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Curdy, Joseph (1862–1947)

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Joseph Curdy was a writer, editor, evangelist, educator, pastor, and church administrator from Switzerland.

Early Years

Joseph Curdy was born in 1862 to Roman Catholic parents in the Swiss canton of Valais. In his 20's while he was a traveling carpenter in Tramelan, he came in touch with the Adventist community. In 1884, he joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church by baptism. Later he worked as a writer and editor in the Adventist publishing house at Basel.

Pioneer Work: Geneva

In 1888 Curdy married Amélie Jaquet.¹ Two years later Curdy was instrumental in the opening of the first Adventist French workers' school in Europe at Neuchâtel, Switzerland.² While he taught general history, he also served as director of the school.³ In 1891, he moved with his family from La Chaux-de-Fonds to take charge of the city mission in Geneva. At that time, Adventists viewed Geneva as "one of those cosmopolitan portals through which all nations pass."⁴ Curdy's work facilitated gradual but successful conversions to Adventism in that city. That same year, he served as the secretary of the Central European Conference.⁵ Concurrently, he worked as departmental officer (Sabbath School, publishing) for the conference.⁶ In 1894 Curdy fought a bitter literary struggle against the Swiss national law of rest ("Sunday Peace"), which he branded "inquisition."⁷

Pioneer Missionary: Italy, Belgium, France

In 1895, the General Conference began publishing *Signs of the Times* in French as *Les Signes des Temps*, with Curdy as editor.⁸ The following year, he was ordained to the ministry. From 1900 to 1902, he joined J. D. Geymet in the mission work in the Waldensian Piedmont valleys Torre Pellice; they were the only two workers in Italy at the time.⁹ While in the mountains of Torre Pellice, he pursued mission work mainly among the French-speaking people, resulting in some Sabbath keepers.¹⁰ In October 1902, with his appointment as superintendent of the French mission field, Curdy moved to France to continue the work of that field.¹¹ While there, he developed an interest in working among the Italians.¹²

In 1903, at a time when the Seventh-day Adventist mission was still at its grassroots in the French speaking area of Belgium, Curdy was sent to direct denominational mission activities in that country.¹³ Before he arrived in Belgium, C. Grin had been in charge of the mission since 1902 but died soon after.¹⁴ Soon the first baptisms occurred.¹⁵

In 1907, Curdy was elected president of the Roman-Swiss Conference/French Swiss Conference¹⁶ (covering the French and Italian speaking parts of Switzerland).¹⁷ He remained president until 1910.¹⁸ From 1910 onwards, he became superintendent of the Northern France Mission¹⁹ and looked after the work in France and Switzerland.

Educator and Missionary: Canada

After the death of his wife, Amélie, he married Emma Clerc in 1920.²⁰ In September 1920²¹ Curdy was transferred to Ontario, Canada, as dean²² of the French Department at Oshawa Missionary College. The French Department was the centre of education for the French workers of the Adventist Church, established by the General Conference. At that time, according to Curdy, the College was "the only one in North America with a French department teaching not only French grammar, but teaching Bible, History, etc., and giving the future French missionary the equipment he needs to enter the French field without any loss of time."²³ At the college, Curdy taught Old Testament, rhetoric and science classes.²⁴ His brother, E. A. Curdy, was also a teacher at the college. While in Canada, he continued to serve as the editor of the *Les Signes des Temps*.²⁵ In addition to his work at the college, he also carried out evangelistic activities in Montreal and Richmond (Quebec).²⁶ In addition, he also served as editor (1921) of the *Le Messager Franco-Américain*, the official paper of the French department of the college.²⁷

Later Years

In 1928, the Curdys returned to Switzerland, where he started working again as a pastor in Lausanne.²⁸ After almost fifty years of working for the denomination, he retired in 1933.²⁹ Eloquent and well informed in biblical matters, he memorized a number of biblical books. In his evangelistic efforts, he took a special interest on the topics of sanctification and Christian life style. Curdy died in 1947 in England.

