

IMPLANTATION AND GROWTH OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH IN RWANDA (1919-2000)

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that “Implantation and Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda (1919-2000)” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this research, I have attempted to show how the Seventh-day Adventist Church originated in America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following a spiritual revival centered on the eschatology propounded by the Millerite Movement, which proclaimed the return of Christ in 1844. After the disappointment and the defection of its members, the remainder formed the nucleus of Adventists. They believed in the mission to proclaim the Second Coming of Jesus to the world, without fixing the dates.

The Adventists reached Europe and from there Rwanda in the persons of two missionaries during 1919. In spite of various difficulties, they founded three mission stations to be used as a base for their growth. They integrated faith in education and medical work while, in particular, involving laity in evangelism, which was the key to their success.

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## SUMMARY

After eighty eight years of the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Rwanda, it has already made history in the evangelization and development of the country. The present research has permitted a study of this church, although incomplete, like any human work. Indeed, owing to a lack of time and adequate means, it was not possible to cover every aspect. However, we believe that this research will have made this church known to those who did not previously know it at all or even only vaguely, by informing them with regards to its implantation and growth. It was interesting to know and understand its methods of evangelism which were the origin of its success, in spite of the difficult times endured.

It is obvious that “The effectiveness of the church’s message and mission is not just determined by its numerical growth and geographical advance, nor by its institutional strength and organizational structures, its financial resources and its universal presence in the world. Rather, the effectiveness of the church’s ministry is measured by the way it has changed people and influenced society” (Oosterwall 1980:3). Such was the reality for the Adventist church in Rwanda. It has helped people to change their life as well as the society around them,. by means of the fellowship it has created and the service it has rendered to Rwandans, in spite of its experience of the 1994 genocide.

The present research, as a basic document, will be also useful to future researchers. To the Adventists, this implication will enable them to know and like their church better. They will be inspired by the methods used by their predecessors and will improve them for the future and better continuity of the church.

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## PREFACE

I was born in an Adventist home and have worked in this church for thirty years now. During this time, I became interested and enthusiastic to know of its past, especially in Rwanda where it flourished, being second only to the Roman Catholic Church in membership.

Since I am a member of this church, I realized that its degree of success attracts interest in its origin. It has also been said by Ralph Barton Perry that: "The chief source of spiritual nourishment for any nation must be its own past, perpetually discovered and renewed" (Harold 1946:9). This same principle is true for the church, and therein lies the reason for this research.

To relate the entire account of Adventism in Rwanda is not easy. The beginnings cannot be fully recaptured. The pioneers are no longer with us to give their first hand reports. Unfortunately, they made no systematic effort to collect and safeguard official documents, minutes of committees, photographs and correspondence. Nevertheless, however difficult it may be, the story of Adventism in Rwanda must be told to the world, but, first of all to the members of the Adventist Church, many of whom possess only vague ideas about the history of their church. They might know that Adventism originated in the United States, somehow arrived in their country, and possessed particular characteristics such as its methods of evangelization and beliefs, especially regarding the Sabbath, which constituted its pillar, whereas other Christian churches observed the Sunday as the holy day. Beyond that, many know very little about the growth and development of their church in Rwanda. This entire situation motivated me to carry out the present research.

In writing this history, I tried to avoid fanaticism and subjectivity, which was not very easy. However, I hope that this study, which is the first attempt regarding the Adventist Church of Rwanda, will serve as a basis for future researchers.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABAE	: Association des Bienfaiteurs Adventistes pour l'évangélisation (Association of Adventist Benefactors for Evangelization)
AD	: Anno Domini (After Christ)
APROSOMA	: Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse (Association for the Social Promotion of the Masses)
ADRA	: Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AHA	: African Humanitarian Action
BC	: Before Christ
CRA	: Central Rwanda Association
DRC	: Democratic Republic of Congo
FAPADES	: Association des parents Adventistes pour le Développement de l'Enseignement Supérieur (Adventist parents association for higher education)
ERA	: East Rwanda Association
GC	: General Conference
MRND	: Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (National Revolutionary Movement for Development)
NGO	: Non Government Organization
NRA	: North Rwanda Association
NURC	: National Unity and Reconciliation Committee
PARMEHUTU	: Party of the Movement and of Hutu Emancipation
RPF	: Rwanda Patriotic Front
RUM	: Rwanda Union Mission
SDA	: Seventh-Day Adventist
SRA	: South Rwanda Association
UNAMIR	: United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda

UNHCR : United Nation High Commission for Refugees  
USA : United States of America  
USD : United States Dollar  
WCC : World Council of Churches  
WRA : West Rwanda Association

## INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, which came into being in the USA (1860), was viewed doubtfully by all the social and religious leaders of that time. It was considered to be a small sect of a few hundred believers who were scattered across the northwestern states of America. They were ridiculed and rejected because of their strange claims and beliefs. Most of the members were poor, lower-class people. Not many were powerful or of noble birth. Numerically, socially and economically, they were one of the least of the many religious movements that arose in North America at that time.

Currently, however, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, within a comparatively short time, has experienced tremendous expansion and growth throughout the world. In just one century, this Church has grown from a small community of 6000 believers in 1874, when the first American Seventh-day Adventist missionary was sent abroad, to a worldwide church of 16 000 000 (Knight 2008:21). It was the most widespread of all Protestant denominations, the largest of all Protestant missionary societies, with the greatest number of missionaries in the field (Oosterwall 1980:1).

From an American-based and oriented sect, it has grown to become a universal Church, well established in about 90 percent of all the countries of the world (Oosterwall 1980:2). It embraces people of many different cultures, ethnic origins, and languages.

Since its beginning, this Church has been characterized by a remarkable organization, message and mission. Thus, it has helped people through the love, peace and fellowship it has brought. Millions of people have been brought to God and have found a new meaning in life amidst the turmoil and confusion of our day.

In many areas where the Seventh-day Adventist missions have been active, a whole new work ethic has developed which has brought new economic growth and prosperity. The Church has led in agricultural development, stimulated national school reforms, and contributed greatly to community development.

In less than 88 years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda has grown from a mere handful of members to approximately 400 000 members today (Rwanda Union Mission statistics). According to the 2002 National Census (2004:22), this church had achieved the second position after the Catholic Church. The ratio of Adventists was 1/21 of the total population.

However, as in its initial years in America, this Church is not recognized as it should be by Rwandans. The work it has accomplished by means of evangelism and social development is not well known to the public, not even to most of its members. The question that arises is: How has this Church successfully achieved its mission? The purpose of this research is to seek out the scattered information and documents, analyze them, and reconstruct the events, so that the planting and growth of this Church may be better known.

In the first chapter, the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be traced. In fact, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, revivals and awakening movements with emphasis on eschatology were witnessed across North America. The most important of these was the Millerite Movement; it was named after its leader, William Miller (1782-1849), who came from the Baptist Church. After he read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, the verse Daniel 8:14 retained his attention. The verse said: "It will take 2300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated" (*New International Version*). According to Ezekiel 4:6: "I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year"; Miller therefore concluded that 2300 days were equivalent to 2300 years, and the sanctuary was to be reconsecrated by the second coming of Jesus to earth, at the end of this period. While he was reading Daniel 9:25, he understood that this prophetic era began in 457 BC when the decree by Artaxerxes was issued to

Ezra, a Jewish priest. This decree concerned the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 7:12-28). Miller then proclaimed that Jesus would come to bring all his saints with him sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844 (Amorim 1990:9). People believed him and preached this message with energy. Many Christians left their denominations and joined the movement. Unfortunately, Christ did not return at the end of this period. This was the first disappointment experienced by the Millerites.

