

Indigenous Leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the West-Central Africa Division

GABRIEL MASFA

Gabriel Masfa, Ph.D., Babcock University

The rise of indigenous leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) is deeply rooted in several complex historical events. The way local agents in Christian evangelism in Africa rose to prominence necessitates an analysis of both the political and religious dynamics that ushered in a post-colonial era.

Background

Between the 1950s and 1980s, African nations regained their independence from European countries. The only countries that had escaped colonization were Ethiopia and Liberia. The first was due to its determined resistance against Italian invaders and other European empires; the second because it served as a place for freed slaves from Europe and America. The fight for African independence started as far back as immediately after WWII. In 1951, Libya obtained its liberation from Italy, followed by other countries culminating in a mass proclamation of freedom from colonial rulers by the 1960s. During that decade 17 countries unfurling their new flags They included Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Senegal.

The end of the colonial period was mostly attributable to the African rejection of European dominance. The idea that European civilization was superior to African culture received widespread opposition. Western education through its schools and health institutions enabled Africans to recognize the limits of colonialism and oppose it. WWI and WWII had also exposed the brutality of European nations when the conflicts inflicted misery and loss of life on Africans. Such events questioned the right of Europe to dictate any moral code to other continents.

On the other hand, African leaders began to express their desire to lead in the administration of the colonies. Especially in British, French, and Portuguese colonies, they had emerged as a result of the opportunities offered by Western education and new economic opportunities greater than that offered by African traditional societies.

By the 1960s, Africans became zealous about western education and thus invested huge efforts in it to transform African societies. School attendance by the 1960s was on the increase compared to the 1900s when missionaries had to beg people to attend the ones they founded.

So by the 1960s, Africans sought to take over the leadership of African nations. As local officials progressively obtained the independence of their countries, it forced Europeans to leave the continent. The transfer of leadership did not only take place among governmental sectors, but also among the Christian denominations that had operated under the aegis of the colonial masters. Seventh-day Adventism followed the pattern of other Christian denominations that handed over leadership to local people following the independence of their countries.¹

Post-Colonial Theory and Christian Missions in Africa

African political and cultural developments with their accompanying rejection of colonialism became especially prominent during the 1960s. The views of local leaders and indigenous theologians that became termed *post-colonial* now began to strongly affect Christianity.

Postcolonial theologians believed that European colonialism had shaped and influenced the teachings of Western missionaries who brought Christianity into Africa. This implied and reinforced the idea of Eurocentrism and the notion of the superiority of European culture. Africans, in the post-colonial era, therefore, adopted new approaches to theologizing the Bible, intending to “make the Bible comprehensible to the colonized cultures on their terms.”² In this regard, they adjusted biblical hermeneutics in the light of postcolonial criticism, an approach inscribed in the idea of African theology, a term first coined in 1965 at the All Africa Conference of Churches. This theology was viewed from the perspective of liberation theology with connections to Black theology in North America. It later became cherished by South African Black theology as a way to shake off the effects of Apartheid.³

The missions in Africa also felt the winds of Post-colonialism. Africans began to condemn western religious policies that denied them an equal place in mission councils and general assemblies. It clearly indicated that African clergy did not want links with mission societies that refused to acknowledge them as having equal prerogatives with white missionaries.⁴ R. Elphick noted that:

Missionaries often refused to treat the African clergy as their professional equals and brothers in Christ. Consequently, many Africans, embittered by their treatment as second-class ministers, quarreled with the missionaries over money, status, and authority ... few of these squabbles concerned Christian doctrine or disagreements over principles of church governance.⁵

Following this trend of self-awareness of the identity of African clergy, emotional and psychological pressure increased against Western missionaries. Africans requested a sharing, if not a relinquishing, of positions of

authority to the indigenous.

Such a vision of leadership in Christian churches in Africa probably contributed to the appropriation of what is called fulfillment theology. According to its proponents, "God had granted special insights to Hindus, Africans and other peoples that would give new dimensions to European worship, just as their acceptance of Christ would fulfill their progress towards salvation."⁶ Such an electrifying argument would yield abundant fruit. By the 1980s, western missionaries had almost entirely left their former colonies and went back home, even though they still tried to adopt a paternalistic attitude from abroad. The General Conference Executive Committee Minutes of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from 1960 to 1980s, for instance, record numerous votes for the permanent return of Adventist missionaries to their homelands.

