Henry, Elie Saturné (1926–2015)

SÉNÈQUE EDMOND

Sénèque Edmond, Ph.D. (International Institute for Higher Learning, Silang, Cavite, Philippines), is the vice president of student affairs at Haiti Adventist University (UNAH). He has served the church as a pastor, a school principal, a chaplain, a youth, education, and communication director, a professor, and the dean of the theology school.

Elie Saturné Henry was a lawyer, high school teacher, academy principal, district pastor, and university theology professor. He also held many positions at the mission level: youth and education director, health director, executive
Early Life and Marriage

Elie Saturné Henry was born on January 1, 1926, to Saturné Henry and his wife, Marieta Azor, and was readily accepted by his parents as a unique gift.² Elie was their fifth child and grew up in Petite Rivière de l’Artibonite, developing a personality very early in his life. He grew up with seven brothers and sisters and benefited from an enriched social environment. One particularity of Élie Henry was that he only had nine fingers, attracting the attention of the children who knew him.

Elie Henry fell in love with Elvire Cantave, a cultured teacher he met in Port-au-Prince, and married her on August 18, 1949. Elie and Elvire were always seen holding hands everywhere they went. They had five children, Ariel, Monique, Edlyne, Elie, and Elvire.

Education and Formation

Elie grew up in his native town until he completed grammar school. He then had to migrate to Port-au-Prince for secondary school. He was a student at Vertière Academy, Simon Bolivar Academy, and Lycée Alexandre Pétion. In 1945, he completed this cycle of studies, and, as was attracted to jurisprudence, he chose to pursue a law degree. Although he soon started his professional career after graduating from law school in 1948, Elie didn’t lose his passion for learning. In 1969, he completed the theology program offered by the West Indies College on the Franco-Haitian Adventist Seminary campus. In 1983, he obtained a master’s degree in public health from Loma Linda University’s extension program at the Franco-Haitian Adventist Institute. In August 2015, long after his retirement, he was awarded the Doctor of Divinity honoris causa by the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary.²

Ministry

With so many talents, Elie Saturné Henry was given many responsibilities. He received his law degree in 1948.³ Immediately after, he started to practice his profession in Saint Marc and in Port-au-Prince. Over time, he was drawn by the ministry of teaching and left his career as a man of the courtroom to become a schoolroom teacher. He became a very successful math, physics, and chemistry teacher at the high school level.

This turning point in Elie’s profession caught the attention of the administrators of the Adventist Seminary of Diquini (now Adventist University of Haiti), and they invited him to be a part of their team in 1960.⁴ He soon became the establishment’s authority on all studies. His discipline and breadth of knowledge echoed to the north of the country, and the North Haiti Mission called him to serve as youth and education director in 1965.⁵ While at the mission, he temporarily served as the principal of Toussaint L’ouverture Adventist Academy at Cap-Haïtien.⁶

Another turning point in Elie Saturné Henry’s professional life took place in 1968. He was called to pastoral ministry as the district pastor for the city of Cap-Haïtian covering the territory from Limonade to Acul-du-Nord. His performance in the north was noticed by the South Haiti Mission, who discovered the pastoral gifts of this intellectual giant. Therefore, it did not take long before that mission called him to serve in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, specifically in Pétion-Ville, in 1969.

Elie was ordained to the pastoral ministry in 1972.⁷ He would then reveal himself as a man for every situation both at local churches and in church administration. He became a departmental director and then an executive secretary of South Haiti Mission between 1975-1982.⁸ He was elected president of North Haiti Mission in 1983.⁹ In 1986, he became the health director and then the education director of Franco-Haitian Union Mission. He accepted a call to be a professor in the school of theology during the latter part of his ministry and continued accepting teaching appointments long after his retirement.

Pastor Henry officially retired in 1995 but continued his active church life. He gave 60 years of strong academic and spiritual guidance to the youth of Haiti. He was not just an educator but also a reference consultant any time an issue became so complicated that it required clarification and guidance. He loved to sit on his rocking chair during the last days of his life surrounded with newspapers and books in his home’s front porch, which became ade facto consulting room for those who wrestled with difficult questions.

Later Years

Pastor Elie Saturné Henry was well known for academic rigor. He published two books during his career, one on homiletics and the other on strategic planning. He was a professor who required the best from his students. He gave many generations of pastors an acute awareness of divine service organization. His courses on homiletics and on worship and adoration have impacted many pastors’ thought processes and, consequently, the church liturgy in Haiti. He would admonish his students to use loving words and avoid hurting members’ feelings with inappropriate words and styles.

Pastor Elie Saturné Henry passed away at the Haitian Adventist Hospital at Diquini on December 20, 2015. He succumbed to a series of illnesses, which he had faced with the same courage and faith he had always demonstrated
throughout his life. On December 31, 2015, he was laid to rest at Parc du Souvenir, Tabarre, Haiti, next to his beloved Elvire, who had died 16 years earlier. Haitian government officials, his family, church members, and students spoke words of praise, acknowledgment of his well-lived life, and encouraging words about the future’s eternal life.

**Contribution**

Elie Saturné Henry was an icon of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Haiti. His influence was so impactful that he became a point of reference for the church. Pastor Henry left a permanent mark on the Adventist church in Haiti through his versatility. He is remembered as a powerful and insightful preacher with a captivating voice, amazing the crowds as they were able to hear him when the sound systems failed to work. Pastor Elie Saturné Henry was known for conducting great events, and, with him, any program became an event. He imbued his field sessions with a festive character, leaving this legacy to many generations in the north. He would say that God’s people should rejoice during those meetings because sessions are strong moments in the life of the church, which should not be seen as only an administrative activity.

All those who came in contact with Elie Saturné Henry witnessed his sense of discipline and attachment to church principles. This explains why he was loyal to the organization. He would always teach that all are ministers in God’s service within an organization. Pastor Elie Saturné Henry is still considered a model of pastoral service in Haiti.

**Sources**


**Notes**

1. Church Obituary Bulletin, December 30, 2015, provided by Dr. Elie Henry.
2. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
8. Church Obituary Bulletin, December 30, 2015, provided by Dr. Elie Henry.