *ARH*, April 6, 1911, 24.

¹⁵⁴ I. H. Evans, "Progress in Korea," *ARH*, April 20, 1911, 9-10.

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Evans arrived in the Philippines after “one of the stormy [sic] voyages I have ever experienced,”¹⁵⁵ he witnessed the very first baptism of 12 souls and also organized the very first church of 22 members in March 1911.¹⁵⁶ His three weeks allowed him an opportunity to meet brethren and “learn of the progress of our work.” L. V. Finster was conducting nightly services utilizing an interpreter to hold evangelistic meetings. About 40 had begun to keep the Sabbath with many more who were interested. Finster had also started a training class for workers that included two hours of Bible study each day. “Out of this number he hopes,” wrote Evans, “to secure several workers in the native language.”¹⁵⁷ R. A. Caldwell was now sharing copies of a Tagalog translation of *Thoughts on Daniel* along with other literature in Spanish. They agreed to work on a small book on Bible readings in the Tagalog language.¹⁵⁸

As Evans traversed Asia, in 1911 he spent only three weeks at home in Shanghai traveling almost non-stop. He felt as if “it is like a great campaign in war” in which he needed another “company of fighting men” to spread the Adventist message. “Day by day,” he wrote with a sense of urgency, “you see the opportunities slipping, passing beyond all hope of return.” Now, as he traveled into the interior of China to Chang-sha, he described a revival that was taking place with over 70 Sabbath-keepers who gathered for three weeks of training. Although R. F. Cottrell could only speak in a whisper, and his wife was bedridden: “I never saw people more eager to hear the truth of God than this congregation.” Some have traveled a hundred li, some even farther, paying their own expenses to study the Bible. Evans and Dr. Selmon did their best to fill in until they had to leave, by which time Cottrell had regained his voice. Without any funds, needing to start two new chapels, Cottrell placed 200 squares to raise funds. The believers took 180 of the squares and Evans and Selmon took 10 each demonstrating the willingness of these new converts to sacrifice for the spread of the Adventist message.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ I. H. Evans, “The Philippine Islands,” *ARH*, June 1, 1911, 11.

¹⁵⁶ See announcement *ARH*, May 18, 1911, 24.

¹⁵⁷ I. H. Evans, “The Philippine Islands,” *ARH*, June 1, 1911, 11.

¹⁵⁸ I. H. Evans, “The Philippine Islands,” *ARH*, June 1, 1911, 11.

¹⁵⁹ I. H. Evans, “The Crying Need in China,” *ARH*, July 6, 1911, 12-13.

On June 16, 1911, Evans planned to leave Korea for the Friedensau Annual Council meeting traveling overland through the Siberian route.¹⁶⁰ This first year of mission service was largely one of assessment and strategic planning. Evans invested heavily in education, publishing, and medical missionary work, allocating extremely limited funds and personnel, to attempt to expand an Adventist presence across Asia.

Mature Administrative Missionary (1911-1913)

Evans attended the second Biennial Session of the General Conference Executive Committee beginning July 4, 1911, in Friedensau, Germany.¹⁶¹ As the General Conference expanded rapidly and as it met every four years, instead of two, this larger gathering half way between General Conference sessions became more important. They also were held outside North America to help maintain a strong missional focus within the denomination as it was rapidly expanding. Especially notable was that Evans used stereopticon views to impress upon the delegates the great need for missionary resources in Asia.¹⁶² From here Evans returned with A. G. Daniells, G. B. Thompson, and H. R. Salisbury from England to New York expecting to arrive in Washington, D.C. on July 31st.¹⁶³ He returned “to close up his personal affairs” and to bring his wife back with him. They would stop at several camp meetings as they traveled across the country.¹⁶⁴ Evans also requested that A. G. Daniells spend the year 1912 traveling with him across Asia.¹⁶⁵ Evans would spend time raising funds and awareness about missions at various camp meetings and other church gatherings until he attended the fall autumn council (starting Oct. 25).¹⁶⁶ After this it was decided that both Elder and Mrs. Evans would return to China.¹⁶⁷ Evans went from the Annual

¹⁶⁰ See note in *ARH*, July 6, 1911, 24.

¹⁶¹ W. A. Spicer, “The Biennial Council in Europe: First Report,” *ARH*, July 27, 1911, 9-10.

¹⁶² See report under “Asiatic Division,” under “The Biennial Council in Friedensau, Germany: Fifth and Last Report,” *ARH*, August 24, 1911, 8.

¹⁶³ See announcement *ARH*, August 3, 1911, 24.

¹⁶⁴ *ARH*, August 10, 1911, 24.

¹⁶⁵ W. A. Spicer, “The Biennial Council in Friedensau, Germany: Fourth Report,” *ARH*, August 17, 1911, 9.

¹⁶⁶ Note his attendance at the East Kansas Camp Meeting, August 10-21, 1911; North Missouri Camp Meeting; Rocky Mountain Camp Meeting;

¹⁶⁷ See announcement: *ARH*, August 24, 1911, 32.

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Council to meet his wife and visit his family in Michigan, after which they would travel to San Francisco to cross the Pacific Ocean.¹⁶⁸ They sailed November 22¹⁶⁹ and arrived in Shanghai on December 16.¹⁷⁰ As they parted with other traveling missionaries, and after having been gone from Asia for six months, he reflected about how they were engaged “in the great work” of sharing the gospel, and that “we meet and part continually.”¹⁷¹

On his return to China, Evans discovered that in October 1911 a successful revolution occurred in southern China that overthrew the Qing Dynasty and replaced it with the Republic of China. At the time of his arrival, “all our foreign workers gathered from the central and northern provinces of China.” During this “trying crisis” the city of Hankow was destroyed including the loss of two chapels, medical supplies and literature; also in Chang-sha missionaries had also fled. Missionaries believed “that not one of our Chinese church-members will give up the truth because of the present troubled condition of the country.” The question was how to get funds for “native workers in Honan.” As a result Liu Tien Bang and O. A. Hall would travel with two money belts and arrived home despite great obstacles. In light of having all the missionaries together, and after three years, Evans decided to utilize the time by holding a “general meeting for the foreign workers in China” that would last from January 25 to February 10, 1912.¹⁷² Such uncertainty and war was merely a sign of the times showcasing what “thrilling times” they lived in on the verge of Christ’s soon return. Every Christian had “a plain duty—to *make Christians*.”¹⁷³

Ever the strategic planner, Evans utilized newly raised mission funds to build better and more healthful homes for missionaries. This included a new cottage in Korea, two homes in Weichow (for the families of J. P. Anderson and S. A. Nagel), and two more cottages in Chang-sha (although these efforts were hampered due to war). Evans was also working diligently to get a piece of property stamped so that they could proceed with building

¹⁶⁸ See note in *ARH*, November 9, 1911, 24. It also notes that their children would be attending school in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and Lincoln, Nebraska.

¹⁶⁹ *ARH*, November 23, 1911, 24.

¹⁷⁰ I. H. Evans, “Word from the Far East,” *ARH*, February 8, 1912, 11.

¹⁷¹ I. H. Evans, “Word from the Far East,” *ARH*, February 8, 1912, 11.

¹⁷² I. H. Evans, “Word from the Far East,” *ARH*, February 8, 1912, 11.

¹⁷³ I. H. Evans, “Our Duty,” *ARH*, March 7, 1912, 10.

a new publishing house. Between war and delays in building, the publishing work was coming to a standstill. Evans, however, was pleased at the new housing opportunities for missionaries. Despite the cost, such housing betokened “better days for our workers” and the extra funds invested “will soon be more than saved in the extra time the laborers can remain at their work each year.”¹⁷⁴ He recommended that they hold another “general meeting” in Asia in three years and request the General Conference president to attend. Also, at the same meeting plans moved forward on building the publishing house and the potential purchase of property for a training school.¹⁷⁵ Tragically, on February 22, 1912, Evans reported on the tragic death of Esta Miller (1885-1912), the younger brother of Dr. Harry Miller, who did not wake up after a surgery for appendicitis.¹⁷⁶ The loss of just one worker, at a time of such great need, “casts a great shadow over the progress of the work we love,” wrote Evans.¹⁷⁷

Next Evans held a meeting for workers in south China held during March. He left Shanghai on March 17 and reached Amoy in three days arriving as the meeting was already in progress.¹⁷⁸ He was joined by W. C. Hankins and B. L. Anderson, the two key leaders of the denomination’s work in the south, as they trained evangelists, Bible workers, and colporteurs. Evangelists Keh¹⁷⁹ (from Shghnai) (1865-1937) and Ang Tau Kiet¹⁸⁰ (from Swatow) (1864-1936) were also present. The latter was ordained to the gospel ministry, being only the second ordained evangelist from China. “He is a promising, consecrated man, with a well-trained family . . . who . . . are united in the worship of the true God.” He added that he was “a very pleasant, capable man, having been a mandarin.” Evans noted that in Amoy two schools were conducted, one for girls and the other for boys, with 2 teachers and 56 students. Three other schools enrolled 70 students (Chin Chow), 20 (Hui An) and 15 (Tang Chu). Evans reported that thanks to the work of a colporteur selling subscriptions there was the first Sabbath-keeper on the island of Formosa (Taiwan). From

¹⁷⁴ I. H. Evans, “Mission Homes in the East,” *ARH*, March 21, 1912, 12.