As western missionaries began to relinquish their leadership positions to local individuals, the latter assumed responsibility for contextualizing Christianity in their own way. They acted as agents of conversion to their fellow Africans. Norman Etherington observed that "the greatest difficulty faced by those who have tried to argue that Christian missions were a form of cultural imperialism has been the overwhelming evidence that the agents of conversion were local people, not foreign missionaries."⁷ The missionaries bountifully sowed, but the local pioneers were the ones who developed strategic plans for harvest. Taking the Christian message to remote areas of the African bush and deserts, they sat with their people on the ground while they gathered around trees to listen to the good news of Jesus's redeeming grace taught to them in their languages. None of them was forced to accept the message, but they all recognized its significance as their brethren highlighted that Jesus would end all sufferings and hand to each a new mansion that He went to prepare for them (Rev. 20; John 14:1).

The Rise of Early African Adventist Leaders in WAD's Territory

The story of Seventh-day Adventism in Africa would be incomplete without mention of the local pioneers. Just as in the mainline Christian denominations in Africa, Seventh-day Adventist local pioneers championed the Adventist message as early as the 1900s. They used a variety of strategies to convey the Adventist teachings to nonbelievers, or better to say, to non-Adventists as they did extend their message to other Christian groups. If the French and the British in the nineteenth century spoke of missions as meant to convert non-Christians such as the Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Confucians, and the traditionalists, for Seventh-day Adventist local pioneers and their mentors, converts were to be sought even among Christian denominations. They emphasized the Sabbath doctrine that the other Christian churches did not preach. As J. A. Hyde, a missionary in Northern Nigeria, reported in 1951, "The majority of the teaching in this mission is carried out by the members themselves." What the missionaries did was to train them on how to reach out to others. "So one of the first things that we do when we take the gospel to them is to teach them to read and to read the Bible for themselves" Hyde affirmed.⁸

Then as they learned to read and write, and thus study the Bible for themselves, they immediately, while still pupils, joined the teaching ranks, helping others who did not know as much as they did. Thus, from one group of 150 members we know of 100 teachers.⁹

So, the local pioneers were at the forefront of Adventist missions as they brought hundreds of people to Christ even while they were yet students themselves. The GC Executive Committee noted in 1948 that the growth in Adventism in Africa was “largely the result of the work of hundreds of native evangelists, trained in our schools, who go out into the highways and byways with their Bibles and picture rolls, and the message in their hearts.”¹⁰ Once they were trained, African evangelists were good at preaching to their people.

To remind ourselves of the works of local pioneers is important, because they were, in some places, the first to convert people before the missionaries ever arrived. Two individuals from Cote d’Ivoire who “had been to Ghana to learn how to cultivate cocoa had accepted and brought Seventh-day Adventist Message to Dida tribe” to which they belonged.¹¹ Joseph KouameDjouman and Pierre Kouame Adingrah shared their new faith in their village. When the mission-based staff in Ghana heard about their success, they decided to send J. K. Garbrar to reinforce what was already in progress. Later, Felix Donkoh and John Zakka, both from Cote d’Ivoire, gave impetus to the mission in their country, supporting earlier efforts.¹² Similarly, in the eastern part of Nigeria, Seventh-day Adventism was already present before Jessie Clifford settled there. Bankole Loving-good, who attended an Adventist school at Waterloo, Sierra Leone, had preached and converted people to the Adventist message.¹³

Places such as Ghana and Nigeria on the West Coast, and Cameroon in Central Africa, served as training centers from where pioneers alongside Western missionaries were sent or sometimes as the only ones who acted as missionaries themselves.

Although all the local pioneers in one way or the other received their training from Western missionaries, they passionately shared the flame of God’s love with their people. For instance, Ondoua Raymond, a Cameroonian, was a missionary in Gabon, while R. P. Dauphin from Sierra Leone and Dunca Morgue from Ghana supported the work of D. C. Babcock in Nigeria.¹⁴ Andrew Noah Daitey, Christian T. Quarcco, and Dr. Kofi Owusu-Mensa served in Nigeria at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa. Pastor W. B. Ackar and his wife were missionaries in the North Nigerian Mission from 1971-1975. D. Cudjoe and his wife went to Gambia as missionaries during 1973-1977.¹⁵ Such local agents transformed several African jungles into real centers of Adventism that continue to today.

