

# Christian, Clarence Dionisio Romig

## (1929-2012)

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### CESARIO ACEVEDO

Cesario Acevedo del Villar, M.A., is a retired president of the Dominican Union Conference. He served the church as pastor, stewardship director, publishing director, and conference secretary and president. He is married to Belkis Alcántara García, and they have three children.

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Clarence Dionisio Romig Christian was an Adventist worker and researcher from Dominican Republic.

### Early Life

Clarence Dionisio Romig Christian was born on June 27, 1929, in San Pedro de Macorís, Dominican Republic. His parents were Corina C. Christian, a Dominican, and Roberto Adolfo Christian, a native of the Caribbean island Antigua. Dionisio was their firstborn, and they had another son, Ismael Adolfo. In 1936, when Dionisio was seven years old, his family moved from San Pedro de Macorís to Trujillo City, now Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic.

One day Luisa Moore, a Seventh-day Adventist, visited Dionisio's house and extended an invitation to attend the Sabbath School at the Mella Avenue Adventist Church. Dionisio had his first contact with the Adventist Church in 1943, at age 14. At that time the Adventist church in the Dominican Republic had 21 organized churches and 1,559 members.<sup>1</sup>

In 1946, while Christian was in his third year of high school at Presidente Trujillo Normal School, he met two classmates, Mario Almonte and Héctor Vinicio Pérez William, both Seventh-day Adventists. In July of that same year, two Adventist laypeople, Napoleón Saad and Federico Comenencia, conducted evangelistic meetings for several evenings. Christian responded to the invitation for personal motives, but soon those motives faded away, his interest changing to full attention.

On August 4, 1946, the Dominican Republic experienced an earthquake of 8.1 surface wave magnitude<sup>2</sup> At the time, Christian was reading about the signs of the end of the world according to Matthew 24, and the experience defined his bond with God.

Christian began to regularly attend the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Mella Avenue, because of the insistent invitation of two young people, Gérmína Savari and Vinicio Pérez. After Bible studies from Leonela González, teacher of the church's baptismal classes, Christian was baptized on September 27, 1947. The ceremony was

officiated by Pastor A. R. Sherman, who, at that time, was serving as president of the Dominican Mission.

## Marriage and Education

Dionisio married Melba María Gómez on February 26, 1950, and had four children. Gómez was a native of Jábaba, Moca, Dominican Republic, and daughter of Santiago Gómez and Virginia Cabrera, descendants of the first Adventist Christians in the town, and founders of the first Adventist congregation in the region and second congregation to become an official church in the country. Gómez was one of the first young women in the region to marry a man from a different region and different skin color. She was a woman of firm convictions that allowed her to succeed in a courtship that broke local traditions.

Christian attended *Colegio de las Antillas* in Cuba, graduating with a baccalaureate degree in theology in 1958. In 1967 he earned a master's degree in religion, and in 1984 a doctorate of ministry, both from Andrews University.<sup>3</sup>

## Career and Ministry

In 1948, Christian volunteered to help in the construction of the *Colegio Adventista Dominicano* in the Herrera Sector of the city of Trujillo. Pastor Samuel Weiss, president of the Dominican Mission, invited Christian to assist in the drafting of some letters. This allowed Pastor Weiss to evaluate him, and he offered Christian a job. On July 19, 1948, Christian began his service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as secretary of the Dominican Mission.

In 1950 Dionisio served as a first to sixth grade schoolteacher in the province of Hato Mayor, located in the eastern region of the Dominican Republic. He was also responsible for the church under the direction of Pastor Juan Rivera. At that time the Dominican Mission had 25 churches and 1,973 members.<sup>4</sup>

In 1951 Christian, along with his wife and their newborn daughter, moved to Barahona, in the southern region of the country, to serve as an elementary teacher and as an assistant to Pastor Wenceslao Adolfo Moretta. After finishing the school year, he was asked to return to the capital city to be director of *Escuela Radio Postal* and assistant pastor of the district that included the central church of Mella Avenue, the church of Villa Duarte, and other groups.

In 1958, Christian was extended a call to serve as pastor of District 5, in the eastern region of the Dominican Republic, based in the province of San Pedro de Macorís. Then, in 1959, Pastor Dionisio was transferred to District 1, based in the city of Trujillo, which included the churches of Villa Duarte and Avenida Mella. During this period he taught courses for *Colegio de las Antillas*, then located in the Dominican Republic due to Cuba's political unrest.

In 1962 Christian served as director of the youth and the education departments of the Dominican Mission, when the church had 3,998 members nationwide.<sup>5</sup> He held this position until August 1, 1963, when the mission became a conference.

On August 3, 1963, Dionisio Christian was ordained in the city of Trujillo. The ceremony was officiated by Pastor C. L. Powers, president of the Inter-American Division, who extended him an invitation to serve in the Central American Union as the director of youth and education of the Panamá Conference.

In 1967, Christian served as professor of Bible and Ministerial training at the Vocational College of Central America in Alajuela, Costa Rica, known today as *Universidad Adventista de Centro America*.<sup>6</sup> In 1969 he was called to be president of Honduras Mission.<sup>7</sup> He was then called as director of youth, education, and temperance of the Central American Union in Guatemala.

In 1971 Pastor Christian was appointed director of lay activities and Sabbath school for Antillian Union Mission in Puerto Rico.

In 1972 Pastor Christian was elected secretary of the new Antillian Union Conference for the territories of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.<sup>8</sup> This position was held until 1975, when he was called to serve as director of lay activities for the Inter-American Division. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to be director of the youth department of the division, a position that he held until December 1976.

On January 1, 1977, at the first session of Antillian Union Conference held in Sonador, Dominican Republic, Pastor Christian was appointed president of the Antillian Union Conference.<sup>9</sup> In 1984 he also taught master level courses for Andrews University at West Indies College in Mandeville, Jamaica.

In 1985 Christian was appointed field secretary of the Inter-American Division. This new responsibility allowed him to be, among other responsibilities, vice-chairman of the governing board of Montemorelos University!<sup>10</sup>

In June 1990 Christian was elected director of religious freedom and public affairs and education, and associate director of the Inter-American Division, positions he held until 1991.<sup>11</sup> He retired in 1991 after 44 years of service to the church.

## Contributions and Death

Pastor Dionisio Christian “provided insight and vision for the work in Inter-America.”<sup>12</sup> Through the years, he wrote three books, *El Líder: Dones y Funciones*; *Senderos de Fé, Ánimo, y Esperanza*; and *En las Manos del Todopoderoso*. He helped establish management processes in the Dominican Republic and in Puerto Rico, contributing and implementing the research and findings of his doctoral dissertation: “Developing and Implementing a Program of Instruction for Church Administrators and Ministers of the Antillian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to Enlarge their Understanding of the Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts as It Relates to Their Roles and Functions.”<sup>13</sup>

Pastor Dionisio Christian died April 1, 2012, at Florida Hospital Heartland in Sebring, Florida, United States.

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## NOTES

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