Some months later, another Millerite, Samuel Snow (a Congregationalist), came up with a date, arguing that Miller had made an error about the decree. He said that the prophecy would have terminated in the spring of 1844, had the decree of Artaxerxes been issued on the first day of 457 B.C. Since the decree had not been issued until the fall of that year, the 2300-day prophecy could not end until the fall of 1844. This coincided with the idea that the 2300 days would end in the fall, for the tenth day of the seventh month in 1844, would arrive on October 22 of the Jewish Karaite year. He then concluded that Jesus would come on that date. He began to preach and convinced many Christians, William Miller too. Once again Christ did not return as expected. This was a great disappointment. As a result, many were ashamed and went back to their churches. By that time the Millerites were known as Adventists because they were waiting for the second advent of Jesus.

However, a small group of Millerites assumed the error, continued to search the Bible and discovered that their interpretation of the prophecy was wrong. Instead of cleansing the earth, Christ had entered the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary at that time, where he ministers on behalf of His people (Hebrew 8:1, 2). The group also discovered that the fourth commandment, which recommended the observance of the Sabbath, was not being respected. They kept it and became Sabbath observers.

Aided by Ellen G White, whom they believed possessed a gift of prophecy, they formed the nucleus of the future Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1863, the

church was officially organized. Step by step, the church fixed its beliefs according to the Bible and the financial system was based on tithes and offerings from the church members.

Chapter two considers the Seventh-day Adventists' great commission as found in Matthew 28:19, 20. This commission was to spread the gospel all over the world. However, some church leaders insisted that all people, race, and countries were already represented in the USA and hence it was not necessary to evangelize beyond the continent. Eventually, they realized that this was not accurate and decided to send missionaries abroad. John Nevins Andrews was officially sent to Europe as the first missionary on August 14, 1874, which also marked the beginning of the missionary era of the Church in Australia, Africa, South America, and Asia.

The Seventh-day Adventist missionary approaches were based on publications distributed in new territories by colporteurs, and all the institutions established by the church were connected to missionary work.

In accomplishing its mission, the church encountered problems owing to dissidents from within. They were opposed to church teachings, particularly the gift of prophecy exercised by Ellen G. White. Fortunately, these dissidents lost their influence upon members, mainly because the church adopted a non-confrontational attitude, which reduced the tensions (Amorim 1990:49). Many of the dissidents disappeared.

Chapter three focuses on the implantation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda from 1919 to 1931, which will be preceded by a discussion of its geographical, historical, and religious background. Rwanda is an overpopulated small country in Central Africa which was colonized by another small country, Belgium. The ethnic history of this country is important because it has caused trouble on several occasions. In fact, there were three groups, the majority Hutu and the minority Tutsi, and a small number of Twa. The minority Tutsi ruled the

country through their kingships for several centuries. The monarch instituted the “ubuhake” system, which was an agreement by which the Hutu obtained the use of Tutsi cattle and in return rendered services to him.

In 1923, Rwanda became a mandated territory of the League of Nations under the supervision of Belgium. During this time, the Belgians favored the Tutsi who ruled the Kingdom. At the same time, the Belgians concluded that the abuses of the feudal system would have to be eliminated step by step. This situation drastically damaged the relationship between Hutu and Tutsi. When in 1949 Rwanda was made a Trust Territory in charge of Belgium, a series of reforms in the economic, education, and administrative sectors were put in place. The church favored the Hutu counter-elite and organized it with the assistance of propaganda distributed through *Kinyamateka*, a Catholic periodical. The result was the creation of the Hutu Social Movement and the publication of the “Manifesto of the Bahutu” (Nyrop 1969:17). On the other hand, the Tutsi created “The Rwanda National Union”, which was hostile to the Belgians. The conflict was now in the open.

In October 1959, Gregoire Kayibanda, who was the editor of *Kinyamateka*, transformed the Hutu Social Movement into a political party, the “Party of the Hutu Emancipation”, which campaigned for the termination of the feudal system. The Movement brought the Hutu into conflict with the Tutsi who left their country for neighboring ones. The Hutu victory owed much to Belgian support which led to the independence of the country in 1962, with G. Kayibanda as the first Hutu president.

Before the arrival of the missionaries, Rwandans had a system of worshipping God, called “Imana”. They believed that He was placed over all the gods they venerated, like the spirits of dead ancestors, which they believed continued to live after death, under another forms (Byilingiro 2002:48). When the Catholic missionaries arrived in 1900, they considered this cult as pagan. They challenged it and overcame it because Christianity was finally accepted.



The Roman Catholic missionaries arrived at Nyanza, the capital of the Kingdom of Rwanda, on February 2, 1900 (Nahimana 1987:57). Their main strategy was to convert the King, with the hope that the population would follow his example. Unfortunately, King Musinga resisted the message. The missionaries, helped by the Belgian Governor, decided to exile him to the southwestern part of the country and proclaimed Rudahigwa as the new king because he had accepted becoming a Christian. Thus the expected mass conversions followed, to satisfy the king and missionaries.

From 1907, various Protestant churches joined the Catholics as missionaries. These were the Lutherans, Baptists, Anglicans, Pentecostals, and Methodists.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church mission was begun in Rwanda after the First World War (1919), by a Belgian soldier, David Elie Delhove, and a Swiss, Henri Monnier. They first occupied the abandoned German Protestant mission stations of Kirinda and Remera in the western part of Rwanda. However, when the former missionaries decided to come back to reoccupy their mission stations, the Adventists were obliged to seek places where they could build their own mission stations.

In 1921, D. Elie Delhove was offered a place called Gitwe, not far from Nyanza, the former Capital. There he implanted the first Adventist mission station in Rwanda. The same year, Henri Monnier opened the Rwankeri Mission station in the north. Later in 1931, the third mission station was implanted at Ngoma, in the western, by Dr Sturges and A. Matter. These three mission stations served as the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda and were strategically located. In fact, they enabled the church to easily reach other parts of the country.

People responded to the Adventist message step by step because it was different in some aspects from that of the other churches. Adventists asked

people to keep the Sabbath instead of Sunday, not to drink alcoholic beverages, and not to smoke.

The fourth chapter will deal with the growth of the church after its implantation (1933-1994). The Adventist Church remained a dynamic and rapidly growing church in Rwanda as a result of the mission to increase its membership and to establish new congregations in order to fulfill the mandate given by Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47). Among the complex factors which made its growth rapid were:

- A mobilized laity: Adventist believers were the prime factor in winning people to become disciples of Christ, the result of spontaneous witnessing by the believers at work, in organizing open-air meetings (“*amavuna*” in Kinyarwanda) and home visitation.
- The educational approach: establishing schools at every mission station because the church believed that the work of education and redemption was one, thus integrating faith into education by emphasizing Bible studies. The schools served as agencies to transmit knowledge and win souls.
- The church combined health services with evangelism. In fact the concept was that people in good health could better understand and do God’s will. They built health care centers where they took care of people physically and spiritually.
- The distribution of Adventist literature formed an important factor of the growth of this church. Lay people distributed books and tracts door to door because the Adventists considered books to be silent preachers.

