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Adamson, Charles D. (1861–1934)

GLENN O. PHILLIPS

Glenn O. Phillips, Ph.D. (Howard University, Washington, D.C.), although retired, is actively writing, researching, lecturing, and publishing. He was a professor at Morgan State University, Howard University, and the University of the Southern Caribbean. He has authored and published numerous articles, book reviews, and books, including "The African Diaspora Experience," "Singing in a Strange Land: The History of the Hanson Place Church," "African American Leaders of Maryland," and "The Caribbean Basin Initiative."

Charles D. Adamson was one of the pioneering Caribbean-Antiguan literature evangelists and lay leaders in the eastern Caribbean from the early 1890s until his death in the mid-1930s.¹ He was among the initial converts baptized

by the first Seventh-day Adventist minister, Dexter A. Ball, at Bridgetown, Barbados, September 21, 1891.² Almost immediately after his baptism, Adamson and another convert from Barbados, E. N. Rogers, accompanied Ball on his return visit to his homeland of Antigua, as well as St. Kitts. Ball trained them to be colporteurs and to conduct Bible studies that resulted in the establishment of a number of early Seventh-day Adventist congregations. Within two years of his baptism, the denomination's foreign mission board recruited Adamson in the spring of 1893 to fulfill a request that it received from a small group of Sabbath keepers in Trinidad to obtain more Adventist literature and to have someone teach them further about the Seventh-day Adventist faith.³ Adamson was one of the most successful early Caribbean-based lay leaders who for almost 30 years labored successfully in spite of numerous personal hardships to spread the teachings of Seventh-day Adventism in the eastern Caribbean.

Charles D. Adamson was born near Saint John's, Antigua, on August 10, 1861,⁴ and from an early age excelled at his studies. They enabled him to attend the colony's teacher-training school for men. He successfully completed the teaching course and became a well-known and respected schoolteacher. Reading widely, he was among the first Antiguans to read the Seventh-day Adventist literature that started circulating within his English Caribbean island during the late 1880s. When he was in his mid-twenties, the first group of Seventh-day Adventist believers commenced services beginning in 1888 near St. John's under the leadership of Mrs. Anna Marie Watkins Roskrige. She had visited the United Kingdom and was baptized into the Adventist faith in England before returning to her home near St. John's.⁵ Together with her small band of Sabbath keepers, she appealed to the Adventist leaders in Battle Creek, Michigan, to send them literature. Within months, William Arnold became the first Seventh-day Adventist colporteur to visit and sell literature on the island (1889).⁶ Obtaining copies of the *Signs of the Times* from Arnold, Adamson read about the beliefs of Adventism and began to observe the Sabbath, but did not fully agree to be baptized. Some months later, when the first Seventh-day Adventist minister, Dexter A. Ball, visited Antigua in mid-1891 and held the first evangelistic meetings and baptized the first small group of believers, Charles was not among them. However, weeks later he traveled to Barbados, and when Ball baptized the first group of Barbadians to become Adventist believers, Adamson was among the 17 who officially joined the Adventist faith on September 21, 1891.⁷

Adamson was also among the small early group of eastern Caribbean Adventists who became successful colporteurs, selling Adventist publications across the region during the early 1890s. When he left his teaching profession, he and Dexter Ball conducted the first evangelistic meeting in the neighboring British Caribbean colony of St. Kitts.⁸

The leaders at Battle Creek, Michigan, noted Adamson's success, and in response to a growing number of requests for a permanent Seventh-day Adventist worker in Trinidad, the church's foreign mission board sent Adamson to work there. He arrived in Trinidad during April 1893 and immediately began to hold meetings at the villages of Princess Town and Couva in central Trinidad. He distributed and sold Adventist literature as well as conducted Bible studies. Soon he started a number of companies in central Trinidad and appealed to church leaders to send its first permanent Seventh-day Adventist minister to Trinidad, A. E. Flowers in 1894.⁹ Adamson also sold literature and helped conduct the first Seventh-day Adventist meeting in the colony's capital, Port-of-Spain, where they encountered great opposition from the clergy of the colony's well established Christian denominations.

During the following almost 40 years (1894 to 1934), Adamson continued to be one of the most active and successful lay leaders, distributing and selling Seventh-day Adventist publications across Trinidad with the support of his wife. Among the established churches that he began as companies during his decades of giving Bible studies and preaching to small groups despite strong opposition were the Couva SDA Church (1895), the Tunapuna SDA Church (1909), the Port-of-Spain (Stanmore) SDA, the Indian Walk SDA, the La Brea SDA, and the San Fernando SDA Church. The last company he started that became a full-fledged congregation was the Carenage SDA Church. It became an official church in the South Caribbean Conference of SDA in September 1941, seven years after his death.¹⁰

Adamson died April 29, 1934, and S. L. Ash and G. A. Coon conducted his funeral service. He was buried in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.¹¹

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"Roskrige, Mrs. Anna Marie Watkins." *ARH*, January 10, 1935.

NOTES

1. "Charles D. Adamson," *Field Gleanings*, vol. IV, no. 6, June 1934, 4.?
2. Glenn O. Phillips, *Seventh-day Adventists in Barbados: Over A Century of Adventism in Barbados, 1884-1991* (Bridgetown, Barbados: Caribbean Graphics and Letchworth Ltd., 1991), 15.?
3. Eric John Murray, *A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Trinidad and Tobago, 1891-1981*, (Maracas Valley, Trinidad: The College Press, 1981), 19, 24, 41, 162, 165.?
4. Ibid.?
5. "Roskruge, Mrs. Anna Marie Watkins," *ARH*, January 10, 1935.?
6. Wesley Amundsen, *The Advent Message in Inter-America* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 82; Floyd Greenleaf, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin American and the Caribbean* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1992), vol. 1, 13, 19, 22.?
7. Phillips, *Seventh-day Adventists in Barbados*, 15.?
8. "Charles D. Adamson."?
9. "Roskruge, Mrs. Anna Marie Watkins."?
10. Ian Green, *Roots 1989* (Curepe, Trinidad: Church Ministries Department, South Caribbean Conference of SDA, 1989), 7.?
11. "Charles D. Adamson."?

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