At the time when local pioneers supported the missionaries or introduced the Adventist message in many places, evangelism could be dangerous and life-threatening.¹⁶ Sometimes the evangelists received blame for local epidemics as they promoted a new religion that many thought angered the gods. Jealous traditional chiefs wanted them killed or judged by the deities.¹⁷ Evangelist J. J. Hamilton from Sierra Leone narrated his own dangerous experience in March 1937. When thunder hit his house, locals told him that the gods were angry

toward him and his activities in Ilesha, Nigeria. No one ventured to assist him and his family members. He expressed his sadness in these words: "The Yorubas worship thunder, and if anyone is struck, they desire that the unfortunate one should die. So no one would venture to help us."¹⁸ In such circumstances, one had to be determined to become an evangelist.

As the local pioneers preached with such determination, their ultimate goal was to communicate their new faith which they believed was superior to that of their ancestors. While they emphasized the love of God in their sermons, the new Christian evangelists used simple sentences that had a strong effect on the mind of those who threatened them with death. An African evangelist "knows how to draw illustrations from native life that bring home the message as no foreign missionary could do."¹⁹ The stories of Stephen and the apostles of Christ, such as Peter, James, John, and Paul, inspired in them a passion for God's mission that no human threat was able to quench. Sometimes, they openly confronted the practice of juju and defeated it in the name of Christ. In Ghana, for instance, Daniel Gyasi, a convert in 1950, asked a local pioneer, Appiah Dankwah, to remove his idols and juju from his house and throw them away.²⁰ Dankwah further reported:

"One bright Sabbath morning on the 16th Sept. 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Vetter, Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Appiah, and myself went to the village. After the church services, the man brought in his various idols and in the presence of the village chief, his elders, and the town folks, the man stood among the people and witnessed for the wonderful message of Christ which has changed his heart to commit to the flames these rubbish idols. I poured kerosene on them and a stick of match raised a towering flame, no mean bonfire, and devoured the whole thing without reserve. The flames of the fire must have appealed to the minds of the awe-stricken populace who were looking to the worthless idols they once served and worshipped."²¹

In Umuocha village, another similar experience took place. R. Wigwe reported that two individuals requested that prayer be offered for them and their juju removed. Wigwe wrote:

"There was one young man in this village and his mother 70 years of age who have converted to the truth on a Sabbath a few days ago. This young man and his mother requested that we come and destroy their juju. The old woman has a familiar spirit, she began to explain how much she had suffered since her connection with juju. One large room was set apart for the juju, then we used a basket to carry them out to the street and burned them up. A sermon was given them that God is a true creator, that all the false gods will perish in the days of the Lord's anger. After the sermon the repentant man began to ask what good thing he could do to become a real Christian. I told him, 'Not until you enlist your name in the baptismal class will we let you know.' May the Lord help this man to make his decision a firm one together with his mother to stand fast in their faith."²²

Such courage from the local Adventist pioneers brought the villagers and the local chiefs to Christ. It freed them from the social prejudices of accepting Christ and the fear that invisible spirits can harm even those who accept Christ. From the East Nigeria Mission comes a story of a juju priestess:

“Ekeomalgwe—about 75—a juju priestess was married in a little village called Elehia in Ogba District. She had nine children, eight of whom have since died; her husband also is dead, leaving her a son who has been in bed for three years. Ekeoma devoted her strength, money, and all her belongings to the worship of her gods, but the gods have done nothing good for her. In a dream last year she found herself in a church and on coming out she wore a white garment and had a book in her hand and was accompanied by many church members until she got to her house. It was at this point that she awoke from her sleep, not understanding what she had dreamt. A few weeks later she fell ill and no one cared for her — no, not even her juju. Our Dorcas Society near that village heard this and hastened to help her. They fed her, supplied wood for heating the house, water for washing her clothes and for her bath and, most important of all, they prayed with her until she became well again.”²³

The power of love found in the women who professed Christ greatly impressed the priestess. They assured her that Jesus is mighty and His followers are shielded from invisible forces and misfortune. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, she made an unusual declaration, especially from a juju priestess:

“Since I became a juju priestess I have given all that I have—goats, sheep, chickens, cola nuts—to the juju but it has never done me any good. All my children have died; no one is caring for me except these good Sabbath women who have been feeding and taking good care of me. I would have died of hunger.”²⁴

After mumbling those words, she went straight to where kept her gods. Boldly standing before them, she said: “I am going to serve the God of these Sabbath women who helped me when I was ill; I will serve you no longer.” She became a Sabbath keeper. “The Ogba District Dorcas Society bought new clothes in addition to other gifts for the old juju priestess. After the church service, the worker in charge of that area and the local laity marched to the woman's home where she turned over the juju to the Church of God; the Church of God presented the juju to the flames! O! How the jujus burnt! Today, Ekeomalgwe is enjoying attending Sabbath School; she is very happy and, looking forward to being baptized and received into fellowship in God's remnant church.”²⁵

As villagers experienced such an ecstatic vision of God through ordinary people, they came out en masse to declare their fidelity to the unknown Christ and declared to the local Adventist pioneers that Christ was indeed the Saviour of the world. They pledged to live for Him, work for Him, and to convert more people to His love. In such times, even juju priests and witchdoctors understood that the name Jesus is extraordinary. They also confessed their public acceptance of Him, because the power He invests in those who follow Him is superior to that of initiated witches. Such was the case of two witches, Maria Simuli and Khakasa. As they witnessed a baptismal service, they realized that they needed God's grace.