- Financially, the church was supported by means of the tithes and offerings given freely by church members, although these were not sufficient.

In 1994, Rwanda faced the terrible genocide of the Tutsi. The Tutsi refugees from Uganda had attacked the country in 1990, because they wanted to return to their country, but the former president, Habyarimana Juvenal, refused their return for a long time. They then chose to fight for their rights. Negotiations under the auspices of the African Union, which took place in Arusha (Tanzania), between two parties from 1992 to 1993, ended with a peace agreement signed on August 4, 1993. It was agreed that power would be shared between the rebels and the government. On April 6, 1994, the President met the leaders of the region in Dar-es-Salaam with regards to matters of security, and in particular, the situation in Burundi. However, during the talks, he was questioned by his colleagues concerning his refusal to implement the Arusha agreement, for which he was seriously criticized. When the president returned, his plane was fired at by unknown people surrounding the Kigali airport. The killings of the Tutsi started immediately. This indicated that the genocide had been well planned. It is believed that approximately one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu died as a result of the conflict.

Rwanda was considered a Christian country since over 90 percent of its population purported to be Christians, which means that the Tutsi genocide was mainly carried out by Christians, including priests, sisters, and pastors. Some of them are in prison, awaiting judgment, while others have been condemned by the International Tribunal for Rwanda based in Arusha (Tanzania). Adventists also participated in the genocide by killing their fellow believers and pastors. However, some Hutu Christians protected the Tutsi who sought refuge in their homes. Consequently, the question that arises is whether the situation constituted a failure for Christianity.

The fifth chapter concerns the aftermath as well as a new beginning. In July 1994, the RPF (Rwandese Patriotic Front) halted the genocide and won the war. Many extremist Hutu who had carried out the genocide of the Tutsi fled the country. They looted and destroyed everything on their way. It appeared as if activity had ceased within the country. The RPF created a government of National Unity, composed of both Hutu and Tutsi representatives. This team had to deal with the consequences of the genocide, which were enormous: devastation and destruction of the country, broken hearts, orphans and widows, and returnees. Fortunately, former refugees returned without delay and helped to begin normal life again, while NGOs offered various types of relief.

The new government re-established security and later created the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission with the purpose of eradicating any of the discrimination and exclusion which had characterized the previous repressive regimes. The commission was intended to be a platform on which Rwandans could meet and discuss the real problems of the nation related to unity, reconciliation, the culture of peace, democracy, and development (Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda 2003:124). However, this commission still experiences difficulties due to the nature of the problem. It will take time to change the minds of people.

The genocide was committed by the majority of the population, and many were consequently arrested and imprisoned. More than eighty thousand are waiting judgment. The government was not capable of handling all these cases because the justice system had been destroyed during the genocide. In an attempt to expedite the trial process, it resurrected the old community based justice approach of “*gacaca*”. Before the colonial period, Rwandans used to elect respected elders in their community, who solved disputes among their members. This approach was adapted to modern times. It was expected that this system would give clarity to the situation and reveal who had carried out which deeds during the genocide.

The government demanded collaboration from different churches, asking them to preach constructive sermons and unite their believers, because they were closer to the population.

Considering the Seventh-day Adventist Church statistics in Rwanda, its membership increased after the genocide, from 190 694 (1994) to 324 012 (2000). In fact, the former Adventist refugees from neighboring countries who returned to their country contributed to this increase, in spite of those survivors who refused to attend the church because of its involvement in the genocide.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reorganized itself, because everything had to be begun again. One of the Union officers, Pastor S Mbangukira, who had remained in the country, was appointed by the church organization to be the coordinator of the Rwanda Union Mission (Rwanda Union Minutes of September 15, 1994). The laity played an important role during the transitional period because the church lacked pastors. They held responsibilities in the various churches.

During 1995, the reorganization became effective. The Rwanda Union Mission gained an elected President, Pastor A. Rugelinyange, a Rwandan, for the first time in the history of the church in Rwanda. All the mission stations elected their Presidents as well. They were challenged to reconcile their church members, comprising survivors of the genocide, the supposed murderers, and people from outside the country.

The church reinforced the evangelistic efforts, and restarted the education and health activities. Through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the church participated in the rehabilitation of the country by rescuing the population, equipping dispensaries, and giving other kinds of assistance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church continued to work in order to restore the image of the church and attempted to change the perceptions of its members in particular and the Rwandans in general.

The final chapter contains the conclusions drawn from the present research as well as the recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. THE ORIGIN AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

In order to understand any religious movement or church, it is important to penetrate it and know its fundamental principles. This chapter will attempt to answer the following questions: Who are the Seventh-day Adventists? Where do they come from? What is their administrative organization like? What are their basic beliefs?

#### **1.2. THE MILLERITE MOVEMENT**

The many revivals and awakenings that swept over North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave rise to new movements and denominations, such as the Modern Protestant Missionary Movement (1793), the Seventh Month Movement, Puritan Pietist Evangelical, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, and others. These were the direct result of religious fermentation. The social and political climate also produced fertile soil for the emergence of new types of Christian churches.

A very active outcome of the second Great Awakening was to be found in the Millerite Movement named after its leader William Miller (1782-1849), a Baptist minister from New York (Neufeld 1976:889). During the war of 1812, he had served as a lieutenant and captain. At the close of the war he moved his family to Low Hampton, where he hoped to live as a farmer. However, he was not at peace with himself since he was a deeply religious man. He wrote:

I saw that the Bible did bring to view just such a Savior as I needed; and I was perplexed to find how an uninspired book should develop principles so perfectly adapted to the wants of a fallen world. I was constrained to

admit that the Scriptures must be a revelation from God; they became my delight, and in Jesus I found a friend (Quoted by Neufield 1976:889).

Challenged by his skeptical friends, he set out to study the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. He then concluded that Scripture was its own interpreter.

In 1818, at the close of a two year study of the Bible, he concluded that in about twenty five years, Jesus would come back (in 1843). This took him five years, seeking to criticize his own conclusions and to examine all objections, arguments for and against his beliefs. Finally in August 1831, he covenanted with God that: "If I should have an invitation to speak publicly in any place, I will go and tell them what I found in the Bible about the Lord's coming" (Amorim 1990:10). Thirty minutes later his nephew brought an invitation to him to preach the following day at Dresden, a town twenty five kilometers from his home. Subsequently, he went to a nearby grove where he could pray. "Into that grove went a farmer; out came a preacher" (Neufield 1976:889). He decided to go and preach as he had promised God.

In his teaching, he emphasized biblical prophecies and their interpretation, especially Daniel 8:14: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed". The key prophetic period was that of those 2300 days. According to Ezekiel 4:6, "I have assigned you forty days, a day for each year", he concluded that 2300 days are equivalent to 2300 years, ending with the cleansing of the sanctuary, which he believed to involve the final purification of the earth at the second advent. Miller William never preached an exact date. But pressed by his fellows to be more specific, finally, by December, 1842 he defined the occurrence of the second coming in 1843, by which he meant the Jewish year, as probably "sometime between March 12, 1843, and March 21, 1844" for he knew the Jewish religious year ran from spring to spring (*The Signs of the Times* of Jan 25, 1843:15).