¹⁷⁵ I. H. Evans, “The General Meeting in China,” April 11, 1912, 11-12.

¹⁷⁶ See note *ARH*, March 28, 1912, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Obit. *ARH*, April 25, 1912, 23.

¹⁷⁸ I. H. Evans, “Meetings in South China,” *ARH*, June 13, 1912, 11.

¹⁷⁹ <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=A8GA&highlight=Keh>

¹⁸⁰ <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=388S&highlight=Ang>

here Evans sailed with Brother Keh to Hong Kong where he spent two days with Brother and Sister S. A. Nagel, and sisters Ida and Gertrude Thompson. The Nagels were waiting here until things calmed down to return to their home in Wai Chow.¹⁸¹

From June 13-23 Evans was able to attend the first Adventist camp meeting held in Korea. This would be the very first Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting held in Asia. The meeting was held about halfway between Chemulpho [Incheon, South Korea] and Pieng-yang [Pyongyang, North Korea], today located in North Korea, where on a small hill near several Korean villages a large tent (28 by 42 feet) was pitched with nine smaller family tents. Approximately 150 people gathered for this special occasion and \$350 pledged toward building new school buildings. Evans, along with Fred Lee and F. H. DeVinney, led out in the preaching. Evans found this to be a deeply moving spiritual experience that led to a call for greater consecration. Over the previous over 100 people were baptized, several new companies begun, and one new church organized.¹⁸²

Evans was happy to learn that the progress on building a publishing house and new missionary homes in Shanghai was moving along rapidly. They expected to move in by November 1912.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, Evans went on to hold a “general meeting” for the work in Japan from July 11-21. Outreach among the Japanese was “a slow and laborious work,” not because they disliked their religion, but rather because they were “indifferent to it.” This required greater effort to develop an interest than it did back home, according to Evans. A large number of people were not able to come due to the high costs of travel. He did note how medical missionary work was especially important for breaking down prejudices and opening doors for further missionary work.¹⁸⁴

Evans took a five week trip through the Malaysian field in which he checked on missionaries and organized the work. Java [Indonesia] was divided into three divisions, with Borneo and another mission for the Straits settlements in the Federated Malay States. These groups would now be organized into a union mission. This represented seven missionary families for an

¹⁸¹ I. H. Evans, “Meetings in South China,” *ARH*, June 13, 1912, 11.

¹⁸² I. H. Evans, “The Korean Meeting,” *ARH*, October 3, 1912, 13-14.

¹⁸³ See announcement, *ARH*, October 10, 1912, 24.

¹⁸⁴ I. H. Evans, “The Japan Meeting,” *ARH*, October 24, 1912, 13-14.

estimated fifty million people. He was especially pleased that there was an Adventist presence in Singapore, which was a modern city as important as New York or London, as cosmopolitan as any western city, and here was “gathered the nations of earth in miniature.” With such a cross-section of languages and ethnic groups: “Singapore is the world in a nutshell.”¹⁸⁵ Evans also stopped for two weeks in the Philippines, his second visit, in which his heart rejoiced to see the growth of the work in Manila. He now witnessed “native evangelists holding a tent effort in the city, at which they do most of the preaching,” which encouraged him that the message was taking hold. He also reported on the publication of “a small monthly missionary paper in the Tagalog language.” They needed a large church building since most of the meetings were taking place in private homes, without sufficient funds to rent a hall. A school, he pleaded, was desperately needed to train workers. He also happily reported on the organization of the second church on the island of Luzon, in a place called Malolos, about two hours’ ride from Manila. While there they baptized 28 with the expectation that a native worker would come and follow-up the interest. Floyd Ashbaugh visited Evans and reported two young girls in Iloilo who had become believers. Evans pleaded for more missionary families to help build up the work.¹⁸⁶

Evans would leave Asia in time to attend the General Conference session (May 15-June 8, 1913) held in Takoma Park, Maryland. In his report he brought greetings from the missionaries and converts in Asia who were working, as he put it, to reach the estimated 625 million people that were part of the newly formed division.¹⁸⁷ Evans preached an “impressive sermon” from John 2:17 titled “Zeal for God in Finishing His Work.”¹⁸⁸ He challenged every church member in the denomination to win one soul that next year to Christ.¹⁸⁹ In it he implored delegates with a sense of urgency for greater consecration.¹⁹⁰ He stated:

¹⁸⁵ I. H. Evans, “The Malaysian Mission Field,” *ARH*, July 24, 1913, 13.

¹⁸⁶ I. H. Evans, “My Visit to the Philippines,” *ARH*, July 31, 1913, 12.

¹⁸⁷ “First Meeting, May 15, 10 A.M.,” *ARH*, May 22, 1913, 5.

¹⁸⁸ I. H. Evans, “Zeal for God in Finishing His Work: Sabbath, May 17, 11 A.M.,” *ARH*, May 29, 1913, 12-14.

¹⁸⁹ This was one of the memorable aspects of the meeting as recalled at later ministerial institutes. Cf. H. A. Weaver, “Win One Soul,” *ARH*, March 5, 1914, 16.

¹⁹⁰ “The Opening of the General Conference,” *ARH*, May 22, 1913, 24.

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If we had the zeal that God wants us to have we could accomplish a mighty work in the world in a very little while. The cause of God needs men who are wholly given to God, whose hearts are on fire with the message. When the church as a body has that experience, then God can use each individual member as a living instrumentality to carry on his great closing work. It is now the night of time; the Lord is coming soon; and yet many of our people are not willing to give themselves and their children to God for service. Every son and daughter ought to be on the altar ready to go where God calls.¹⁹¹

In his report to the delegates he summarized and gave an assessment ultimately reminding delegates of “the vastness of the work before us.”¹⁹² To the surprise of those present, former church president G. A. Irwin passed away during the meeting (May 23). Irwin would participate with other church leaders in a funeral service in which he paid his own personal tribute.¹⁹³ On May 30, 1913, Elder I. H. Evans was nominated to be president of the North American Division Conference. Daniells stated his appreciation for someone of Evans’ “experience in that field” in which he devoted his time to “adjusting, reorganizing, and putting things in shape.” Now it was felt that Evans was needed in America to strengthen the work in the homeland. As Daniells added: “This new conference [the North American Division] has a big work to do.”¹⁹⁴ From the vantage point of church administrators, including Evans, it was seen as absolutely imperative to organize and make sure that the support from North America, including both funds and personnel, was as strong as possible in order to sustain and grow the mission of the church around the world.¹⁹⁵ R. C. Porter, a veteran missionary in Africa, was elected to take the place of Evans in Asia.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ “A Great Need,” *ARH*, May 29, 1913, 4.

¹⁹² His full report can be found: I. H. Evans, “The Asiatic Division of the General Conference,” *ARH*, May 29, 1913, 8-10.

¹⁹³ “Life Sketch and Funeral Service of Elder G. A. Irwin,” *ARH*, June 5, 1913, 15-17.

¹⁹⁴ “North American Division Conference, Fourth Meeting, May 30, 4:15 P.M.,” *ARH*, June 12, 1913, 17.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ “A Transformation—Not a Revolution,” *ARH*, June 19, 1913, 3.