They knew that the Lord did not approve of their activities. A couple weeks later, at the Chebwai camp meeting, a speaker made a call for sinners to repent. To the astonishment and joy of the congregation, the two witches came forward, carrying all their medicines, poisons, and materials with which they used to invoke the favor of the spirits. While the people rejoiced, the two women knelt and gave their hearts to the Lord. “Maria and Khakasa are now studying the Word in the Bible class and await the day when they may join the remnant church

fully through baptism.”²⁶

If witches could confess Christ, individuals who could claim extraordinary power, other people could hardly reject Jesus. Such unusual circumstances often exalted the name of Jesus. African local pioneers used every opportunity to live out their beliefs which would draw people to Christ.

While local pioneers learned a lot from the evangelistic methods of the Western missionaries, they also developed strategies that suited their circumstances.²⁷ They constituted a real strength for the Adventist mission in Africa by the 1960s. Eighty-six such passionate evangelists labored in 1968 on the West Coast. By the 1970s, women also joined hands with men to advance the mission of Adventism in Africa. Among the first two known ones in West Africa were Miss Odias of Benin-City, Nigeria, and Miss Oguneso from Ode Remo, Nigeria.²⁸ Both had graduated from the Adventist Seminary of West Africa. B. B. Beech reported a total of 374 graduates from the Bible Correspondence School in 1973 who became evangelists, and more than 8,000 active students were enrolled to serve later as local pioneers in Africa.²⁹

Selected Local Pioneers in WAD's Territory

Influential local pioneers in Nigeria include the following: Isaiah Aina Ajibola Balogun,³⁰ Paul Chibunna Chima,³¹ Albert Job Dike,³² Mallum Ishaya Wali, Joseph A. Adeogun,³³ Willie J. Limejuice,³⁴ Silas Rabakaya, Luka Tambaya Daniel³⁵. All of them engaged in pastoral activities that sought to draw people to Christ.³⁶

In Ghana, influential local pioneers who contributed to the development and growth of Seventh-day Adventism were Charles Bennet Mensah,³⁷ Francis I. U. Dolphijn,³⁸ Ackah Christian Abraham,³⁹ Affum John Kwame, R. K Antwi, J. Y. Entwi, S. Asmah, J. B. Kobia, S. B. Essien, and G. M. Erzuah.⁴⁰

In Cameroon, among the most significant local pioneers who took the Adventist message to the villagers and preached to them in their native languages included Bendele Thomas, Andoulko Barnabas, Ndongo Matthew, Andre Makong, and Babba Abraham. With just rudimentary education, they succeeded in communicating Bible truth to the people in their communities. They were highly esteemed, as they rendered their service to humanity with total humility. The villagers regarded them like the saints of the Bible. Philemon Amanze, who documented the work of Ndongo, reported that: “Pastor Ndongo was very strategic and systematic in evangelism. To win the hearts of many converts, he contributed to their welfare by encouraging periodic community gatherings and initiating community projects with the approval of the village rulers. He even went as far as forming community groups to relieve families that had a heavy workload and financial challenges. All these avenues were created by Pastor Ndongo to preach the gospel and the Lord blessed his efforts.”⁴¹

Another significant local pioneer was Andre Makong. Born July 2, 1934, he married Bakongo Jeanne on July 21, 1960. Besides attending the Protestant primary school at Babimbi from 1943 to 1948, he went to the Adventist primary school at Mandjap I. There he discovered Seventh-day Adventism and was baptized in the Adventist

Church in 1954. Later he went to the Adventist high school in Nanga-Eboko.⁴² Studying at the Adventist Bible College of Niam Noudou between 1968 and 1969, he obtained an evangelism certificate. From 1969 to 1972, he had training in theology in Nanga-Eboko where he obtained an advanced evangelist certificate. Later he was ordained into the gospel ministry on March 19, 1978. During his lifetime, he conducted 54 major evangelistic series during which hundreds and even thousands of people learned the truth of the Sabbath message. He moved from one town to another in Central Africa to conduct evangelistic meetings.