Miller and his colleagues from various Protestant churches (Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Christian connections, Presbyterians etc.) began their work in 1831. Miller was a good preacher but not a good promoter, therefore he needed a promoter (Neufield 1976: 890). In December 1839, he was invited by Joshua Vaughan Himes of the "Christian Connection" to speak in Boston. After the preaching Joshua was impressed by the message and decided to promote him. He immediately began the publication of *The Signs of the Times* (a periodical which published Miller's teachings), and a series of booklets called "The Second Advent Library", composed of the writings of Miller and his group.

The intention of William Miller and his followers was not to separate from various churches, but to warn Christians wherever they were that the Advent was near. In the beginning, Millerites proclaimed this message in churches only when invited. Otherwise they preached in homes and on farms. They also printed tracts and distributed them in the United States of America, Europe, and Asia where they were cherished by many people.

By 1840, the movement had gained considerable trust. Because they placed much emphasis on the Advent, the various Millerite groups were also known as "Adventists", which means the "arrival of an important person or thing, or second coming of Christ" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1984:14). The editors of the *Advent Herald* adopted this name as being suitable for those participating in the movement (Damsteegt 1976:91). Unfortunately they were rejected by the established churches (their original churches) because Miller's prediction concerning the year 1843 rendered them the targets of theological opposition, public ridicule and irresponsible journalism (Neufield 1976:894-895). Rumors were circulated that the Millerites were cheating the public, were disorderly and fanatical. On the other hand, people spoke of their sobriety, sincerity, and knowledge of the Bible. They accepted this rejection because they believed that it was not necessary to belong to any church since the second coming of Jesus was near. They considered those churches as "Babylon" and according to

Revelation 14:8, they had been called to leave them by the message of the second angel (Revelation 14:8).

It was during this time that some of the Millerites started to set exact dates for the second coming of Christ. They first calculated that the event would take place in 1843 and 1844. They applied historical hermeneutics and year-day principles to the prophecy of Daniel 8:44, and identified the 2300 days with the service rendered by Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Assuming that these days began simultaneously with the prophecy regarding the seventy weeks, found in Daniel 9:24, 25, the starting point for both prophecies was set at 457 B.C. This year was accepted as the time when the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued, according to the copy of the decree by Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, to Ezra the priest (Ezra 7:12-28). The Jewish people and the sanctuary had to be restored because the Jews were in captivity and the sanctuary was in ruins. This period would extend as far as 1843/44 (Damsteegt 1977:16-40).

### **1.2.1 The first disappointment**

On January 1, 1843, Miller (1843:147) wrote a fourteen-point synopsis of his views in which he became more specific regarding the time, by determining the limits of the year 1843. He concluded: "I am fully convinced that sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to Jews mode of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all this saints with him; and that then he will reward every human as his work shall be".

Miller was criticized by other people who were not convinced by his message. He was accused of seeking money and many pastors took the opportunity to deny his teachings from the pulpits of their churches.

Dr Henri Ward wrote to Miller (quoted by Damsteegt 1981:36): “I think you are wrong in using the matter of the date; but I honor your zeal, your fidelity, your learning, your industry”. He also wrote to the *Signs of the Times* asking the editor to publish his views in terms of a definite time setting. He cited Acts 1:7: “it is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set by his own authority”.

During his studies of the Bible, Miller certainly examined Matthew 24:36 which said: “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son but only the Father”. This text is specific but the Millerites asserted that they should be able to know the date because prophecies are clear and the calculation easy.

Unfortunately, the year 1843 passed without the return of Jesus. This brought the first disappointment to the Advent believers. Many were discouraged and abandoned the movement. However, others remained faithful to the message and were comforted by Habakkuk 2:3: “For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay”. This text encouraged them and they continued to wait for the year 1844.

### **1.2.2 The great disappointment**

Some months after the first disappointment, Samuel Snow, a Congregationalist, later a Millerite minister, determined a date. He explained that the 2300-day prophecy would have terminated in the spring of 1844, had the decree of Artaxerxes been issued on the first day of 457 B.C. But inasmuch as that decree had not been issued until the fall of that year, the 2300-day prophecy could not end until the fall of 1844 (General Conference of the SDA, 1956:171). A closer study of the sanctuary occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month. This coincided with the idea that the 2300-day period would end during the fall, for the

tenth day of the seventh month in 1844 would fall on October 22 of the Jewish Karaite year.

Based on Mark 1:15: "The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Samuel Snow concluded that they must know the date of the second coming of Jesus. Thus he began to preach that the Second Advent would occur on October 22, 1844. Once again, many Christians accepted this new message. After a serious study of this new date set up by Samuel Snow, Miller William and other prominent leaders of the movement supported it, a few weeks prior to 22 October 1844 (The General Conference. 1956:175).

During the weeks prior to the ultimate date, the Millerites engaged in intensive preparations for the supposed coming of the Savior. Businessmen had closed their shops, employees had given up their jobs, and farmers had left their crops to rot in the fields. In fact, there was no reason to be engaged in such mundane activities. According to Maxwell (1977:31,32), people spent the last days settling their quarrels, confessing their faults, and donating their money so that the warning message concerning the second coming could be published.

Unfortunately, Christ did not return as they had expected on October 22, 1844. This day passed like any other day in history. Thus, confusion and despair became the sad experience of those early Adventists. Their reactions must have been of disappointment such as that experienced by the early Christians when the Lord did not inaugurate His kingdom in their lifetime as expected. We can imagine their shame when faced with the mockery of their neighbors. This has been referred with "The Great Disappointment" (Schantz 1983: 207). It affected people in many ways.

Socially and economically, they were disturbed because this Movement had drained the resources of many people who had left everything as mentioned above. The people who were not part of the Millerite movement, were obliged to

take care of those Adventists because some were their neighbors or brothers. The reaction of their society in general was described by William Miller (quoted by Damsteegt 1981:107): “The amount of scoffing and mocking at the present time was beyond any calculation. We can hardly pass a man, professor or non-professor, but what he scoffingly inquires ‘You have not gone up’, or ‘God cannot burn the world’, ridiculing the Bible itself, and blaspheming the word and power of God.” Having spent everything, it was very difficult to survive. There was no food or shelter for the Millerites and many were jobless. Fortunately, some people created a fund to help the needy (Gerber 1950:50). Furthermore, no provision had been made for the coming of the New England winter. They suffered greatly.

Politically, the event was published in various newspapers and many stories were told about the Millerites. James White, in his letter of September 6, 1846 to Jacobs, summarized the situation in the State of Maine: “We have been brought before magistrate, publicly whipped, put in the jail, workhouse, and families torn asunder.”

Many Millerites drifted away soon after the disappointment. One group became known as the Evangelical Adventists. However, this group gradually declined into extinction. Another group was called The Advent Christian Church, a Sunday keeping Church, the only Adventist group of importance aside from the Seventh-day Adventists (General Conference of SDA 1956: 175). Certainly, many people lost their trust in religious leaders.