NAD President, 1913-1914

Between 1901 and 1913 there was some fluidity in the development of the idea of vice-presidents of the General Conference who were responsible for large regions of the world church and the development of divisions. The term “division of the General Conference” began to also be used, but the terms were often overlapping. What is clear is that the 1913 General Conference session helped to clarify these terms and roles so that now a “transformation” had taken place, but as church leaders were careful to also remind members, this was “not a revolution.”¹⁹⁷ It was this subtle tweaking of church organization that allowed the three major regions of the world church—notably Europe, Asia, and North America—to be clearly identified as each being “organized into a great division conference.”

With clarification on his administrative role, Evans began to travel across North America attending meetings, initially in the central west.¹⁹⁸ One of his first tasks was to promote the “Midsummer Offering” (July 26) to provide funds for missions. If every member could raise 15 cents a week, they could sustain the present mission outreach, but at that moment, he estimated for the first half of 1913 they were \$80,000 behind. “There is no investment,” he wrote, “in banks, stocks, or bonds that will pay so large eternal dividends as the investment we make in the souls of men.” In this great controversy conflict, the struggle was literally life or death without any neutral ground. The previous year the denomination had effectively reached its goal for mission funds, and now it was absolutely essential that the church not lose ground by supporting its missions.¹⁹⁹ It was this impassioned appeal that would feature his new title for the first time as “President of the North American Division Conference.”²⁰⁰ By August Evans was attending camp meetings, notably in Iowa, Nebraska, and California.²⁰¹ At each camp meeting he made strong appeals to raise funds for mission. His quick stop at the Nebraska

¹⁹⁷ “A Transformation—Not a Revolution,” *ARH*, June 19, 1913, 3.

¹⁹⁸ See note in *ARH*, July 3, 1913, 24.

¹⁹⁹ I. H. Evans, “Shall It Be Thirty Thousand Dollars,” *ARH*, July 17, 1913, 9-10.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ See note *ARH*, August 21, 1913, 24. See also O. A. Olsen, “The Iowa Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, October 2, 1913, 13.

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camp meeting resulted in \$1,500.²⁰² This last stop allowed him to meet his wife, who traveled from China, after the surprise news that they would be returning to America. On their return they stopped at the Northern Illinois Camp Meeting.²⁰³ An announcement in the *Review* celebrated their arrival back at church headquarters.²⁰⁴ For his part, Evans was able to participate in the opening exercises of the Foreign Mission Seminary on September 17, 1913.²⁰⁵

Evans believed that the strength of the church was in its unity. Through collective efforts the denomination could do what individually they would never be able to accomplish. In the day of great capitalist business interests, the pooling of money allowed the possibility of “financing gigantic undertakings.”²⁰⁶ With shipping, steel, and similar trusts, what could happen when the church pools its resources? No one person could finance the missionary “campaign” of the church, but together, as individuals are organized into churches, churches into conferences, conferences into unions, and unions into divisions, and divisions into the General Conference. “Each organization is stronger than the preceding. Each gathers together a larger number of single units combined in the organizations, so that when we reach the General Conference, we have the strongest organized body in our work. The General Conference, therefore, is the one to carry on aggressive work which neither the division, union, nor local conferences are able to carry on as efficiently and as well.”²⁰⁷ Evans challenged members to take note of the new pledge of 20 cents per week per member challenge voted at the 1913 General Conference session.²⁰⁸ He also had the privilege, on October 26, 1913, of offering the dedicatory prayer for the new Takoma Park Church at church headquarters.²⁰⁹

²⁰² O. A. Olsen, “The Nebraska Conference and Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, October 2, 1913, 13-14.

²⁰³ G. E. Langdon, “Northern Illinois Conference and Camp-Meeting,” *ARH*, October 23, 1913, 17.

²⁰⁴ See note *ARH*, September 25, 1913, 24.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ I. H. Evans, “Our Strength Lies in Unity,” *ARH*, October 6, 1913, 9-10.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ I. A. Ford, “The Takoma Park Church,” *ARH*, December 25, 1913, 17.

Although Evans started to write about the importance of the Holy Spirit and revival as the great need for the church in order for it to accomplish its mission, now as president of the North American Division the need for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit became a major focus of his ministry. "One thing more is needed,—a heart preparation on the part of God's people. When his Holy Spirit fills these messengers, when every witness for Christ becomes a channel through which the Spirit of God may ass to other souls, the work can indeed be quickly finished." He prayed for the "final baptism" of the Spirit that would cause a mighty revival. As the work of God is rapidly closing, he believed, it was vital that each person make sure they are ready for Christ's return. "It is time for God's people to be in a state of readiness, waiting for their Lord's return." Anything imperfect or unsanctified might prevent oneself from being ready.²¹⁰

Late 1913 through early 1914 brought a series of union meetings that required Evans' attention. He first attended the ministerial institute and Union Conference session for the Atlantic Union. Evans spoke on the great need for the Holy Spirit.²¹¹ By late December 1913 Evans left with A. G. Daniells and G. B. Thompson to attend the Southern Union Conference (Jan. 2-11, 1914) in Graysville, Tennessee.²¹² Evans felt that it was vital to develop "a medium for communicating the plans, policies, and instruction of the North American Division Committee to the to the church officers" hence the reason why they began a new sixteen page "monthly journal" titled *The Church Officers' Gazette* in early 1914.²¹³ Edith M. Graham and Matilda Erickson would become the two founding editors of the periodical. The new periodical would not be a "competitor of any other periodical or magazine published by our people" because it was "not for general circulation." Instead, the *Gazette* had "a field of its own" to "benefit" church officers across the division.²¹⁴ Evans, along with the two other General Conference vice-presidents (as division presidents), and George B. Thompson, as secretary of the North American Division, would serve as consulting editors of the *Review and Herald*.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ I. H. Evans, "The Finishing of the Work," *ARH*, November 20, 1913, 9-10.

²¹¹ "Our Union Conference Meetings," *ARH*, December 11, 1913, 24.

²¹² See note *ARH*, December 25, 1913, 24.

²¹³ "The Church Officers' Gazette" *ARH*, January 15, 1914, 24.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *ARH*, May 28, 1914, 24.

As Evans took the helm of leadership he conducted a survey of the effectiveness of church workers across the division. He reported to pastors during the Southern Union ministerial meetings “some very startling figures showing a lack of fruit from the labors of the workers in this cause.” Such a startling wake-up call “stirred all present” to be part of an “earnest call to prayer” to change.²¹⁶ Since the “present time is the most momentous and solemn in human history,” it was imperative that as God works in a “marked manner” at “certain times” that it was time to finish the work. The opening of doors in “remote nations” to receive the gospel, along with rapid developments in transportation and communication, made it possible to share the gospel as never before.²¹⁷

Next Evans participated in ministerial meetings at College View, Nebraska (January 13-25, 1914) for the Central Union Conference.²¹⁸ Once again Evans “in a forcible and impressive talk, set forth the weakness of our ministry as compared with what it ought to be in view of the tremendous work committed to our hands.” He implored them to see spiritual power from on High and “many heartfelt confessions were borne” that “brought liberty of soul.”²¹⁹ Evans gave additional talks about “the calling and work of the gospel ministry, emphasizing the importance of a definite call, the sacredness of the calling, the object of the ministry, the spiritual life and high standard set before the ministry.”²²⁰ Evans did the same thing again for the Northern Union Conference (January 27 to February 7, 1914) held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.²²¹ Then he attended the ministerial meetings at Lacombe, Alberta, from February 11-22, 1914.²²² Similar meetings

²¹⁶ R. W. Parmele, “The Southern Union Conference,” *ARH*, January 29, 1914, 16.

²¹⁷ I. H. Evans, “The Day of His Power,” *ARH*, February 5, 1914, 13.

²¹⁸ A. T. Robinson, “The Meetings at College View, Nebr.,” *ARH*, February 12, 1914, 14.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ E. M. Graham, “The Northern Union Conference,” *ARH*, February 26, 1914, 14.