When the pioneers passed away, not only the church mourned, but also the people who knew them, Moslems, idol worshippers, and members of other Christian denominations all affirmed that they were indeed God's angels in human form. Through their exemplary lives, hundreds of people accepted Seventh-day Adventism in such countries as Cameroon.⁴³

In Liberia, Willie Helbig, a talented minister who was the first Liberian to be ordained, joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church on April 30, 1930. Through his dedication, he preached the Adventist message to hundreds of people. Another influential local pioneer in that country was I. W. Harding. Originally from Sierra Leone, he went to Liberia as early as the year 1913 to help strengthen the Adventist mission there.⁴⁴

In Gabon, the following were key local pioneers: Emmanuel Wora, Darius Djanivend, and Samson Assoumou.⁴⁵ In Congo, Nicolas Sangouet, Lucien Ngonziegue, Firmin Bidzimou, Norbert Ngotimi, and Philippe Milandou had great impact.⁴⁶ In the Central African Republic, important local pioneers included Nicolas Sangouet and Kolongonda. In Equatorial Guinea, among several other local pioneers, one can name Angel Garcia, Ricardo Bull, and Fernando Garcia. And in Chad, Michel Denote and Paul Ouankissam were representative local leaders.⁴⁷

The evangelists mentioned here are only a few of those who have been documented. A significant number of local pioneers helped develop Seventh-day Adventism in Liberia, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Gabon, and in all the other West African countries. The foreign missionaries may have sowed the seed of the gospel, but the national pioneers developed local strategies to bring it to harvest.

Finding itself within a non-western context, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had to make sense of African realities to be able to preach to the adherents of African Traditional Religions, as well as to members of African Christian indigenous churches. To this end, Seventh-day Adventist evangelists had to provide teaching more convincing than that offered by the indigenous churches. They preached that Seventh-day Adventists were God's true children and are protected against the evil eye. Such public perceptions of Seventh-day Adventists constitute significant assets for preaching the Adventist faith to Africans. From the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its adherents have viewed themselves as special: "In retrospect, some of this seems a little paranoid, but the fact remains that because of this perception, most Adventists at one time felt that they knew exactly who they were: the 'remnant' 'the people of God' 'the true church with a special message for a special time. They had 'the truth.'"⁴⁸

Energetic preaching to non-Adventists, emphasis on prophetic portions of the Bible and the imminent return of Christ, and special focus on the Ten Commandments led to spiritual revivals.⁴⁹ Adventist evangelists in WAD preached that people must separate themselves from practices that prevent them from living a righteous life. These constitute additional elements that nurtured the commitment of Seventh-day Adventists in Africa to win the hearts of non-Adventists.

Impacts of Early Local Pioneers on the Collective Growth of Seventh-day Adventism in WAD

As early as the 1940s, the GC Executive Committee realized the importance of having indigenous leadership, noting that “it is evident that we must have a native leadership who can not only evangelize but who can become leaders in the administrative side of our work.”⁵⁰ When the church relinquished leadership in Africa to nationals, the church grew tremendously, resulting in new mission fields, conferences, and unions. As more people joined the church, the local pioneers served as mentors. They trained their fellow believers and sent them first to their families, their immediate communities, their tribes, the neighboring villages, and any other people within their reach. Traveling by foot and sometimes enduring hunger and heat, they were very courageous in fulfilling the gospel commission. As they preached in local languages, villagers had no choice but to heed the message of the “men and women of God” as they were often called.⁵¹

In the eyes of the villagers, the local pioneers possessed a supernatural power surpassing that of traditional witches. As the curses pronounced by the witches against the Adventist pioneers never had an effect, people came to accept the Sabbath message as a sign of protection in the fight against evil spirits, demons, curses, and disease. People called upon the local pioneers for prayer.⁵² As the Adventists prayed, the Lord visited the villagers and blessed their families, something the communities celebrated. New converts were not afraid to recount the stories of how they overcame their fear of evil spirits and the invisible plans of witches through the prayer of the men and women of God. Their stories became legends they retold from one village and tribe to another, each gaining added meaning to thrill their hearers about the Christian power found in the Adventist faith. It was to no surprise that from the 1950s to 2000 when the local members took over the leadership of Seventh-day Adventism in Africa, that the church has experienced dramatic growth. As they preached together with the white missionaries, more new converts accepted baptism in the name of Christ. Usually, a series of ceremonies would precede the baptisms.

