

# Anderson, Roy Allan (1895–1985)

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## ROSS GOLDSTONE

Ross Goldstone, M.A. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 1998 as Senior Pastor, Avondale Memorial Church, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia. New Zealand born, Goldstone has served the Church as a pastor, Conference Youth Director, teacher, and Sessional Lecturer at Avondale College. He has authored nine books relating to Adventist history, including *The Angel Said Australia*. He is also co-author of four other books on Adventist history in Australasia. In retirement Ross Goldstone continues to research and write Adventist Church history.

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Roy Allan Anderson gained global recognition within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church as an illustrious evangelist, a gifted musician with a fine bass voice, talented writer, theologian, and an educator of ministers.

## Early Life

Roy Allan Anderson was born in Melbourne, Australia, on March 15, 1895.<sup>1</sup> He was the second son of Pastor Albert and Mrs. Margaret Anderson. His siblings were Albert Mendelsohn, Doris Estelle (later Mrs. Cooper), and twin brothers, Clifford Russell and Ormond Keith.<sup>2</sup> His parents joined the SDA Church as a result of attending the first Australian SDA camp meeting (1894) in Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> In 1898 Albert Anderson was appointed as the resident Adventist minister in Tasmania.<sup>4</sup> Being only 3 years old at the time, Roy would have had little memory of his stay in that southern state. His parents were transferred to Warburton, where his father's talents as a writer and administrator were devoted to becoming the editor of the *Australian Signs of the Times*, and *Life and Health*.<sup>5</sup> It was in this rural country village that Roy spent his boyhood years and where, at the age of 13, he was baptized by his father.<sup>6</sup> Writing of his early childhood, Anderson stated, "I was born into the home of a minister where daily family worship was observed. I was present on the opening day of the first church [primary] school opened in Australia. While far from perfect in those tender years I never knew a time when I did not love the Lord. I cannot give the date of my conversion."<sup>7</sup>



Roy A. Anderson

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

At the age of 13, Roy began working at the Signs Publishing Company where his father was a manager. He worked there until 1916 when he was 21 years of age.<sup>8</sup> At the age of 17, Roy, an accomplished trumpet player, had organized his first brass band. It had upwards of 50 instrumentalists.<sup>9</sup> His talents as a musician later played an important part in his evangelistic campaigns and ministry.

While attending the Australasian Missionary College in Cooranbong, New South Wales, between 1916 and 1918,<sup>10</sup> Roy met his future wife, Myra Elsa Wendt, who had been born on April 30, 1901, in Brisbane.<sup>11</sup> They were married on the afternoon of August 11, 1920, in the South Brisbane Seventh-day Adventist Church. Pastor Marriot was the officiating minister.<sup>12</sup>

## Evangelism in New Zealand and Australia

On entering the ministry, Roy Allan Anderson quickly demonstrated a gift for public evangelism. He began his ministry in August 1919 in South Australia<sup>13</sup> before transferring in 1920 to the North Island of New Zealand,<sup>14</sup> preaching in Wanganui and Hastings/Napier. He was ordained to the ministry at the Wanganui camp meeting on December 27, 1924.<sup>15</sup> His evangelistic meetings in Hastings were conducted in the SDA church, arousing interest among the businessmen of the town and resulting in a number of baptisms.<sup>16</sup> It was in Gisborne that his flair for the public platform really became apparent. After two years of intensive evangelism, a new church had to be built to house the new converts.<sup>17</sup> Pastor Laurence Naden was one of the Gisborne converts.<sup>18</sup> He later became the president of the Australasian Division.

At the Union Conference Session in September 1926, Anderson was transferred to the Queensland Conference.<sup>19</sup> He conducted a city evangelistic campaign in Brisbane, commencing on Sunday evening, May 29, 1927. Two announcements were placed in the *Brisbane Courier*, the topic being, "The Fermenting East and the World's Great Need."<sup>20</sup>

Supported by a team of ministers, including his brother Clifford, this campaign continued every week for more than two years, featuring multi-exposure techniques. Over two hundred persons were baptized, and almost 20 million summaries of sermons were circulated through newspapers.<sup>21</sup> A public baptism conducted in a portable font on stage attracted the attention of the press as far abroad as New Zealand.<sup>22</sup> With the world moving toward the great depression and increasing unemployment, many were seeking answers and turning toward God. Roy's programs were providing the answers that many needed. Not only did his preaching draw and hold his audiences, but the choir and Roy's own musical presentations as a bass soloist added atmosphere to each session. Such was the audience appreciation that freewill offerings virtually covered the expenses of the two-year program.<sup>23</sup>

On July 9, 1928, the Loyal Orange Institution of Queensland held its anniversary march and assembly in the Brisbane Exhibition Hall. Anderson was the invited speaker and addressed the audience of five thousand,

supported by his 100-voice choir and orchestra. The *Brisbane Courier* reported that “the service was fully choral and too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the splendid work of the special choir. The voices were admirably blended, and the volume of sound was most artistically modulated.”<sup>24</sup>

## Evangelism in England

From 1930 to 1936, at the request of the General Conference, Roy and his brother Clifford conducted successful evangelistic series in England, under the auspices of the South England Conference.<sup>25</sup> These were the years of the great depression. Despite considerable resistance to the messages, large crowds were attracted to Roy’s preaching.<sup>26</sup> Several programs were conducted throughout the northern districts of London, creating a problem of nurturing the subsequent interested persons.<sup>27</sup> In 1935, Ealing, an outer suburb of London, became the focus of Roy’s evangelistic endeavors, and 2,300 people crowded into the Forum Theatre on October 27, 1935, with many more seeking entrance.<sup>28</sup>