²²² I. H. Eavns, “Western Canadian Union Conference,” *ARH*, March 19, 1914, 11.

were held for the North Pacific Union (Feb. 25-March 8, 1914) in College Place, Washington.²²³

Evans took a special interest in the retention of young people. He supported the Missionary Volunteer Sabbath. He estimated that there was an estimated 13,000 Adventist young people between the ages of 10 and 25, but only 6,000 affiliated with the church meaning a 54% loss rate. "We are anxious to save our young people from the world."²²⁴ He noted that those who participate in the Missionary Volunteer Reading Course tend to go on to get an education that results in greater retention rates. By simply retaining 1,500 young people this would save more than all the money expended in evangelism to replace those who left. This was a worthwhile investment.²²⁵ He similarly urged conservative financial policies, especially avoiding debt both personally and for institutions.²²⁶

Evans participated in the College of Medical Evangelists constituency meeting (March 25-29, 1914). Then from April 1-12, 1914, he participated in the Southwestern Union Conference and Ministerial Institute.²²⁷ Once again he held some special workers' meetings in which he read excerpts from the "plain and cutting Testimonies" (Ellen White's writings) with his comments toward the ministry.²²⁸ Evans believed that in order to maintain a strong evangelistic focus, it was vital to train Adventist ministers. A new requirement was the minimum of twelve grades for all licentiate ministers. All clergy should participate in the Ministerial Reading Course.²²⁹ Final meetings included the session of the Columbia Union Conference and ministerial institute, held in Baltimore April 28 to May 10, 1914.²³⁰

After completing ministerial meetings across the North American Division territory, Evans reported that they had entered into a new era of evangelism. "I must say that I had never taken

²²³ G. B. Thompson, "North Pacific Union Institute and Conference," *ARH*, March 26, 1914, 7-8.

²²⁴ I. H. Evans, "Our Young People's Work," *ARH*, April 23, 1914, 19.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ I. H. Evans, "Is It Right?" *ARH*, June 18, 1914, 9-10.

²²⁷ W. W. Eastman, "Southwestern Union Conference and Ministerial Institute," *ARH*, April 30, 1914, 15.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ W. E. H[owell], "Notes Afield," *ARH*, May 14, 1914, 19.

²³⁰ W. L. Burgan, "Newspaper Work in the Columbia Union Conference," *ARH*, May 28, 1914, 13.

hold of any work,” he wrote, “that so enlisted my interest and stirred my heart as this. The people respond readily, and I am convinced that most of our people need only to be shown how to work, and to get just a little taste of the joy of service, and they will become firebrands for God.”²³¹ He set a new goal for the upcoming Harvest Ingathering for that year for a record-breaking \$100,000.²³² By early July Evans finally returned to his office after a lengthy tour of meetings.²³³

As World War I broke out, Evans reminded members that this was a fulfillment of end time events. “At this time,” he cautioned, “it is not known what nations of Europe will be involved, if the war continues. . . . Our people should not forget their brethren and sisters in these war-stricken zones. Many will be called upon to go to the front, and there enter into a life-and-death struggle with their fellow men, some of whom are Christians like themselves. . . . In these trying times our European brethren need our sympathy and prayers for wisdom and strength to do the right. . . . Our sympathies should reach the unfortunate and those whose lives are endangered.”²³⁴ Evans’ rhetoric took on a more militant tone.

The kingdom of God is a conquering kingdom. It is aggressive. It invades the territory of Satan, and besieges the hearts of the children of men. The warfare wages by Heaven is a war of conquest. Christ himself came into an enemy’s land to establish his kingdom. . . . Every loyal citizen of this heavenly kingdom is subject to service to extend its domain. The enemy’s territory must be invaded; the standard of Prince Immanuel must be planted in the hearts of men; subjects of Satan must be won to love the Lord Jesus and to believe in him to the saving of their souls.²³⁵

The primary weapon of warfare would be to distribute truth-filled literature.²³⁶ As Evans tracked progress, he happily reported that attendance at camp meetings that summer was up and that the church was on track to reach its goal of 20 cents a member for mission that year. Further reports from various administrators also were encouraging that records for sales of Adventist literature

²³¹ I. H. Evans, “The Outlook Encouraging,” *ARH*, May 28, 1914, 9.

²³² I. H. Evans, “Our Goal,” *ARH*, June 25, 1914, 10.

²³³ See *ARH*, July 9, 1914, 24.

²³⁴ I. H. Evans, “The Times and the Demands Upon God’s People,” *ARH*, August 13, 1914, 8-9.

²³⁵ I. H. Evans, “The Call to Service,” *ARH*, August 20, 1914, 9-10.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

were taking place. This may have be in no small part due to Adventists pointing to the war as a sign of the end.²³⁷ This called for hard yet joyous work.²³⁸

As the scale of war intensified, Evans both recognized that while on the one hand such “wars and rumors of wars” was a sign of the end, while also reminding members not “to venture beyond what is revealed, and to preach what the Word of God does not declare.”²³⁹ Evans also urged church members to support the call for a day of national prayer and supplication for the first Sabbath in October. He especially reminded believers to remember their fellow brothers and sisters in Europe who were suffering under the calamities of war and “find it difficult to prosecute the work of the third angel’s message as heretofore.”²⁴⁰ On this same Sabbath, he also reminded members to contribute liberally toward the work of “Negro believers.” Such help was needed due to the shortage in funds that had caused “great perplexity” and “necessitated reducing the active force of workers to the minimum. Our colored laborers bravely share the self-denial, and in some conferences they have been satisfied with reduced wages for some time, or else have taken up self-supporting work.” In order to prevent a hindering of this work, Evans pleaded for church members to contribute liberally to this work.²⁴¹

As Europe unfolded, Evans recognized that this would provide financial instability preventing believers in Europe from contributing their part to support the worldwide mission program of the denomination. He called upon church members to sacrifice more and to raise extra funds for mission. “If ever there was a time when funds for prosecuting the work were needed, it is now.”²⁴² He added:

The people are ready and willing to help, if for no other reason, because of this war; for many believe it is a sign of the end. Never has the world witnessed such a scene as exists at the

²³⁷ I. H. Evans, “Encouraging Omens,” *ARH*, August 27, 1914, 7.

²³⁸ I. H. Evans, “The Joy of Service,” *ARH*, September 3, 1914, 9.

²³⁹ I. H. Evans, “Correctly Interpreting Prophecy,” *ARH*, September 10, 1914, 11-12.

²⁴⁰ I. H. Evans, “A Day of Prayer,” *ARH*, September 17, 1914, 8.

²⁴¹ I. H. Evans, “A Donation for the Work Among the Colored People,” *ARH*, October 1, 1914, 24.

²⁴² I. H. Evans, “A Sobering Effect,” *ARH*, September 17, 1914, 9.

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present time. Never has there been a time like the one through which the nations are now passing. War! war! war! The literature we read, the conversations we hear, the sermons to which we listen, the very air we breathe, all seem to be surcharged with the spirit of war.²⁴³

Evans returned in time for the opening of the Washington Missionary College on September 16, 1914. Up until then it was called the Foreign Mission Seminary, but the 1913 Annual Council voted for the school to “carry a regular college curriculum, giving special emphasis to the preparation of men and women for the ministry and the Bible work, and also continue those courses having special reference to preparation for foreign mission service.” Hence the school was renamed and Evans gave the opening address.²⁴⁴

Evans advocated for a no-debt policy. Where problems exist, he urged leaders to “call a council, and let plans be laid either to place the institution or association on a substantial working basis or to close the enterprise.”²⁴⁵ Such warnings were none too soon as the war progressed, those institutions still in debt or losing money would close. A significant number of smaller Adventist sanitariums closed during the war.

The war also caught A. G. Daniells in Australia and unable to return in time to attend the 1914 Annual Council. As a result, Evans would call the meeting to order and chair most of the sessions. The Annual Council meetings took place in the mornings, 9 am to noon; and the Division committee meetings in the afternoons, 2:30 to 5:30 pm, with the evenings devoted to committee work as needed.²⁴⁶ As 1914 drew to a close, he reflected on some important statistics. In 1913 church membership increased to 122,386 (a net increase of 7%) and the denomination had a banner year sending out 157 missionaries.²⁴⁷ As the year drew to a close, he encouraged churches to celebrate Young People’s Day (December 18) so that every young person is given an

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Frederick Griggs, “The Opening of the Washington Missionary College,” *ARH*, October 1, 1914, 20.

²⁴⁵ I. H. Evans, “An Encouraging Prospective,” *ARH*, October 15, 1914, 9-10.

²⁴⁶ “Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee,” *ARH*, November 5, 1914, 10.