After this great disappointment, certain Adventists continued to set new dates while others gave up their faith. However, a small but important remnant group could not believe the Lord had forsaken them. They continued to meet in prayer and reconsidered the biblical prophecies. They also encouraged and comforted one another. They continued to regard themselves as a movement rather than a church.

## **1.3 FROM MILLERITE MOVEMENT TO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

### **1.3.1 The real meaning of sanctuary discovered**

Further diligent study would reveal that at that time the prophecy was correct, but the Adventists had misinterpreted the time and place at which the event was to take place.

According to Leviticus 16:29-34, under the Mosaic system, the cleansing of the sanctuary, or the great Day of Atonement, occurred on the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month, when the high priest, having made an atonement for all Israel, and thus removed their sins from the sanctuary, came forth and blessed the people. So it was believed that Christ, our High Priest, would appear to purify the earth by the destruction of sin and sinners and to bless His waiting people with immortality (White 1998:83).

The Adventists had understood that the cleansing of the sanctuary was the purification of the earth by the fires of the last day, and that this would take place at the Second Advent. Hence the conclusion that Christ would return to the earth, on October 22, 1844. With earnest prayer they reviewed their position and studied the scriptures in order to discover their mistakes. In their investigation they learned that there is no scriptural evidence sustaining the popular view that the earth is the sanctuary; but they found in the Bible an explanation of the subject of the sanctuary, its nature, location, and services. In Hebrews 9:1-5 the apostle Paul refers to the tabernacle built by Moses at the command of God as the earthly dwelling place of the Most High, during their journey through the wilderness. The tabernacle was moved from place to place until their settlement in Canaan where it was replaced by the temple of Solomon which was permanent until its destruction by the Romans in AD 70. This was the only sanctuary that existed on earth about which the Bible gives any information.

According to Hebrews 8:1-2, there is a heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus ministers on our behalf; the earthly one was only the image of the original. Thus, those who were studying the subject found indisputable proof of the existence of a sanctuary in heaven.

White (1998:93) avers that at the death of Christ the typical service in the earthly tabernacle ended. The "true tabernacle" in heaven is the sanctuary of the new covenant, and the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 is fulfilled during this dispensation; therefore, the sanctuary to which it refers must be the sanctuary of the new covenant. At the termination of the 2300 days, in 1844, there had been no sanctuary on earth for many centuries. Thus, this prophecy unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven.

In the light of the aforementioned, the most important question is: What is the cleansing of the sanctuary? The Old Testament refers to such a service in connection with the earthly sanctuary, but this leads one to ask whether there could be anything in heaven to be cleansed? In Hebrews 9:22, 23 the cleansing of both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary is taught: "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the pattern of things in the heavens be purified with this (the blood of animals); but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than this, even the precious blood of Jesus." Thus the cleansing both in the typical service and in the real one must be accomplished with blood: the former with the blood of animals, and the latter, by the blood of Christ.

The Adventists realized that after His ascension, Jesus began His work as our High Priest. Paul says: "Christ has not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb 9:24).

For eighteen centuries Jesus continued the work of ministration in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded on behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of people was completed there was a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This was the service which began when the 2300 days ended (White 1998: 97). In the new covenant the sins of the repentant were by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact to the heavenly sanctuary.

Those who followed in the light of the prophetic word understood that, instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming.

The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. Finally this mystery was revealed.

Among the Millerites was a farmer named Hiram Edson who experienced the great disappointment together with Joseph Bates, James White and Ellen Harmon. When this peasant was walking through the field to visit other families and comfort them after the great disappointment, Adventists believed that he experienced a vision, in which he saw the sanctuary in heaven and Christ as a High Priest going from the holy place of the sanctuary into the most holy. He then wrote: "I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth at the end of the 2300 days, He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most Holy part before coming to this earth" (General Conference of SDA 1956:177).



Adventists consequently recognized their error. Refusing to set another definite time, Miller looked for Christ and wrote: "Today, Today and Today, until he comes" (quoted by Neufeld 1976: 895). In spring of 1845, he concluded that he had made an error in his calculations, though he continued to look to the Advent as being near. He further wrote: "Although I have been twice disappointed I am not yet cast down or discouraged... My hope in the coming of Christ is as strong as ever... I have fixed my mind upon another time, and here I mean to stand until God gives me more light" (Miller 1844:179,180). He died in December, 1849 before the Seventh-day Adventist church was formed.

This group of Millerites later founded the Seventh-day Adventist church which became the most important outgrowth of Millerism.

### **1.3.2 How the Sabbath came to Adventists.**

Through Rachel Oakes, a Seventh-day Baptist, the Sabbath was introduced to a group of Millerite Adventists in Washington, Hampshire, in the winter of 1843-44. Thus their attention had been called to the Sabbath doctrine, causing some of them to observe it. This doctrine emphasized the validity of all the precepts of the Decalogue, including the fourth commandment and the significance of the Sabbath as a sign between God and His people. According to Exodus 20:8, God reminded the Jews to keep the Sabbath day holy. This was not only intended for the nation of Israel but for all humanity (Mark 2:27). This day had been kept throughout the centuries but the responsibility of altering this day of worship from Saturday to Sunday was attributed by Adventists to the Roman Catholic Church (Damsteegt 1981:137). The latter somehow accepted it. For example, Bacchiocchi (1977:261), an Adventist author, cites Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea: "...all things whatsoever that were prescribed for the Sabbath, we have transferred them to the Lord's day, as being more authoritative and more highly regarded and first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath".

The Adventists emphasized the Sabbath day which is the seventh day of the week (Saturday). Nothing is done from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset except worship and other church activities. Hence those around them called them “Seventh-day Adventists”.

### **1.3.2.1 Ellen Gould Harmon**

The principal pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventists were Joseph Bates, John Byington, Uriah Smith, John Norton Loughbough, John Nevins Andrews, James White, and Ellen Gould Harmon (1827-1915) who, as a young lady in 1844, experienced “The Great Disappointment”. She was married to James White on August 30, 1846. According to 1 Corinthians 12:28, “Within our community God has appointed, in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, thirdly teachers; then miracle-workers, then those who have gifts of healing, or ability to help others or power to guide them, or the gift of ecstatic utterance of various kinds”. Adventists believed and continue to believe that Ellen White had received the prophetic gift. When many believers were discouraged after the great disappointment, she experienced her first vision. In the vision she was shown the peculiar experience of the Advent believers in this world, and their eternal reward, an encouragement to the disappointed flock (White 1929: 13-17). Most of the Adventists believed that God, through this young girl, was giving them light. Since then, until her death in 1915, her ministry to the church as a leader, counselor, writer, and lecturer was extensive and her influence has been enormous. Her writings covered different subjects from soteriology to eschatology, health to education, and child care to church organization. Not only did she write and counsel about missions, she was herself a missionary. She spent eleven years overseas in Europe and Australia (Schantz 1983:210). It has been suggested that Ellen Gould White made three general contributions to Adventism (Schantz 1983:210):

- From 1844 to 1863 she was an encouragement to Sabbath-keeping Adventists to keep their hope alive and unite as a group;

- From 1863 to 1888 she helped in the enlargement of their doctrines to include health, education, and mission; and
- From 1888 to her death in 1915 she strengthened SDA understanding of biblical teaching on Christology and soteriology, and alerted the denomination to contend against certain heretical teachings that were troubling her.