An effective means of evangelism deployed by the local pioneers involved the sale of Christian books.⁵³ Literature evangelism accounted for most of the increase in membership among the elites, as it targeted those who were able to read and write. They, in turn, shared their discoveries and new faith with members of their households. Hundreds of literature evangelists pledged their commitment to Christ and service to humanity as they entered every corner of Africa to spread the Word of God. In November 1951, one of the literature

evangelists, A. N. Daity, in an article titled, “Why I Became a Colporteur Evangelist,” wrote:

I feel it an immense pleasure to express my views of entering this noble work of colporteur evangelism. Being a member of the great Advent Movement, I realised the need of speedily carrying the third angel’s message to the people of this sin-sick world of ours, and especially to my own people here in the Gold Coast. . . . I saw that it would be the right channel through which I could bring many lost souls to the Saviour. The Lord is richly blessing my labour. I enjoy my work. Dear believers, the fields are really ripe for the harvest. It is the augmenting of this colporteur work which will provide an opportunity to let many in this generation know more of the love of God, His plan of redemption, and the imminent coming of our Redeemer Jesus Christ.⁵⁴

Thus, following the hard work of the local pioneers as well as the collapse of European imperialism and its paternalistic tendencies, significant growth occurred in the Congo, resulting in nearly 65, 000 members.⁵⁵ By the 1960s, the total membership in the sub-Sahara was 236,000. This figure changed to 700 000 by 1980 and grew to 2 900 000 in 1996.⁵⁶ Steady growth and reorganization continued through the years after the departure of the foreign missionaries as church structures adjusted to African realities.

West Africa also had dramatic developments in terms of membership. In May 1954, for instance, Ghana laity alone reported 646 converts to Adventism.⁵⁷ Just one year later, 1,408 people were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist community in West Africa, and more than 11,000 joined baptismal classes as the product of 118 evangelistic meetings held across West African countries. The West African Union voted £4, 000 for its missionary activities under the slogan of “Let Your Light Shine in 1959.”⁵⁸ With such encouraging results, more effort was invested in evangelism in subsequent years. By 1962, they were 25, 379 members in the West African Union, with more than 65,000 in Sabbath schools.⁵⁹ Evangelism began to use local radio and television stations.

The major factor that contributed to the enthusiasm of the local pioneers and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Africa, especially West Africa and some parts of Central Africa between 1950 and 2000, was the work of educational and health institutions. Schools founded with the help of missionaries between the 1900s and 1940s became widely recognized. Educational institutions established during the colonial era and which became centers of educational excellence today include Babcock University (previously known as Adventist Seminary of West Africa) in Nigeria, Valley View University in Ghana, and Cosendai Adventist University in Cameroon. Such schools became influential in their countries as political leaders would often send their children to them. They became centers for evangelism as staff and students accepted the Adventist message through public baptisms.

Conclusion

Adventist local pioneers were the major players who sought to present biblical truths to their families and communities with a passion equal to that of their mentors, the Western missionaries. Such African Adventists

sought to assure the continuity of not only the teachings of the church but also the developing strategies on how to reach the hearts of those whom Western missionaries had feared could not be reached with the Adventist faith. Local pioneers spared no means to preach the gospel of Christ. They led thousands to accept Adventism. Between the 1960s and 1990s, the growth of the church became very impressive as skills taught by Western missionaries were integrated and redefined intuitively by people who had only rudimentary education. Their labor transformed Adventism in Africa into a major religious movement that thousands keep joining each year.

SOURCES

Adiele, M. U. "Juju Priestess Repudiates Her God." *West-African Messenger* 10, no. 2 (1960).

Agboola, David. *A History of Christianity in Nigeria: The Seventh Day Adventists in Yoruba Land, 1914-1964* Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1987.

Agboola, T. David. *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988): A Mustard Seed* Ilishan Remo: By the Author, 2003.

Akintunde, E. A. "I Will Fear No Evil: Suggestions for Evangelistic Workers." *West-African Messenger* 10, no.1 (1960).

Amanze, Philemon O., Abimbola O. Fagbe, and Oyewale A. Akintunde. *Pioneers: Courageous Stories of God's People*. Lagos, Nigeria: Jamiro Press, 2011.

McKenna, Amy, ed. *The History of Western Africa*. New York: Britannica Educational, 2011.

Babalola, David. *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers*. Lagos, Nigeria: Emaphire Reprographics, 2001.

Babalola, David O. "Balogun, Isaiah Ajibola (1882–1947)." In *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*. Accessed August 21, 2020. <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=6G6P#fn2>

Babcock, David C. "Erunmu, Southern Nigeria." *ARH*, June 8, 1916.