²⁴⁷ I. H. Evans, “A Retrospect,” *ARH*, December 10, 1914, 8.

opportunity to consecrate themselves to God. The following day, December 19, was the Annual Offering to turn in receipts for the "Twenty-cent-a-week" mission fund.²⁴⁸

Assessment & Church Health, 1915-1918

The first quarter of 1915 witnessed a series of three medical conventions (Takoma Park, Maryland; Loma Linda, California; and, Boulder, Colorado). The strong focus on young people and training workers meant that the focus of 1915 was centered on educational and missionary volunteer councils and conventions.²⁴⁹ For the new year (1915) Evans set a goal of increasing the church membership from 73,605 (as of April 1, 1915) and increasing the membership to 80,000. The 1,407 church workers the previous year had set a 15-year record by bringing in 4,700 new members or an average of 3.3 souls per person on the church payroll.²⁵⁰

It can only be the sign of a much-needed reform and careful elimination, to be set in operation by union and local conference officers. Why should papers of recognition be given to nonproducers? If we cannot win souls to Christ, should we take papers from a conference and expect support?²⁵¹

Furthermore colporteurs had sold \$1.3 million in literature in 1914. All schools and sanitariums should be "centers for winning souls to Christ."²⁵² Evans, ever the pragmatist, suggested putting stoves in evangelistic tents to extend the evangelistic season for winning souls.²⁵³

Evans spent the summer attending the Educational and Missionary Volunteer Conventions. The first was at Pacific Union College (June 4-14, 1915).²⁵⁴ From here there would be six other regional educational-missionary volunteer conventions.²⁵⁵ When Ellen White passed away (July 16, 1915), Evans wrote one of the main tributes in the commemorative issues of the *Review and*

²⁴⁸ I. H. Evans, "The Week of Prayer," *ARH*, December 10, 1914, 24.

²⁴⁹ I. H. Evans, "Educational and Missionary Volunteer Council and Conventions," *ARH*, May 6, 1915, 9.

²⁵⁰ I. H. Evans, "Our Goal for 1915," *ARH*, May 27, 1915, 10-11.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ I. H. Evans, "Our Summer's Campaign," *ARH*, July 29, 1915, 9.

²⁵⁴ See note *ARH*, June 3, 1915, 24.

²⁵⁵ I. H. Evans, "The Educational and Missionary Volunteer Council," *ARH*, July 1, 1911, 11.

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Herald affirming her lifetime of contributions. She held a “deep personal piety” and was “liberal beyond her means.” He added:

No one ever more firmly preached righteousness by faith than she. She exalted Christ as the sinner’s only hope. She loved this Saviour, and did what she could to bring others to a knowledge of him. . . . While we mourn the loss of one so strong and true as Sister White, still Christ lives, and in him we must unite in a renewed consecration of life and means to complete his work on earth.²⁵⁶

Evans left with other church leaders to attend the funeral service of Ellen White in Battle Creek, Michigan.²⁵⁷ Evans served as one of the pallbearers in the procession from the church to the carriage that took her remains to the cemetery.²⁵⁸ At the graveside service, Evans read some Scriptural passages.²⁵⁹

The next General Conference and North American Division Executive Committees meeting for Annual Council was held for the first time in Loma Linda, California, from November 5-27, 1915. Due to limited space, only actual members of these bodies were invited to participate. One exception was the invitation for conference presidents to attend. They were urged to attend because their role was so vital in raising funds and supplying personnel, so it was felt best to invite all conference presidents to be present.²⁶⁰ At the opening session he preached a message on personal piety titled “Heart Religion.”²⁶¹ Evans at this meeting promoted the week of prayer reminding believers that in “this maelstrom of confusion and international perplexity God’s people have to live and carry on the great work of preparing a people for the coming of Christ.”²⁶² He believed that if “all rise to the high standard of efficiency called for by the Lord himself . . . we may soon see a hundred thousand Sabbath keepers in America alone.”²⁶³ Perhaps most crucial of the 1915 Annual Council was the

²⁵⁶ I. H. Evans, “The Character of the Message,” *ARH*, July 29, 1915, 4-5.

²⁵⁷ See note *ARH*, July 29, 1915, 24.

²⁵⁸ See description in *ARH*, August 5, 1915, 10.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁶⁰ I. H. Evans, “The Coming Autumn Council,” *ARH*, October 7, 1915, 2.

²⁶¹ I. H. Evans, “Heart Religion,” *ARH*, January 20, 1916, 8-10.

²⁶² I. H. Evans, “The Week of Prayer,” *ARH*, December 2, 1915, 3.

²⁶³ See “Notes from the Field—No. 4: The Spirit of the Council,” *ARH*, December 2, 1915, 4.

need to raise sufficient funds to build a hospital so that medical students can “secure satisfactory clinical work.” A group of women were empowered to raise \$61,000.²⁶⁴ Evans made a clarion call, based on Ellen White’s admonition to have a school of the highest order, that when things seemed impossible to retain the College of Medical Evangelists’ accreditation that the denomination needed to step out in faith and raise the necessary funds to keep the fledgling medical institution going.²⁶⁵ At this critical juncture Evans believed “that we must set ourselves more resolutely than ever before to carry out the instruction of God [through Ellen White], and courageously meet this first great test since the passing away of the servant of the Lord.”²⁶⁶ In her memory the hospital would be named The Ellen G. White Memorial Hospital. This development, as they have sacrificed to reach each step, helped them to become “a real medical school.”²⁶⁷

Evans joined other church leaders in urging participation in the Harvest Ingathering campaign. “The needs of the ever-widening mission fields demand it,” as Evans along with other church leaders challenged them to join the battle “in a great soul-winning campaign” that will contribute to the “speedy finishing” of the work.²⁶⁸ An important development was that Evans led the charge in establishing the first systematic requirements for ministers to be ordained. The North American Division executive committee voted that “all candidates for ordination to the gospel ministry shall be carefully examined in Bible doctrines, their ability correctly to expound the same, and their confidence in and loyalty to the denominational organization.” They required a minimum of 14 years of education, and then after sufficiently demonstrating practical experience, must be called before an ordination committee. Only after successfully examinations have been done can the prospective candidate be recommended by their local conference for ordination. Only afterward can arrangements

²⁶⁴ I. H. Evans, “The College of Medical Evangelists,” *ARH*, January 13, 1916, 6-7.

²⁶⁵ Percy T. Magan, “My Counsel Shall Stand, and I Will Do All My Pleasure,” *ARH*, March 2, 1916, 16-17.

²⁶⁶ Percy T. Magan, “Strengthening the Hands of the Builders: A Notable Meeting in Connection with the Founding of the Los Angeles Hospital and Dispensary,” *ARH*, March 16, 1916, 17-18.

²⁶⁷ I. H. Evans, “The Offering for Our Medical Hospital,” *ARH*, September 7, 1916, 24.

²⁶⁸ “An Earnest Appeal,” *ARH*, December 2, 1915, 24.

for the ordination ceremony be done at the hand of the General or Division Conference who with the union and local conference presidents. Ordination credentials were revocable if the conference granting them deem it unwise for the person to continue in the gospel ministry. When ministerial credentials are not renewed, the authority to administer church ordinances, perform marriage ceremonies, would not be recognized.²⁶⁹

By late 1915, Evans rejoiced that his first major book, *Ministry of Angels*, was released and included in the Ministerial Reading Course.²⁷⁰ In late 1915, when the ship carrying Homer R. Salisbury sank, a memorial service officiated by Evans was held at Washington Missionary College.²⁷¹ In early 1916 he attended union meetings for eastern Canada and the North Pacific Union. Evans was known, along with George B. Thompson, for speaking about the “privileges of a victorious Christian life and the duty of winning souls to Christ.”²⁷² Evans would continue to expound upon the role of the Holy Spirit and victorious living as he participated in another round of union meetings. The first was for western Canada in a rented building in Calgary (February 24-29, 1916).²⁷³ Then on to the Lake Union (March 7-14) where Evans gave a series of talks on the victorious Christian life²⁷⁴ followed by similar meetings for the Columbia Union Conference held in the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (March 13-20)²⁷⁵ and the Southeastern Union Conference (March 25-April 5) held in Atlanta, Georgia. Once again Evans was noted for his talks on the victorious life.²⁷⁶ Next was the Southern Union Conference held in the Southern Publishing Association chapel in Nashville, Tennessee.²⁷⁷ In the busy round of travels to attend union meetings, Evans reified the importance of working for young people, especially with the annual Missionary Volunteer Day (May

²⁶⁹ See section “The Gospel Ministry,” in “Autumn Council of the Executive Committee of the North American Division Conference,” *ARH*, December 16, 1915, 8.

²⁷⁰ See “Ministerial Reading Course,” *ARH*, December 2, 1915, 6.