Certainly therefore, as regards the Seventh-day Adventist mission history, the name Ellen G. White is prominent.

### **1.3.3 Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.**

The Advent message, as previously mentioned, proclaimed the second coming of Christ, even so far as to set specific dates for the advent. Because of its imminence, it did not seem important to establish any organization. The disappointment had left the Advent believers in confusion. They could not return to the churches they had left, and their failed hopes and trauma caused many of them to turn against religion. There were no (Adventist) churches, officers, or organizations. There were only groups here and there.

Some of the pastors held credentials in the church from which they had withdrawn, some of whom the Millerite group had also ordained. But at this point, there was no official body to perform new ordinations or to accredit former ordinations. The ministers received no regular financial support. They depended upon the hospitality of the brethren and occasional gifts. Self-styled leaders arose preaching doctrines contrary to the scriptures. The movement did not own any property or church building. It was necessary to face different reactions from people. Many people felt that the whole movement had been based on a faulty interpretation of the Scripture, and that there was no point in continued allegiance to it (Jemison 1955:197). Unbelievers mocked Millerites as they never had done before the Great Disappointment. It was a humiliating occasion. “There was a

class - a group who had come to the Millerite services, not because they loved the Lord's appearing, but rather because they feared it. They hoped that in some way they might ward off the judgments of God by coming into the circle of the Millerites at the last moment and mingling their fear-inspired prayers with the exultant songs of the true believers" (Nichol 1945:250). The reaction of the people was also evident in the local newspapers. The *New York Spectator*, Nov.2, 1844, charged that Joshua Himes, one of the Millerite leaders, had taken everything the poor possessed and left them destitute. A Boston paper, the *American Traveler* of Nov.9, 1844 accused the Millerite leaders of "filling their pockets". Accusations flowed from every quarter. They were represented as being dishonest, speculating from the fears of the community, disturbers of the peace, obtaining money under false pretences, and causing suicide among believers (Nichol 1945:256).

Those who had been leaders through the time of disappointment clearly saw the need for organization, yet many people did not agree. The confusion continued for fifteen years after the disappointment. At the same time, the number of Seventh-day Adventists was increasing, in spite of the situation described above. Thus the need for organization was acute.

James White, who had encountered the problem more frequently than anyone else, was willing to accept any type of organization that would meet the needs of the church. James White, his wife Ellen, and their colleague John Norton Loughborough were among the chief advocates for organization (General Conference of SDA 1956: 216).

In 1859 White (1948:191) wrote: "There is order in heaven, and God is well pleased with the efforts of his people in trying to move with system and order in his work on earth. I saw that there should be order in the church of God and that system is needed in carrying forward successfully the last great message of mercy to the world". God is a God of order. Jesus, the founder of the Christian church, recognized that organization was essential if His disciples were to carry

the gospel to the entire world. In order to provide for the support of the ministry, carrying the work to new fields, protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, holding church property, and other problems, the organization was a necessity. Therefore, the appeal was addressed to Adventist leaders, urging them to begin the organization of the church.

### **1.3.3.1 Steps in organization**

The first evidence of order appears to have been the issuing of cards to ministers, which affirmed that they had been approved for the ministry. The first was to be given to John Norton Loughborough, dated January 1853, signed by James White and Joseph Bates (SDA.1956: 218).

In 1860, under the chairmanship of John Norton Loughborough, a plan of organization that would meet legal requirements was set up for the publishing work, the "Advent Review Publishing Association" which was the first institution of the future church (Amorim 1990:66). During this meeting, the name of the denomination was also discussed. Several ministers favored the name, "Church of God", but another group had already used this name. The problem was that this name failed to express the distinctive features of the church. James White made the suggestion that the name chosen was indefinite, besides appearing presumptuous to the world. He suggested that the selected name should be one which would be the least objectionable to the world at large. The majority agreed to adopt the name "Seventh-day Adventist Church". White (1948:224) wrote:"The name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind".

In October 1861, the first conference (formed by local churches associated for administrative purposes within a given area, such as a state) was organized during a gathering of Michigan workers at Battle Creek. Following this example, other states also organized conferences but brought confusion among them. This inspired the leaders to convene a General Conference (GC) comprising all the

state conferences, each of which would send delegates to the general session. This plan was accepted, and the first General Conference with accredited delegates met at Battle Creek, May 20-23, 1863. All the Conferences were represented. By this time there were about 3500 members in 125 churches with 30 evangelistic workers and 6 Conferences or separate mission stations (GC statistical Report 1981:2). During this meeting, John Byington was elected the first president of the denomination. A constitution of the church was adopted and the General Conference committee elected. The church was thus founded with a democratic organization after nearly two decades of tentative plans (Neufeld 1996:263).

### **1.3.3.2 The form of organization**

According to the Church Manual of the Seventh-day Adventists, fifteenth edition (2002:23, 24), there are four generally recognized forms of church government.

- Episcopal: government by bishops, usually with three orders of ministers, such as bishops, priests, and deacons.
- Papal: The supreme authority is vested in the Pope. From him the church is governed by cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests. The local church or individual member has no authority in church administration.
- Independent: This form of church polity renders the local church congregation supreme and final within its own domain.
- Representative: Church government, which recognizes that authority in the church, rests in the membership, with executive responsibility delegated to representative bodies and officers for the government of the church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church adopted the fourth form (Representative). According to the same Church Manual (2002:24), among the SDA are four

constituent levels, leading from the individual believer to the worldwide organization of the work of the church.

- The local church; a united organized body of individual believers.
- The local conference, or local field; a united body of churches in a state, province, or territory.
- The Union Conference or Union Field; a united body of Conferences or Fields within a larger territory.
- The General Conference; the largest unit of organization, embraces all unions in all parts of the world.

It is important to notice that between the Union Conference and the General Conference are Divisions which form sections of the General Conference with administrative responsibility assigned to them in a designated geographical area.

The General Conference session is held every five years, and the Executive committee, which meets between sessions, is the highest organization in the administration of the worldwide work of the (SDA) church. Every member of the church has a voice in selecting the officers of the church as well as those of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the Union Conferences, while those chosen by the Union Conferences select the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every Conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of men and women who bear the chief responsibilities of the General Conference. For Adventists, the G.C. is the highest authority under God among the Seventh-day Adventists (Church Manual 2002:24, 25). The structure of the Church follows:

