



Jim and Nangoye Mainza with children.

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## Mainza, Jim (1881–1949)

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Jim Mainza was a Seventh-day Adventist teacher, colporteur and evangelist in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia).

## His Early Life

Jim Mainza was born in the summer of 1881, the first-born son of Sikabasa (Hikabasa) and his first wife Makwembo.<sup>1</sup> He was born in Northern Rhodesia, northeast of Victoria Falls. The name “Mainza” was given him in reference to the season in which he was born.

Around 1888, Mainza had grown up to be a tall and thin boy who spent most of his time heading cattle.<sup>2</sup> That year, Matabele warriors went into his village on a raiding mission. Nellia Burman Garber suggests that Chief Lobengula of the Matebele people was revenging the death of David Thomas, a brother of the magistrate, who had been killed by his neighbor, Sitwala.<sup>3</sup> Mainza’s mother managed to run away and hid herself in the tall grass. When she discovered that her son was not with her, she went back to surrender herself as a slave to the Matebele invaders so that she could take care of her son.

After several days of marching southward across the Zambezi River, they reached their destination – a small settlement called Nyamandhlovu.<sup>4</sup> They stayed at this place under the custody of a Matebele soldier.<sup>5</sup> After some months in captivity, Makwembo and her son tried to escape, planning to travel at night in order not to be caught. After they had traveled 200 miles, they were recaptured and returned to their former master.

Makwembo told her son that no matter what happened, his father’s name was Hikabasa and he did not belong to the Matebele. She told him to always seek a way to escape from and to go look for his father and relatives.<sup>6</sup> As they’d feared, Mainza and his mother were eventually separated.

In 1896 white settlers conquered the Matebele and the British Government set free all the slaves.<sup>7</sup> After he was freed, Mainza started working for an Irish policeman who spent most of his time drinking. The white man told him that he should not follow in his footsteps but should go to the missionaries and dedicate himself to God. These words motivated him and influenced his future decisions.

## Education and Marriage

Mainza first visited Solusi Mission in 1897 looking for work.<sup>8</sup> During this time the mission cattle were dying of rinderpest, and he joined the people eating the meat of the dead cattle. Elder G. B. Tripp, superintendent of Solusi Mission, hired him to transport his fowls to Bulawayo. Thereafter Mainza worked for a gold mining prospector.<sup>9</sup> He later returned to Solusi to seek an education when W.H. Anderson was the administrator. When Anderson saw his personal appearance as well as the way he was dressed, he thought that if God was able to do something for him, then there was nothing else God would not do. Anderson decided to test the genuineness of Mainza’s request by asking him to dig a well. To Anderson’s surprise, by four in the afternoon, Mainza had finished the work which had previously taken two men the whole day to accomplish.<sup>10</sup>

Anderson was also surprised by Mainza’s diligent studying. He completed the first and second readings. Anderson assigned him and was ready for Bible studies. Mainza needed his own copy of the Bible, but there was

not one at Solusi, so he walked 60 miles to get a Bible from another mission. He memorized substantial portions of Matthew 5 during his journey back.<sup>11</sup>

There are differing views as to how Mainza got the name of "Jim." Mrs. Anderson suggested that the mining prospector gave him the name.<sup>12</sup> Virgil Robinson, however, says it was after Mainza learned about the disciples of Jesus, he named himself James, and American missionaries nicknamed him Jim.<sup>13</sup> On December 1, 1901, Mainza was baptized as the first black convert at Solusi Mission, and from that time he led a consistent Christian life.<sup>14</sup> On November 2, 1902, he married Nangoye, a Shona girl,<sup>15</sup> and he built his home near the Andersons.<sup>16</sup>

## Career and Ministry

Jim Mainza became actively involved in ministry when he started working as a school teacher at Solusi Mission. He used every available opportunity for God's service. While still employed as a teacher at Solusi in 1904, a certain European missionary from another mission society heard Mainza preaching. Two weeks later, the missionary sent the head teacher of his society's institution to Solusi to lure him to his mission, promising that his salary would be tripled. Mainza spent a whole night studying the Bible with the head teacher, and by sunrise he had won a convert.<sup>17</sup>

One of Mainza's persisting longings was to see his father. When Anderson crossed the Zambezi River into Northern Rhodesia in 1903, to search for a site to establish a new mission, Mainza asked that Anderson search for his father.<sup>18</sup> When Anderson returned in 1905 to open Rusangu Mission, he continued the search. One day Anderson heard that a man called Hikabasa lived near Rusangu Mission. He was Mainza's father.<sup>19</sup>

In 1906 Jim Mainza finally traveled to Northern Rhodesia to reunite with his family.<sup>20</sup> When he arrived at Rusangu Mission, Anderson used his wagon to transport Mainza to his parents, and witnessed a touching reunion between Mainza and both his father and his mother.<sup>21</sup> Grateful for the care given his son, Hikabasa gifted Anderson a large ox.