²⁷¹ “Memorial Service for Prof. H. R. Salisbury,” *ARH*, February 17, 1916, 15-16.

²⁷² G. B. Thompson, “North Pacific Union Conference,” *ARH*, March 16, 1916, 16.

²⁷³ I. H. Evans, “The Western Canadian Union Conference,” *ARH*, March 23, 1916, 15.

²⁷⁴ M. E. Kern, “The Lake Union Conference Session,” *ARH*, April 13, 1916, 15-16.

²⁷⁵ I. H. Evans, “The Columbia Union Conference,” *ARH*, April 13, 1916, 16.

²⁷⁶ Frederick Griggs, “Southeastern Union Conference,” *ARH*, April 20, 1916, 14.

²⁷⁷ G. B. Thompson, “Southern Union Conference,” *ARH*, April 20, 1916, 15.

6) that included a program for each church so that they could participate. Evans wrote a talk to be read for the occasion titled "The Missionary Volunteer Work a Preparation for Service."²⁷⁸ Additional meetings were held for the Southwestern Union Conference (April 6-13) held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.²⁷⁹ He attended more meetings to offer counsel about the work at Loma Linda before returning to give the baccalaureate sermon as part of the graduation exercises at Union College.²⁸⁰

During the war the future of Adventist sanitariums was on the brink even as the need for raising funds for missions was never greater. The high costs of running such medical institutions had caused many of them to go into significant debt, and not a few closed between 1910 and 1915. Evans recognized that something must be done so a major theme of his administration was to put institutions on a sound financial basis. A Medical Convention to discuss the many facets of medical missionary work was held at the Madison, Wisconsin, Sanitarium from June 5-10, 1916.²⁸¹ Evans spoke about how "Personal Sacrifice [is] Necessary to Win the Kingdom of God"²⁸² and "Our Responsibility."²⁸³ This visit coincided in part with the Wisconsin Camp Meeting allowing Evans an opportunity to preach.²⁸⁴ The war also strained global finances as Evans reminded members to give generously for the midsummer offering (July 29) for support. Of the estimated twenty-cents a member asked, 15 cents went for mission and 5 cents to reduce the indebtedness of institutions. "God has given us in America great prosperity," wrote Evans, adding "the prosperity in the North American Division Conference is beyond anything ever known before."²⁸⁵ Such optimism led him to set a goal of

²⁷⁸ I. H. Evans, "The Missionary Volunteer Work a Preparation for Service," *ARH*, April 20, 1916, 17-18.

²⁷⁹ I. H. Evans, "The Southwestern Union Conference," *ARH*, May 4, 1916, 15.

²⁸⁰ See note *ARH*, June 1, 1916, 24.

²⁸¹ L. A. Hansen, "The Medical Convention at Madison, Wis. Its General Features," *ARH*, June 29, 1916, 17; I. H. Evans, "Our Medical Convention," *ARH*, June 29, 1916, 24.

²⁸² The sermon can be read in its entirety at: I. H. Evans, "Personal Sacrifice Necessary to the Kingdom of God," *ARH*, November 16, 1916, 6-8.

²⁸³ I. H. Evans, "Our Responsibility," *ARH*, February 15, 1917, 6-8.

²⁸⁴ I. H. Evans, "The Wisconsin Camp Meeting," *ARH*, July 20, 1916, 14.

²⁸⁵ I. H. Evans, "The Midsummer Offering," *ARH*, July 20, 1916, 24.

\$100,000 for ingathering funds (the previous year \$78,000 was raised and in 1914 \$59,000).²⁸⁶

The war continued to impact Adventism in America in many ways. The 1917 Annual Council of the General Conference and the North American Division met from October 10-14. Paramount was the impact of the war. The high costs of paper were causing the publishing houses to lose money, and new plans and higher prices were necessary.²⁸⁷ Adventist colporteurs had to be supplied with adequate ammunition. “The colporteurs,” he wrote, “are an army that knows no defeat.”²⁸⁸ Perhaps the most significant actions had to do with systematizing how the local church operated, especially with regard to records and finances. This would result in a list of published guidelines that was to be printed and kept available by church members for quick reference as a de facto *Church Manual*. This included the selection of church officers, church board, nominating committee, ordination of local church officers, transfer between churches, remission of offerings, expenditures and poor fund, and that local churches, not conferences, should be the means of disciplining unfaithful and troublesome members.²⁸⁹ As America became militarized, it became imperative that the church operate as efficiently as possible, too.

Despite war rations and travel restrictions, Evans maintained a busy schedule attending church meetings and raising funds. He encouraged people to contribute liberally for another annual offering (November 18) for the work for the colored people. He pledged \$45,000 in the coming year (1917) so that the church could provide for facilities and specifically do outreach among Black Americans.²⁹⁰ In Evans’ week-of-prayer reading he reminded believers that: “The enemy is fighting hard for our souls. It is therefore necessary for every one of us to reconsecrate himself

²⁸⁶ I. H. Evans, “The Harvest Ingathering for 1916,” *ARH*, August 10, 1916, 24.

²⁸⁷ G. B. Thompson, “Fall Council of the North American Division Executive Committee,” *ARH*, October 26, 1916, 5.

²⁸⁸ This quote appears in “Colporteurs of Union College Reach Their Goal,” *ARH*, February 1, 1917, 19.

²⁸⁹ I. H. Evans, “Important Resolutions for the Churches,” *ARH*, December 28, 1916, 6-7.

²⁹⁰ I. H. Evans, “Donation for Our Work for the Colored People,” *ARH*, October 26, 1916, 5-6.

anew to the service of God.”²⁹¹ From January 3-11, 1917, he participated in a Ministerial Institute for Colored Workers at the Oakwood Manual Training School.²⁹² As a result of the meetings, C. M. Kinney wrote a special poem and those present pledged to increase the Black membership of the denomination 400% over the next five years (to 10,000). The Oakwood school board voted to change the name to Oakwood Junior College Training School (as a 14 grade school) and to raise \$50,000 over the next three years to expand its facilities. From January 12-21, 1917, he participated in the publishing and home missionary convention held in the chapel of the Southern Publishing Association in Nashville, Tennessee.²⁹³

From April 12 to 19, 1917, Evans led out in the Spring Council of the North American Division Conference Committee held at Oakwood Manual Training School. This allowed church leaders to see up close the growth of Oakwood, which coincided with an affirmation to change its name to become a junior college. Among other resolutions, church leaders affirmed their position by passing “a carefully worded declaration applying only to our people in the United States . . . reaffirming the position taken at the time of the Civil War, that we are noncombatants, and petitioning the government to recognize our conscientious conviction on this question.”²⁹⁴ When President Taft passed a conscription law requiring all men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register,²⁹⁵ Evans urged that all Seventh-day Adventists to comply with the provisions of the draft law.²⁹⁶ This led to a more formal pronouncement by church leaders.²⁹⁷ He also supported a special collection for the Red Cross.²⁹⁸ The North American Division Conference called for a day of fasting and prayer on July

²⁹¹ I. H. Evans, “The Week of Prayer: What It May Mean to Us,” *ARH*, November 2, 1916, 7-9.

²⁹² C. B. Stephenson, “Ministerial Institute for Colored Workers,” *ARH*, November 23, 1916, 24.

²⁹³ W. W. Eastman, “The Publishing and Home Missionary Convention at Nashville, Tenn.,” *ARH*, March 1, 1917, 21-22.

²⁹⁴ G. B. Thompson, “Spring Council of the North American Division Conference Committee,” *ARH*, May 10, 1917, 3-6.

²⁹⁵ See response by I. H. Evans, “Registration,” *ARH*, May 31, 1917, 24, 21. See also, *idem.*, “The Draft,” *ARH*, June 7, 1917, 24, 21.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ I. H. Evans, “Exemptions in the Selective Draft Law,” *ARH*, June 14, 1917, 2, 5.

²⁹⁸ I. H. Evans, “Special Collection for the Red Cross,” *ARH*, June 21, 1917, 2.