## Evangelism in California and Jamaica

In 1936 Roy began another era in his ministry. He moved to California and was associated with La Sierra College students conducting evangelistic campaigns in surrounding ethnic communities.<sup>29</sup> In 1938 he was appointed the head of the Bible Department at the college while maintaining his evangelistic emphasis. During the 1939 college vacation, Roy was invited to run a school of evangelism in Kingston, Jamaica. Each morning he gave instruction in evangelistic techniques and content to the assembled Jamaican pastors. The public evening meetings were held in a packed theater in the center of the city that seated between 1,300 and 1,400 persons. Many were left standing, and crowds spilled over into the streets. Night by night the attendances grew and resulted in 105 baptisms, with a further 160 persons in a baptismal class. Anderson described the campaign as “one of the most interesting experiences of my life.”<sup>30</sup>

From July 30 to August 25, 1940, Anderson participated in a significant Bible and History Teachers’ Council in Takoma Park, Washington. The aim of the council was to ensure that Bible courses in SDA colleges were evangelistic, encouraging students to be equipped for soul winning.<sup>31</sup>

He continued for another year and a half lecturing at La Sierra College while at the same time conducting evangelistic campaigns. His lectures were always practical, often comparing evangelism to the art of fishing.<sup>32</sup> He remained at La Sierra until he was appointed as an associate secretary of the Ministerial Association in Washington, D.C. His name first appeared on the masthead of *The Ministry* magazine in the February 1942 issue.

<sup>33</sup>

## The General Conference Ministerial Association Years

As an associate in the Ministerial Association, Roy had the opportunity to travel to various countries of the world conducting schools of evangelism. While a part of the Ministerial Association, he also taught classes in evangelism and pastoral studies at the SDA Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. The field schools were extensions of the classes he taught at the seminary.

Anderson conducted field schools in the Australasian Union Conference in 1946. At this time, the concept of an internship for ministerial employees was introduced. An internship for all ministers later became policy in the South Pacific Division.<sup>34</sup> While in Australia, Anderson was preparing the manuscript for his classic in pastoral evangelism, *The Shepherd Evangelist*. This book was to become a textbook for many SDA ministers in training.<sup>35</sup>

At the 1950 General Conference Session, Roy Allan Anderson was appointed the general secretary of the Ministerial Association.<sup>36</sup> With this appointment also came editorial leadership in *The Ministry* magazine. He carried these responsibilities for the next 16 years. As the first experienced evangelist to be appointed to this position, evangelism in all its forms became the key thrust of the Ministerial Association under his leadership.

Two significant events of a theological nature occurred during his years of leadership. The first was the 1952 Bible Conference held in the Sligo SDA Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, September 1–13, 1952. This was the most significant Bible Conference in the SDA Church since 1919. It was deemed that the worldwide spread and growth of the SDA Church warranted the study and affirmation of SDA doctrine, and to this end over four hundred delegates were brought together to give intensive biblical study to the verities of SDA faith and doctrine.<sup>37</sup> The papers presented at this Bible Conference were published in the two-volume work *Our Firm Foundation*.<sup>38</sup>

The second major event that defined the ministry of Roy Allan Anderson as the general secretary of the Ministerial Association was the discussion he and other church leaders held with Walter Martin, which culminated with the publishing of the book *Questions on Doctrine*. The book contains answers to theological issues raised during the discussions with Martin. Though some have disagreed with a certain doctrinal emphasis contained in this publication, it has met wide acceptance for its theological clarification of debated doctrinal issues within the SDA Church.<sup>39</sup>

While encouraging his theological students to gain a good education in preparation for ministry, Anderson engaged in tertiary studies himself. In the years 1939–1941 he had undertaken graduate studies at the University of Southern California.<sup>40</sup> These studies were put on hold at the time of his General Conference appointment. However, in recognition of his contribution to Adventist theology and missiology, he was granted a doctorate of divinity by Andrews University in 1964.<sup>41</sup>

Anderson strongly believed in team evangelism, and whenever possible, he advocated keeping the team together from crusade to crusade. He conducted his programs in some of the world's largest cities, including New York, Cleveland, London, and Tokyo. Music was always a feature of his campaigns. He would form choirs of

between 100 and 200 members, many of the participants being from outside the SDA communion. Statistics showed that 95 percent of these singers became baptized Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>42</sup>

## Later Life

Anderson retired in 1966 but continued teaching at Loma Linda University until 1980, after which he concentrated on writing. *Preachers of Righteousness, The God-Man, God's Unique Love For You, You Can Be True, Love Finds a Way, A Better World, Secrets of the Spirit World, Unfolding the Revelation, Unfolding the Prophecies of Daniel, Faith That Conquers Fear, and All Eyes on Israel* were titles that came from his pen, together with numerous articles published in *The Ministry* and other SDA publications.<sup>43</sup> He was survived by his wife, Myra, and their two children, Allan W. Anderson and Tui Myra Anderson (White) and their families, after his death on December 12, 1985,<sup>44</sup> in Loma Linda, California, United States of America.<sup>45</sup>

Myra Elsa Anderson died on October 11, 2005, at the age of 104.<sup>46</sup>

## Legacy

Christian education commenced for Roy Allan Anderson as a young boy in one of the first Australian Seventh-day Adventist primary schools in a backyard shed in Warburton, Australia.<sup>47</sup> From this humble beginning, under the blessing of God, he became a world leader in educating ministers in pastoral evangelism, modelling what he wrote in *The Shepherd Evangelist*. Affectionately known as "The Chief" in his later years, he constantly challenged his fellow ministers with his call for evangelism, revival, and reformation. As a Bible scholar, he revealed a penchant for relating to ministers of other Christian faiths and took a leading role in interfaith discussions, leading to the publication of the book *Questions on Doctrine*.

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