Back in Southern Rhodesia, Mainza was the first to lead students from Bulawayo to Solusi to attend camp meeting. He invited five students to attend a campmeeting at Solusi, and they each joined the church through baptism.<sup>22</sup> Mainza was assigned to head the first Adventist school in the Malungwane area. Soon the school had more than sixty students. Mainza concentrated on biblical studies while his daughter concentrated on ordinary school work. He established more schools with more than fifty students at each.<sup>23</sup>

Literature evangelism enabled the Adventist message to reach certain places where preachers could not go, and Mainza began canvassing in 1911. When he was imprisoned for canvassing without a permit, he resolved to sell his cattle for the necessary funds. When the missionaries saw the depth of his commitment, they gave him the funds he needed. He soon proved an excellent salesman, and over many years of literature ministry, motivated many Africans to join it as well.<sup>24</sup>

Jim Mainza's influence extended from ordinary people to tribal chiefs. When such leaders converted, their subordinates followed their example. One day in 1918, a Solusi student was driven to Baleni Gumbo's home while seeking shelter from a storm. After a brief Bible discussion, Baleni was connected to Mainza. Through a series of Bible studies, Mainza led to baptism Baleni and his wife, plus his two sons and their families, eleven in all.<sup>25</sup> After Baleni was baptized, several church members followed him and accepted Adventism as well. The London Missionary Society disfellowshipped these members.<sup>26</sup> Mainza had planned to use the church on Baleni's property for their worship services, but the Society objected. After the Solusi missionaries consulted with British authorities, Baleni and the new Adventist members were allowed to use the church.<sup>27</sup>

Around 1921, Mainza met and shared his faith with Register Nzula Ndlovu and his mother. Register was a boy who came from a very influential and respected family. After his mother had accepted the message, she determined to have that message grounded into her son. Her son accepted the message and prepared for baptism.<sup>28</sup> Register became a Seventh-day Adventist teacher and minister, and his son, Register Reward Ndhlovu, also became an influential evangelist and church administrator in Zimbabwe.

After serving for many years, Mainza was ordained to the gospel ministry on August 27, 1922.<sup>29</sup> As an ordained pastor, Mainza also spent time serving in his home country of Zambia. In Zambia, while conducting an evangelistic effort near Rusangu Mission in 1922, Jim Mainza brought about the conversion of headman Chikonga.<sup>30</sup> Headman Chikonga was later baptized by Elder Robinson on the second Sabbath of February in 1927.<sup>31</sup>

## Later Life

Mainza came to feel unfairly treated by the church, and returned to his home country, Zambia. Mainza became strongly involved in the political affairs of the country. Many of his friends prayed for him and urged him to get back to church. He finally turned back and made a public apology with bitter tears in Choongo Church, near Monze, and was rebaptized in 1926. Thereafter, Mainza resumed his work of evangelism until he retired. He spent the remainder of his life in Mbeza, his home village in the Southern Province of Zambia. Mainza died in January, 1949.<sup>32</sup>

## Legacy

Courageous, determined, and passionate for the word of God, Mainza "always seemed to drink from God's word as the parched earth does the refreshing showers of rain."<sup>33</sup> An influential educator, his influence was shown by the schools he established and the number of students attracted to his schools.

Mainza also left a legacy through his zeal for preaching and spreading the word of God. H. M. Sparrow asserted at one time that half the congregation at Solusi campmeeting would be converts of Jim Mainza.<sup>34</sup> Virgil Robinson

wrote that Mainza's preaching converted a thousand or more people.<sup>35</sup>

At the first Solusi University graduation ceremony in 1985, when the first candidates received degrees from Andrews University, Dr. Merlen Ogden, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, told the story of Jim Mainza's perseverance. Even "though he faced many obstacles, he became one of the giants of Adventism in the region."<sup>36</sup>

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2. Mrs. W. H. Anderson, "Mayinza", *The Youth's Instructor*, March 8, 1904, 6. (Mrs. Anderson's version of the life of Jim Mainza contains a lot of information that contradicts other sources.)
3. Nellia Burman Garber, "Mfundisi Jim", *The Youth's Instructor*, January 26, 1945, 5.
4. *Ibid.*, 13.

5. Mrs. W. H. Anderson, "Mayinza", *The Youth's Instructor*, March 8, 1904, 6.
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7. Virgil Robinson, *The Solusi Story*, 74.
8. Mrs. W. H. Anderson, "Mayinza", 6; Anderson, "Mayinza Making Good," 262.
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11. *Ibid.*, 263.
12. Mrs. W. H. Anderson, "Mayinza", *The Youth's Instructor*, March 8, 1904, 6.
13. Virgil Robinson, *The Solusi Story*," 75. See also Cornelius Matandiko, *Adventism in Zambia*, Lusaka, Zambia: Zambia Adventist Press, 1903, 82.
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32. Cornelius Matandiko, *Seventh-day Adventism in Zambia*, 84.
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