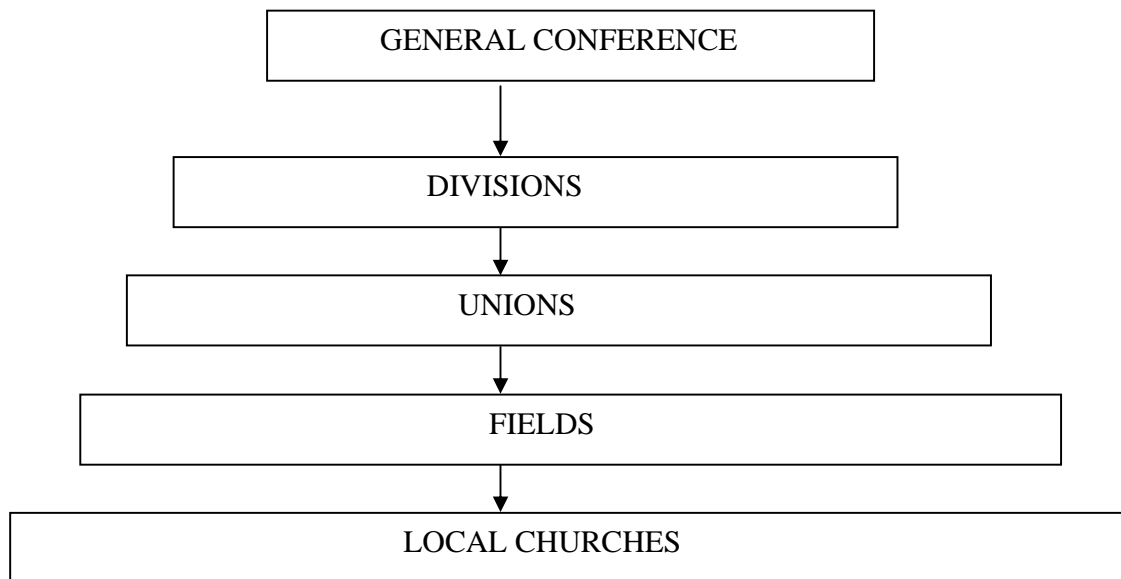


Figure 1. The Structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

#### 1.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH

The pioneers of the advent message during the 1850s were self-supporting ministers who were prepared to devote themselves to the evangelism. Sometimes they sought employment for short periods in order to raise money for evangelism. They conducted their work by faith without any financial backing, except for occasional gifts from well-wishers and fellow believers. However, the Bible says: "The Lord had commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). According to this principle the SDA introduced a system called "Systematic Benevolence" in 1858 as a result of a Bible class conducted by an Adventist pioneer, John Nevins Andrews, in Battle Creek (USA), to study the biblical principles of support for the ministry. Systematic Benevolence was the practice of making regular contributions to the church in accordance with a predetermined plan. The plan was adopted in January, 1859 (Neufeld 1976:1453). It recommended specific amounts to be pledged each week, according to the ability of the donor, by each member from 18 to 60 years of age, from 5 to 20 cents for men and from 2 to 10 cents for women; and for those who owned property, from 1 to 10 cents for every



\$ 100 of its value. This plan was endorsed by Ellen White, who urged the members to a greater sacrifice and liberality. However, this did not represent a tenth of the income, according to Leviticus 27:30. But this system gradually developed into the tithe system, which was adopted fully in 1876 by the General Conference (Review of April 6, 1876:108). As the tithing system became increasingly understood by the members, the revenue increased rapidly.

With the introduction of systematic tithe-paying in addition to free-will offerings, the financial basis for the SDA mission was established and assured. This enabled the church to fulfill its mission globally. Therefore, the SDA church makes use of its denominationally owned and operational institutions such as health care institutions, publishing houses, health food industries, and educational institutions to generate income, and to carry the gospel to the entire world.

## **1.5 FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

When we examine the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church their similarities with other Protestant groups are evident. As we have seen, Adventists stemmed from various Protestant churches; consequently, most of their beliefs derived from those denominations. However, there were certain differences which sometimes constituted doctrinal controversies between them.

The Adventists accepted the Bible as their only creed; they confessed that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by the inspiration of God and that they contained an all sufficient revelation of His will to humanity. Thus any teaching that was contrary to them was to be rejected. The SDA encouraged the reading and study of the Bible, both among members and nonmembers (Neufeld 1976:156).

However, one opinion holds that Adventists have considered Ellen White's writings to be above those of the Bible. This was mainly owing to the large

number of books and articles that she wrote and to the fact that since her death the church has continued to compile and publish her unpublished manuscripts. This literature was appreciated by Adventist believers but could not replace the Bible. White (1980:29, 30) wrote to Adventists and others about this opinion: "The Lord desires you to study your Bibles. He has not given any additional light to take the place of His word. In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written, as authority to sustain your positions. To do this will not increase faith in the testimonies. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. A 'Thus saith the Lord' is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White". With regards to the relationship of her writings to the Bible she further wrote: "Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light" (White 1980:30).

Adventists believed in the Trinity. There was one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal persons. Naturally they believed in Jesus who also became truly man, because he was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being. He was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of his people. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of his people and the restoration of all things. His coming will be literal, personal, visible, audible, and worldwide. This return was the hope of the church and the climax of the gospel (SDA Church Manual 2002:18).

In Adventism, two principal sacraments were distinguished. The first one was the baptism by immersion in water, which was a symbol of union with Christ, the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:1-6). The second was the Holy Communion, which was a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in him. Preparation for the supper included self examination (1Cor 10:16, 17).

The fundamental difference between Adventists and other Christians is in the observance of the Lord's Day, the Sabbath. The fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments which requires the observation of the Seventh-day is valued. This holy institution is at the same time a memorial of creation and a sign of sanctification, a sign of the believer's rest from his own works of sin, and his entrance into the rest of soul that Jesus promised to those who came to him (Gen.2: 1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Heb 4:1-10).

Death is considered as a sleep. When a human dies he does not go to live in another world. He remains in an unconscious state until the resurrection. There shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. The resurrection of the just will take place at the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the unjust will take place a thousand years later, at the close of the millennium (John 5: 28,29; Rev. 20:5-10). God will make all things new. The earth, restored to its beauty, will forever become the dwelling of the saints of the Lord (Rev. 21:1-7) (Damsteegt 1981:306,307)

From those principles, Adventists derive a certain ethic which leads their behavior, based on the Bible. Their attitude vis à vis life is characterized by simplicity. For them, life is good health. Accordingly, they cannot drink alcohol or smoke. They are temperate in everything, prefer a vegetarian diet to flesh, and are not involved in politics. They consider themselves citizens of this world who must obey the authorities according to 1 Peter 2:13(KJV): "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme". The reality is that certain Adventists are like some other Christians who profess such things and do the opposite.

Adventists also believe that "Nothing will open the doors for the truth like evangelistic medical missionary work. This will find access to the hearts and minds, and will be a means of converting many to the truth" (White 1974:513).

## **CONCLUSION**

The basic constituents of their message and beliefs have been imprinted on us by studying the origin and organization of the SDA. The Millerite movement was a result of an earlier widespread awakening which arose from an error of interpretation of the Scripture with regards to the Second Advent. After setting certain dates for the Second Coming of Jesus, Adventists were disappointed on two earlier occasions. As a result, most of them abandoned the movement but a small group remained and continued to study the Scriptures. Finally they discovered the error. It is from this group that the SDA church derived. The present study will help to understand how this church became a truly worldwide church geographically, though it has always been challenged in regions not yet entered. The next Chapter will deal with the expansion of this church around the world.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. EXPANSION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist pioneers were not quick to grasp the momentous commission to carry God's last message "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev 14:6). They claimed that the "Gospel of Kingdom" had reached all nations when pamphlets had been sent to the seaports and that the whole population of the world had been evangelized when they preached to the immigrants in the USA (*Review and Herald* of March 21, 1854:70).