Bekele Heye, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*. By the author, n.d.

Brandt, H. "Witches Seek the Lord." *Trans-Africa Division* 62, no. 8 (1964).

Brock, Peggy. "New Christians as Evangelists." In *Missions and Empires*. Norman Etherington, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Coleman, James S. *Nigeria Background to Nationalism*. University of California Press, 1958.

Daity, A. N. "Why I Became a Colporteur Evangelist." *West African Advent Messenger*, November 1951.

Dankwah, Appiah. "A Scene AtKwaaso Village." *Western African Advent*, January 1951.

Elineema, K. B. "Development of the Adventist Church in Tanzania." In *The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa*. E. Elineema, ed. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: By the Editor, 1992.

Elineema, K. B. "The Mission's Contributions to Tanzania." In *Seventh-day Adventist Contributions to East Africa (1903-1983)*. Balduur Ed. Pfeiffer, ed. Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 1985).

Elphick, Richard. "The benevolent and the social gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the age of segregation." In *Christianity in South Africa*. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, eds. Oxford: James Currey, 1997.

Etherington, Norman, "Introduction." In *Missions and Empires*, Norman Etherington, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

General Conference Executive Committee, April 13, 1948, General Conference Archives. Accessed April 27 and 29, 2021. <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1948-04.pdf>

Hamilton, James J. "Deliverance from Lightning." *The Advent Survey*, March 1938.

Hyde, J. A. "North Nigerian Teachers Send Greetings." *West African Advent*, January 1951.

Hyde, John J. "A Door Opening." *British Advent Messenger*, December 24, 1937.

Hyde, John J. "An Urgent Plea from Northern Nigeria." *Missionary Worker*, June 1, 1934.

Ireland, Marèque Steele. "Postcolonial Theology." In *Global Dictionary of Theology*, William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, eds. Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Keslake, Edgar. "Sierra Leone Mission: Annual Report for the Year 1951." *West-African Messenger* 6, no.4 (1952).

Kwanin, Kwame Boakye. "Ghana." In *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*. Accessed November 15, 2020. <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=CC1L&highlight=Ghana>

Pahimi, Patrice. "Mobilité de la Main-d'oeuvre Missionnaire et Dynamique d'Intégration sous-Régionale en Afrique Centrale : Cas des Missions Fraternelle Luthérienne et Adventiste du Septième Jour au nord du Cameroun et au sud du Tchad - XXe siècle-début XXIe siècle." In *AfrikaZamani* 22 & 23, (2014-2015).

Pato, Luke Lungile. "African Theologies." In *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives: Theology and Praxis*. John W. De Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio, eds. New York: Orbis Books, 1994.

Paul, Samuel A. *The Ubuntu God: Deconstructing a South African Narrative of Oppression*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009.

Provonsha, Jack W. *Remnant Crisis*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993.

Publishing Department of the West African Union Mission. "Seven Reasons Why We Believe in Gospel Literature." *West-African Messenger* 10, no.1 (1960).

Sanneh, Lamin. *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* New York: Orbis, 1983.

Schwarz, Richard W., and Floyd Greenleaf. *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000.

Wigwe, R. "Juju Was Destroyed: Umuocha District." *West-African Messenger* 6, no.8 (1952).

NOTES

1. David Agboola, *A History of Christianity in Nigeria: The Seventh Day Adventists in Yoruba Land, 1914-1964* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1987), 68-77.
2. Marèque Steele Ireland, "Postcolonial Theology," in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, eds. (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 684.
3. Luke LungilePato, "African Theologies," in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives: Theology and Praxis*, John W. De Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio eds. (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 153.
4. Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in *Missions and Empires*, Norman Etherington ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.
5. Richard Elphick, "The benevolent and the social gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the age of segregation," In *Christianity in South Africa*, Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport eds. (Oxford: James Currey, 1997), 350.
6. Etherington, "Introduction," 16, footnote 27.
7. Ibid., 7.
8. J. A. Hyde, "North Nigerian Teachers Send Greetings," *West African Advent*, January 1951, 3.
9. Ibid., 3.
10. General Conference Executive Committee, April 13, 1948, p. 1446, General Conference Archives, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1948-04.pdf>.
11. David T. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988): A Mustard Seed* (Ilishan Remo: By the Author, 2003), 36.
12. Ibid.
13. D. Babalola, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers* (Lagos, Nigeria: Emaphire Reprographics, 2001), 78.
14. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 24.