14.²⁹⁹ The urgent need for relief prompted a special offering (June 23) collected in churches across the division for the work of the Red Cross.³⁰⁰ Altogether, Evans reflected: “These are testing days.”³⁰¹

Church leaders gathered for a special Council, in light of the war, held at Takoma Park, from July 24-27, 1917.³⁰² At this meeting they asked church members across the North American Division to meet for a season of fasting and prayer on Sabbath and Sunday, September 1-2, 1917, to seek “for a full baptism of the Holy Spirit.” They clearly were, they felt, on the cusp of Armageddon. “Our people are in sore trial because of world conditions, over which they have no control.” Increasing numbers in terms of membership, Evans wrote, was “not an indication of the all-important thing.” He felt instead the “supreme need” was “to *get right with God*.” Many who were “dear to us . . . have been drafted, and some will have been called to service, and some will have been called to service before the time appointed for fasting and prayer.” This new environment and call to endurance would surround them with temptations. “If ever we needed the help of the Holy Spirit, it is now,” he added.³⁰³ The Provost Marshal General made an exemption for ordained ministers under appointment as missionaries as an exemption to military service.³⁰⁴ It was imperative that those claiming noncombatant status be proactive and appear before their local draft board; failure to do so meant automatic entry without consideration of status to the United States Army.³⁰⁵ Evans requested anyone drafted and sent to the front lines to please notify him personally and to let him know what the conditions under which they were

²⁹⁹ I. H. Evans, “A Season of Fasting and Prayer,” *ARH*, June 21, 1917, 24.

³⁰⁰ I. H. Evans, “Collection for the Red Cross Society,” *ARH*, June 28, 1917, 24.

³⁰¹ I. H. Evans, “The Lord is My Helper,” *ARH*, August 9, 1917, 4.

³⁰² G. B. Thompson, “Midsummer Council,” *ARH*, August 16, 1917, 2; “Our Late Council,” *ARH*, August 16, 1917, 2, 6.

³⁰³ I. H. Evans, “A Season of Fasting and Prayer,” *ARH*, August 9, 1917, 24; I. H. Evans, “The Season of Fasting and Prayer, September 1, 2,” *ARH*, August 23, 1917, 2.

³⁰⁴ I. H. Evans, “Recent Rulings by the Provost Marshal General,” *ARH*, August 16, 1917, 6.

³⁰⁵ I. H. Evans, “Official Rulings Concerning the Draft,” *ARH*, September 6, 1917, 2.

working and “any suggestions” about how to be of help.³⁰⁶ Another exemption was for students enrolled in school. This contributed to a quick surge in enrollment in all Adventist colleges for the 1917-1918 school year.³⁰⁷

Evans continued to advocate for African Americans who were faithful members who paid their share of tithe and support of foreign missions, but yet often did not have access to the same resources. These people, he argued, had been forcefully taken here, and it was only fifty years since the emancipation proclamation, and now by the annual offering for Oakwood and the “colored people” this was an opportunity to do something. “We owe them a debt which we must try to pay,” he shared, “and the Division Committee feels anxious that our people rally to help provide them with church buildings, church schools, and with a suitable training school, equipped to train colored workers for efficient service.”³⁰⁸ From late August through early October 1917 Evans spoke at a series of camp meetings through the southern United States.

A significant turning point in the brief history of the North American Division occurred during the Autumn Council. Held from October 26 to November 6, 1917, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the meetings would be held jointly with the General Conference and the North American Division committees. The war effort meant that A. G. Daniells and I. H. Evans issued a joint statement that in light of the need for “the greatest simplicity, economy, dispatch, and efficiency,” and the administrative duplication, “in actual experience it has been found that the North American Division administration duplicated in many points the General Conference administration, therefore it was decided to recommend that it be discontinued, and that the organization of the General Conference be so strengthened that it can hereafter administer the work at its base.”³⁰⁹ The war would also be a point of continued concern, especially the draft, as Evans posted regular

³⁰⁶ I. H. Evans, “Notice to Our Brethren Who Have Been Drafted,” *ARH*, September 20, 1917, 24.

³⁰⁷ I. H. Evans, “Further Draft Regulations,” *ARH*, September 27, 1917, 2; idem., “Compiled Rulings Issued by Provost Marshal General on Questions Concerning the Selective-Service Law,” *ARH*, October 11, 1917, 2, 5.

³⁰⁸ I. H. Evans, “Needs of Our Negro Department,” *ARH*, October 5, 1917, 5-6.

³⁰⁹ A. G. Daniells and I. H. Evans, “The Minneapolis Council,” *ARH*, November 29, 1917, 3.

updates expressing appreciation to the United States government for giving them consideration and exemption for those who cannot “conscientiously perform [the bearing of arms] and not stultify their conscience.”³¹⁰ Evans also organized a special offering for the “destitute Armenians and Syrians” who were facing extreme suffering and atrocities.³¹¹

By 1918 Evans wrote for the first time about the dangers of higher criticism within Christianity. He warned that “we must not drift” by “conformity to the world.” Instead “our pattern” must always be Christ. He opined that “Our Puritan forefathers would have been staggered at the things done in these days by church members.”³¹² Instead of seeking deliverance from sin, plain pulpit preaching is no longer popular, and even the sermon has degenerated into a popular lecture with slang and vaudeville performances that amuse and gratify. Adventists were called to a higher standard of the Word of God that knows no compromise with sin:

This advent movement stands for all that the Word of God teaches. It knows no compromise with sin; its standard of righteousness is the law of God as interpreted in the teaching and life of Christ. Its aim is to prepare a people clothed, through faith, with the righteousness of Christ, who will await their Lord’s second coming in glory and power. Such a people, both in their life and in their work, must live unmoved and uninfluenced by the conditions of sin about them. This people must not drift. They *cannot* drift and fulfill their mission to the world.³¹³

In order to help avoid this drift, and encourage spiritual growth, he recommended the daily study of Ellen White’s writings. By cherishing and study this gift, never replaces the Word of God, but “helps in the perfection of Christian character. A methodical study of these writings . . . will be a means of helping him to grow in grace and Christlikeness.”³¹⁴

³¹⁰ I. H. Evans, “Important Changes in Draft Rules,” *ARH*, November 29, 1917, 2; idem., “The New Rulings of the War Department on the Draft,” *ARH*, December 13, 1917, 24.

³¹¹ I. H. Evans, “Collection in All Our Churches for Destitute Armenians and Syrians,” *ARH*, December 6, 1917, 24.

³¹² I. H. Evans, “Are We Drifting?” *ARH*, January 31, 1918, 4-5.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Quoted by Matilda Erickson, “Begin Today,” *ARH*, February 7, 1918, 19-20.

Wrapping up War and the 1918 General Conference

As preparations continued for the 1918 General Conference session, in light of “the general war conditions,” it “seemed advisable” to shorten this important event. Travel limitations, especially from delegates in war-torn regions, would reduce attendance, or at best, make it much more difficult and expensive to participate. The conference would be reduced from 24 to 17 days.³¹⁵ The gap of five years since the previous General Conference session was “the longest interim between sessions” since the denomination was founded. Evans encouraged church members to make sure they read the *Bulletin* and for those coming to make arrangements with J. L. McElhany who was coordinating lodging for the upcoming gathering.³¹⁶

As the war progressed, Evans published a notice affirming that “Seventh-day Adventists are and always have been noncombatants.” All members “in good and [regular] standing [as of] May 18, 1917” are “entitled to a certificate exempting him from the bearing of arms.” Those enlisted should seek help from their conference president, or C. S. Longacre who was appointed secretary of the “War Commission.”³¹⁷

The joint session of the General Conference and North American Division Conferences was held in San Francisco from March 29, to April 14, 1918. Evans gave the opening message on Friday evening titled “God Revealed in Man.”³¹⁸ Evans, in his subsequent report highlighted what he felt were the most significant accomplishments during the five years of the North American Division.³¹⁹ Never since the days of William Miller was there such widespread interest in the Adventist message. Such success must be acknowledged as the divine providence of God. At the recommendation of the 1917 Autumn Council it was recommended “that the organization known as the North American Division Conference terminate” at the 1918 General

³¹⁵ A. G. Daniells and I. H. Evans, “Shortening the Session of the General Conference,” *ARH*, February 7, 1918, 24.

³¹⁶ I. H. Evans, “Coming Sessions of General and Division Conferences,” *ARH*, February 28, 1919, 24.

³¹⁷ I. H. Evans, “Notice to Drafted Men of Our Faith,” *ARH*, March 28, 1918, 24.

³¹⁸ I. H. Evans, “God Revealed in Man,” *ARH*, May 9, 1918, 3-6.

³¹⁹ I. H. Evans, “North American Division President’s Address,” *ARH*, April 4, 1918, 9-14.

