Raposo, Alberto Fernando (1891–1966)

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Alberto Fernando Raposo was the first ordained Portuguese pastor and the first Portuguese Adventist missionary.

Early Years

Alberto Fernando Raposo was born October 29, 1891, in Lisbon, Portugal, into a middle-class Roman Catholic family. In 1906, he was introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist faith by Clarence Rentfro (1877-1951). Rentfro was the first denominational missionary sent to Portugal in 1904.

Fernando Raposo, Alberto’s father, was a successful businessman and wanted to give his son a helpful education. Since Fernando Raposo had established a warm friendship with Clarence Rentfro, he asked him to teach his son the
English language. Soon the English lessons were filled with spiritual themes. A bond of friendship and spiritual sympathy was established between Clarence Rentfro and Alberto Raposo. Sometime after the beginning of the English lessons, Alberto’s father decided to send him to England in order to perfect his English skills.

In England the young man was entrusted by his father to the care of a Portuguese family that resided in Manchester. But this family was forced to leave the city, and they left Alberto Raposo with another family residing in Manchester. This second family had accepted the Adventist faith and gladly invited their young Portuguese guest to Sabbath services and to youth meetings. Alberto started to study the Bible and decided to accept the Adventist faith. He was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in August 1908, in Manchester, England, by Pastor W. Knight.

Two months later Alberto returned to Portugal and one of his first visits was to Clarence Rentfro. Rentfro was overjoyed when he discovered that his former pupil had already been baptized. However, Alberto’s father was not happy with the decision of his young son. He tried to “sober up” Alberto, but was not successful. In fact, the young man decided to dedicate his life to spreading the Adventist message. In October 1911, he departed for Gland, Switzerland, where he enrolled in the theology course of the Latin Union School. Alberto finished his theology studies in the spring of 1914 and then returned to Portugal.

Early Ministry and Administrative Positions

In 1914 Alberto started his ministry as a colporteur in Oporto, but he was soon assigned to work as junior pastor in Lisbon. Paul Meyer (1886-1945), who was then senior pastor of the Lisbon Church, enjoyed the collaboration with the young Portuguese pastor. On November 30, 1915, Alberto married Bertha Kleist. Tragically, she died from tuberculosis on April 17, 1924. In 1917 Clarence Rentfro departed from Portugal and Paul Meyer assumed the presidency of the Portuguese Mission. Alberto Raposo was then appointed pastor of the Adventist church in Oporto. He remained in that northern city until July 1920. On February 6, 1921, he became secretary-treasurer of the Portuguese Mission, an office he held until August 1933. It was in this capacity that he directed the work of the Portuguese Mission from October 1928 until March 1930 as acting president. Meanwhile, on December 9, 1928, he married Nazaré Velez.

Ordination and Later Years

In September 1933, he was assigned to be the pastor of the Portalegre church. He remained in Portalegre until 1935. At the Portuguese Mission annual session in May 1935, Alberto was ordained to the pastoral ministry. On June 25, 1935, he and his second wife departed for Cape Verde as the first Adventist Portuguese missionary couple. They arrived in the African archipelago on July 16, 1935. Alberto Raposo decided to settle on the Island of Brava, even though he also worked on Fogo Island. After six years of intense missionary activity, a chapel was built and an elementary school opened in Brava. When Raposo departed Cape Verde, he left behind 30 baptized members and 10 baptismal candidates in Brava and 20 baptismal candidates in Fogo.

The Raposo family returned to Portugal in May 1941. Alberto was then elected director of the Madeira Mission. He arrived there with his wife in September 1941 and remained in office until the middle of 1943. From June 1943 to 1949, Raposo was secretary-treasurer of the Portuguese Union and director of the Portuguese Publishing House (Publicadora Atlântico). He authored several booklets, including A Imortalidade à Luz do Texto Sagrado (Immortality in the Light of the Sacred Text), É a Alma Imortal? (Is the Soul Immortal?), A Verdade Divina (The Divine Truth) and Para Onde os Concílios Levam a Igreja? (Whereto are the Councils Leading the Church?). These booklets appear to have played a role in the dissemination of the Adventist message in Portugal at the time.

From October 1950 to October 1952, he was principal of the Portuguese Seminary (Seminário Adventista de Portalegre). From 1953 until 1957 he directed the Portuguese Bible Correspondence Course. Alberto Fernando Raposo retired from active service in 1957 and died September 17, 1966.

Contribution

The contribution of Pastor Alberto Fernando Raposo to the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portugal was significant. He was the first ordained Portuguese pastor and the first Portuguese Adventist missionary, and his writings contributed to the spread of Adventism in his country.

Sources


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