15. Ibid., 72.
16. Brock, "New Christians as Evangelists," 140.
17. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 43.
18. James J. Hamilton, "Deliverance from Lightning," *The Advent Survey* 10, no. 3 (March 1938), 8.
19. General Conference Executive Committee, April 13, 1948, p. 1446, General Conference Archives, accessed April 27, 2021, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1948-04.pdf>.
20. Appiah Dankwah, "A Scene AtKwaaso Village," *Western African Advent*, January 1951, 4.
21. Ibid.
22. R. Wigwe, "Juju Was Destroyed: Umuocha District," *West-African Messenger* 6, no.8 (1952): 4.
23. M. U. Adiele, "Juju Priestess Repudiates Her God," *West-African Messenger* 10, no. 2 (1960): 3.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. H. Brandt, "Witches Seek the Lord," *Trans-Africa Division* 62, no. 8 (1964): 9.
27. K. B. Elineema, "Development of the Adventist Church in Tanzania" in *The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa* (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: By the Editor, 1992), 57. See also "The Mission's Contributions to Tanzania," in *Seventh-day Adventist Contributions to East Africa* (1903-1983), Baldur Ed. Pfeiffer ed. (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 1985), 41-56.
28. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 72.
29. B. B. Beech, quoted in Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 77.
30. See, David O. Babalola, "Balogun, Isaiah Ajibola (1882-1947), *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=6G6P&highlight=Balogun>.
31. Michael A. T. Senne-Aya, "Chima, Paul Chibuma (1928-1985), *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=CCVE&highlight=Chima>.

32. Nnamdi Onyenweaku, "Dike, Albert Job (1887-1992)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=FB87&highlight=Dike>.
33. Joseph Adeogun, "Adeogun, Joseph Adeyemo (c. 1905-1971)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=AC2S&highlight=Adeogun>.
34. Nation Amadi Nation, "Limejuice, Willie Julius (1914-2000)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=1B89&highlight=Limejuice>.
35. Yohanna Uchopo Harry, "Daniel, Luka Tambaya (1943-2019)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=BIGK&highlight=Rabakaya>.
36. Babalola, *Sweet Memories*, 93-104; 129-138, 141-147, 170-183,
37. Emmanuel Dickson Poakwa, "Mensah, Charles Bennet (1918-2008)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=EC1B&highlight=Mensah>. Kwame Boakye Kwanin, "Ghana," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/assets/pdf/article-CC1L.pdf>, November 15, 2020.
38. Nii Lante Thompson, "Dolphijn, Francis I. U. (died c. 1914)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=9B8I&highlight=Dolphijn>.
39. Kojo Polley-Kwofie, "Ackah, Christian Abraham (1883-1912)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=4B8F&highlight=Ackah> | .
40. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 10, 31.
41. Amanze, et al., *Pioneers*, 81.
42. Ibid., 73, 74.
43. Patrice Pahimi, "Mobilité de la Main-d'oeuvre Missionnaire et Dynamique d'Intégration sous-Régionale en Afrique Centrale : Cas des Missions Fraternelle Luthérienne et Adventiste du Septième Jour au nord du Cameroun et au sud du Tchad – XXe siècle-début XXIe siècle," in *Afrika Zamani* 22 & 23, (2014-2015): 131-150; Amanze, et al., *Pioneers*, 73-79, 80-86, 98-102.
44. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 33, 34.
45. Tony Ogouma, president of Gabon mission, interview with Gabriel Masfa, April 23, 2020.
46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.
48. Jack W. Provonsha, *Remnant Crisis* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993), 8, 9.
49. Mavalla, *Conflict Transformation*, 46.
50. General Conference Executive Committee, April 13, 1948, p. 1447, General Conference Archives, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1948-04.pdf>.
51. Edgar Keslake, "Sierra Leone Mission: Annual Report for the Year 1951," *West-African Messenger* 6, no.4 (1952): 2.
52. Brandt, "Witches Seek the Lord," 9.
53. E. A. Akintunde, "I Will Fear No Evil: Suggestions for Evangelistic Workers," *West-African Messenger* 10, no.1 (1960): 4-5. See also Publishing Department of the West African Union Mission, "Seven Reasons Why We Believe in Gospel Literature," *West-African Messenger* 10, no.1 (1960): 7, 8.
54. A. N. Daity, "Why I Became a Colporteur Evangelist," *West African Advent Messenger*, November 1951, 2.
55. Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 546.
56. Ibid.
57. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History*, 56.
58. Ibid., 59.
59. Ibid., 61.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000