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Conference session and “its work and territory be absorbed the General Conference.” The official wording was as follows:

In order that the unity of our worldwide work may be preserved; that economy of administration may best be served; that the largest possible amount of funds may be made available for the prosecution of our work, both at home and abroad; that the believers everywhere may be constant contributors of their means to the regions beyond; that the General Conference may have direct control and management of its chief base of supplies, both of men and of means;

We recommend, That the General and North American Division Conferences, at their next session, arrange for eliminating the North American Division Conference, and that the territory comprised in the North American Division Conference be hereafter under the direct administration of the General Conference.³²⁰

Under Evans’ administration notable developments included the creation of the Home Missionary department in the autumn of 1914, which facilitated the Harvest Ingathering work raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for missions. During the previous quinquennium the denomination aggregated \$4.8 million, but during the past five years of the NAD, the tithe aggregated \$7.6 million making a gain of \$2.7 million (56.54%). The contributions for missions amounted to \$3.6, which included \$2.7 million for foreign missions and debt relief of \$854,733 and a reduction of liabilities of \$499,386 so that with creased assets should a net improvement of \$1.6 million. Church membership had increased by 23,357 just shy of Evans’ goal of 100k members in North America. He pointed out that it had taken the previous eighteen years so win that many souls in the same territory. If anything Evans had been too successful as church leaders looked to harness these resources. He had some recommendations: (1) The NAD is the base of supplies for finances and personnel and there is no limit to the need; (2) the home base must be kept strong; (3) We must not increase our liabilities; and (4) we must become more efficient and continual in soul-winning; more young people should be enrolled in our schools; (6) local conferences need to be responsible for training their membership for service;

³²⁰ Ibid., 10.

(7) colleges should establish short summer institutes to train members for outreach; (8) we should eliminate nonproductive workers; (9) the Sustentation Fund needed “definite regulations”; and (10) every union needs to have a treasurer, not just a president, to build up the finances of the union and local institutions, raise mission offerings, and increase of tithe.

Ultimately there was competition between Evans and A. G. Daniells for resources that led the General Conference president to recommend phasing out the North American Division. Daniells wrote in 1917 that “a strong, self-directing, practically independent organization thrown in between the GC and its resources. . . . It transfers the control of the base of supplies from [the] GC [General Conference] to the division.” Froom noted that the restriction of finances tied the hands of General Conference leaders. T. E. Bowen noted that at the Annual Council was recommended the that the North American Division be discontinued. “While this organization has done good work in stimulating our people in the home land and building up the work in other lines at the base, yet with the world-wide work in hand, and America being the base of supplies, it seemed that the General Conference Committee should have immediate direction of the work in the home land.”³²¹ Leaders furthermore reflected how this was “an interesting experience” that resulted in “an unworkable arrangement.” William A. Spicer, for his part, described it as “an extra wheel . . . at home base.”³²² In a way, Evans was a victim of his own success with his strong evangelistic focus and the need to develop workers with his strong emphasis upon training leaders, especially pastors, and raising funds to reduce debt, increasing tithe, and raising additional funds for projects.

Continued Commitment

On April 4, 1918 General Conference session Evans was elected for a second term as vice-president of the General Conference (effectively division president) for the Eastern Asia division. The one change was that India and Australasia were separated into a separate Division of the General Conference, and

³²¹ T. E. Bowen to J. M. Johanson, February 26, 1917, General Conference Archives.

³²² W. A. Spicer to W. S. Hyatt, November 22, 1917 (GC AST Secretariat General Files #21, 1917—Hyatt, W. S.).

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the Southern American Division was at the same time also created.³²³ Their daughter, Jessie (1892-1981), returned with them to Asia.³²⁴ Then on April 8, 1918, Evans made two motions discontinuing the North American Division, and the General Conference assuming all of its assets and liabilities.³²⁵ After the General Conference, the Executive Committee met for an additional four days to get some “detail work” done.³²⁶ Meanwhile, Mrs. Evans wrote a poem “The Old Packing Boxes” as they prepared to move.³²⁷ Before they left, Evans participated in the dedication of the new hospital building at Washington Sanitarium on May 19.³²⁸ His talk was titled: “How Christianity Leads in Helpful Service for the Sick.”³²⁹ Before he had even left, Evans rejoiced at the gift of \$50,000 by Mr. and Mrs. Au to build a permanent sanitarium in Shanghai.³³⁰ Evans stayed by to attend the Midsummer Council of the General Conference Committee (July 9-15).³³¹ By late July they left Takoma Park to visit family before sailing for China.³³² They set sail from San Francisco on September 24, 1918.³³³ On the way they stopped briefly, as they had done a number of times before, in Hawaii where he spoke to the believers one evening while their boat was repaired.³³⁴

³²³ See “Report of Nominating Committee,” as part of the report titled “Eighth Meeting: April 4, 10:30 A.M.,” *ARH*, April 25, 1918, 14.

³²⁴ See “Telegraphic News from the Conference,” under “Night Letter of April 14,” *ARH*, April 25, 1918, 24.

³²⁵ “Seventh Meeting, April 9, 3 P.M.,” *ARH*, May 2, 1918, 22.

³²⁶ I. H. Evans, “The General Conference Session,” *ARH*, May 16, 1918, 24.

³²⁷ Mrs. I. H. [Adelaide Bee Cooper] Evans, “The Old Packing Boxes,” *ARH*, May 30, 1918, 19.

³²⁸ “New Hospital Building,” *ARH*, May 30, 1918, 24.

³²⁹ As recorded: I. H. Evans, “How Christianity Leads in Helpful Service for the Sick,” *ARH*, July 4, 1918, 17-19.

³³⁰ I. H. Evans, “The Shanghai Sanitarium,” *ARH*, July 18, 1918, 24.

³³¹ See report *ARH*, August 1, 1918, 3-6.

³³² See note *ARH*, August 8, 1918, 24.

³³³ See note *ARH*, October 10, 1918, 16.

³³⁴ I. H. Evans, “Honolulu, H.I.,” *ARH*, December 19, 1918, 11-12. Evans objected to the exploitation of the Hawaiian islands. “The visitor . . . cannot but feel a sense of sadness at the thought that these hills and valleys, which, a generation ago, were the property of the races who had held them so long, are now owned and exploited by others. Year by year the native Hawaiians are becoming fewer and fewer, while the foreigners are increasing in numbers and strength. In the land where their fathers lived and ruled they are now the toilers and the poorest of the poor, while the descendants of those who brought them the gospel own and govern their country.”

After his tenure in the North American Division Evans remained vice-president of the General Conference for the Far Eastern Division until 1930 when he was elected as a general vice-president of the General Conference, a post held continued in until 1936). From 1936 to 1941 he served as a field secretary of the General Conference, after which he retired from active service. Irwin was a “strong administrator” as well as “a forceful preacher and writer.” He loved to write poems, hymns and put some of his own hymns to music. He was a significant force behind the development of the 1941 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal*. Such efforts in his later years contributed to “undue strain” on his health. He was also a major player in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and a member of the board of trustees until his health forced him to step aside. He had a lifelong passion for the education and the development of pastors. Evans was especially known for his extensive writings. One obituary observed that “Throughout his lifetime he wrote a great deal for Adventist publications.”³³⁵ A major focus of Evans’ life was bookended by both World War I, as North American Division president, and then in his final years, with World War II. The war impacted his own family. His son Arthur was held as a prisoner by the Japanese in a Philippine internment camp during World War II. His grandson, Lieut. Irwin Evans, was killed on Christmas Day, 1944. His son Jerome worked in government service in Panama. And his daughter, Jessie, married Lieut. Col. L. P. Corbett.³³⁶ Irwin died November 24, 1945, at Takoma Park, D.C., at the age of 83. He was remembered as a “man of iron will but gracious spirit” who did much to mentor young ministers and build up and establish “the pillars of the cause in finance, administration, and literature.”³³⁷

³³⁵ “Elder Irwin Evans, Leader in SDA, Dies,” *Battle Creek Enquirer*, November 26, 1945, 2.

³³⁶ “Elder Irwin Evans, Leader in SDA, Dies,” *Battle Creek Enquirer*, November 26, 1945, 2.

³³⁷ A. W. Spalding, *Captains of the Host: First Volume of a History of Seventh-day Adventists Covering the Years 1845-1900* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1949), 374.