Contribution

Joseph Curdy's contribution to the Adventist church is seen in his work as editor, translator, evangelist, pastor, church administrator and educator. He was an instrumental force in the early stages of the growth of Adventism in French-speaking Europe. As a pioneer mission worker in Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, France and some areas of Canada, he helped establish the Seventh-day Adventist message as well as planting new churches wherever he worked.

As a church educator, he contributed to the educational and spiritual development of French speaking church

workers. As a long-time translator for the church and editor of the French *Signs of the Times*, he contributed to the literary force that was needed for the early Adventist ministry in Europe and in reaching several French-speaking regions of the world.

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NOTES

1. "Curdy, Joseph," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996, second revised edition), 424.?
2. Jean Vuilleumier, "The French Department of Oshawa Missionary College," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 25, 1920, 30.?
3. Ole A. Olson. "Notes by the Way," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 12, 1893, 586.?
4. "The Year's Work in Foreign Fields: Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1891," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1892), 66.?
5. See a report of the annual session by H. P. Holser and Joseph Curdy, "Central European Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 28, 1890, 668.?
6. See "Central Europe" and "Central European Publishing House," in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1892), 37, 40.?
7. Daniel Heinz, "Curdy Joseph," TMS., ND.?
8. "Proceedings of the Meetings of the General Conference Committee," *General Conference Bulletin*, April 1895, 518, General Conference Archives, accessed, July 12, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/GCSessionBulletins/GCB1895-02.pdf>.?
9. See short report by him in 1901, "Italy" in "Central European Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 17, 1901, 818 (10).?
10. *The Bible Echo*, July 17, 1902, 223. Mention is made of Curdy's report about the difficulty of finding a suitable place of worship. He also mentions the fact that the region only had two workers for more than thirty million people who were predominantly Catholic. See "Brief Mention," *The Missionary Magazine*, March 1902, 144.?
11. Joseph Curdy, "Central European Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 26, 1902, 10-11.?
12. "Doings of European General Conference," *General Conference Bulletin*, April 9, 1901, 160.?
13. Ludwig R. Conradi, "The Latin Union Meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 24, 1903, 9.?
14. See M. Ellsworth Olsen, *Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926, second edition), 615.?
15. In 1904/1905, Curdy reported of five baptisms in connection with the church of Jemeppe at Liege. This brought the total number of Adventist believers to twenty-two. See B. G. Wilkinson, "The Latin Union Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 8, 1905, 20.?
16. While the *Yearbooks* of 1908, 1909, 1910 refer to it as the Roman-Swiss Conference, in the GC Bulletin of 1909, it is referred to as the French Swiss Conference. See "French-Swiss Conference," *The General Conference Bulletin*, May 26, 1909, 165.?
17. L. P. Tieche, "Switzerland," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 8, 1908, 18.?
18. Guy Dail, "In the Roman-Swiss Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 21, 1909, 14.?
19. "Year Book Revisions," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 9, 1916, 21.?
20. "Curdy, Joseph," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia*, 424.?
21. See the announcement in "French Educational Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 30, 1920, 28.?
22. An old Adventist paper regarded the position as head of department, others, as dean. Curdy took over from Jean Vuilleumier, see Vuilleumier, "The French Department of Oshawa Missionary College," 30.?
23. Joseph Curdy, "French Department," *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, June 12, 1927, 14-15.?
24. See "The French Department at O.M.C.," *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, November 23, 1920, 4.?
25. See "Missionary work among the French," *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, May 16, 1922, 4.?
26. For Montreal, see Joseph Curdy, "The French Effort in Montreal," *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, September 13, 1927, 5-6; and for Richmond, see L. F. Passebois, "Work among the French Canadians," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 4, 1921, 18.?
27. "A New French Paper," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 14, 1921, 24.?
28. General Conference Committee Minutes, January 2, 1928, 520, General Conference Archives, accessed, June 26, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1928.pdf>; "Swiss Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1929), 368.?

29. In 1933, Curdy was listed as an honorary (retired) minister. Perhaps he continued working as a pastor for some time. "Swiss Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald).?

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