However, an important group of SDA leaders continued to plead for worldwide evangelism, and their voices were heard. As a result in its effort to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus and the missionary calling of Matthew 28:19-20, within a comparatively short time the church experienced tremendous expansion and growth throughout the world.

This author of this chapter will attempt to summarize the expansion of the SDA message globally. Not every country will be dealt with but the use of tables will furnish an image of this expansion. Furthermore, the methods employed to reach such results will be traced.

#### 2.2. TOWARD A WORLD-WIDE MISSION

So far it has been established that the SDA originated from the USA. Step-by-step, after the 1844 disappointment, Adventists thought about their mission expansion. They began with Christian immigrants in North America. From there the message was taken to the Christian countries of the world. Around 1890 these foundations and springboards had been constructed. Institutions, manpower, financial resources, and home bases first had to be developed and

recruited in various parts of the Christian world (Schantz 1983:317). Thereafter, the gospel needed to reach non-Christian people, the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and believers in traditional religions living in Asia, Africa, the islands of the sea, and South America. During the years following 1890, parts of the Far East began to open up to both ideas and people from the West. Africa followed a little later.

### **2.2.1 Adventism in Europe**

Even before the official presence of Adventists in Europe, there was an organized SDA church established by Michael Belina Czechowski (1818-1876). A Pole by birth, he was educated for the priesthood but became disillusioned with the Catholic Church, and married in 1850. After one year, he fled his country and came to America where he worked for the Baptists. After a certain time, he was afforded the opportunity to attend a series of meetings organized by Adventists at Findlay, Ohio, and subsequently joined them in 1857. Even though it was his first contact with the SDA message, he experienced a great desire to preach this message in Europe. Unfortunately, the General Conference did not choose to send him, for at that time the church was unprepared to send any workers overseas. However, according to Amorim (1990:58), this was not the only problem. Czechowski evinced problems such as money mismanagement, and in taking decisions independently. He was not flexible when he took a decision, and this displeased the leaders of the Church. Disappointed but determined to carry out his plans, he sought assistance from Advent Christians (which are not Seventh-day Adventists), and sailed from Boston to Europe (Italy) in 1864 (General Conference 1956:283). Although he was backed by the “first day” Church, he felt a burden to preach all of the Bible truths which he had heard, including those concerned with the Sabbath.

He worked in Italy, Switzerland, Rumania, and other countries within Europe. However, one day, amongst his papers, the Swiss believers discovered a copy of

the *Review and Herald* which mentioned the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference (he had never spoken about this organization). They then wrote to this higher Church organization and asked for further help.

For a few years the appeals for help from Europe were satisfied only by literature which was sent from the USA. Urged by Ellen White to lay plans to carry the light of truth to the nations overseas, the leaders of the church finally voted to send one of their officers, John Nevins Andrews, as the first official missionary to Europe. This was done during the General Conference session of August 14, 1874 (Amorim 1990:64). Andrews sailed for Switzerland the following day, according to the same source. In Europe, he continued and consolidated the work started by Czechowski throughout the continent. Unfortunately, Andrews died young on October 21, 1883, from overwork. He had been an important administrator among the Adventists. In 1867 he became the third president of the General Conference, a position he held for two years. He possessed many talents; for example, he could read the Bible in seven languages and claimed the ability to reproduce the New Testament from memory (Neufeld 1976:43). As a theologian, he made significant contributions to the development of various doctrines of the SDA Church. In 1855, requested to do so by James White, he provided biblical evidence that the Sabbath begins at sunset Friday evening. His conclusions became the accepted position of the SDA. In 1878 Andrews served on the committee that recommended the tithing system. On April 7, 1960 the General Conference voted to name the important SDA American University "Andrews University", in honor of him (Neufeld 1976:45).

The German SDA church, in particular, provided strong European home bases for missions, because Adventism had found a more favorable acceptance in this country and the work became financially more self-supporting than in other European countries. From the 1890s to the beginning of the First World War, German Adventist missionaries as pioneers were instrumental in establishing the SDA work in Brazil, Tanganyika, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, to mention a few places (Schantz 1983:323).

Later, the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognized the missionary work done by Czechowski even though he had not been dispatched by the Organization. Unfortunately, he also died as a result of overwork in Vienna, February 23, 1876 (Maxwell 1999:191-198).

### **2.2.2 SDA missionaries in Australia**

Seventh-day Adventist teaching was preached in Australia by Alexander Dickson, of Melbourne. He came into contact with the Adventist message while serving as a missionary for the American Board of Missions in Africa (Liberia). This message was from Mrs. Hannah More, a colleague who knew about Adventism. When Dickson returned to his homeland, he published tracts and preached the new doctrine to the people. Although his work attracted considerable favorable interest, he did not succeed in achieving any visible results and became discouraged.

According to Schantz (1983:263), in 1874, Ellen White urged the church leaders to spread the message widely and made particular mention of Australia. However, it took ten years before the church responded. In 1885, Stephen Nelson Haskell, together with four other missionaries and their families, were assigned to Melbourne (Neufeld 1976:104). Thus Australia became the first country in the Southern Hemisphere to be entered by SDA missionaries. They conducted tent meetings (tents were used instead of church buildings), and distributed literature. On January 10, 1886, the first church was organized in Melbourne. In December 1886, Haskell reported that there were three churches with about 250 members in Australia and New Zealand. He also reported that they possessed a press worth \$4,550, had conducted numerous tent meetings, had printed three issues of the *Bible Echo* locally, and had sold many books printed in the USA (Schantz 1983:265).



It is noted that American pioneers to Australia enjoyed an advantage over the American pioneers on the European continent in that they could use the English language in their preaching and teaching. Also, methods in soul-winning used with success in the USA, such as tent-evangelism and camp-meetings, were more readily accepted in Australia than in conservative Europe. Ellen White was a missionary in Australia from 1891 to 1900. During this time, she established the Sanitarium Health food company in 1898, which helped the church to finance its programmes, and the Avondale College to promote Christian education (Neufeld, 1976:1590). Australia and New Zealand became strong home bases for SDA outreach into non-Christian countries.

### **2.2.3 How the SDA message entered the African Continent**

The Seventh-day Adventist message penetrated the continent from South Africa. A Dutch family of farmers, named Wessels, who lived on the outskirts of Kimberley, were dissatisfied with the Dutch Reformed Church and began to look something better. When one of their sons, Peter, became ill with tuberculosis, his father went to a minister to seek healing through prayer. Fortunately the prayer was positively answered. But this man was experiencing another difficulty; his conscience bothered him about the proper observance of the Sabbath, which to him was the Sunday. When he mentioned this to someone, he was told that if he were so conscientious, he ought to keep the Seventh day Sabbath, because that was the Sabbath of the Bible (General Conference 1956:290). When he began to study his Bible he was directed to Matthew 28, which settled the question for him; and he became a Sabbath keeper. He sought out a friend, G J Van Druten, who soon joined him in the observance of the Sabbath, in 1885. These two men continued to meet on the Sabbath and soon a small group joined them. This group later learned that they were not the only Sabbath keepers in the world, but also heard of an organized church in America. They wrote to the General Conference of the SDA requesting a minister to be sent to them. Their request was accompanied by a cheque for \$250 to assist in the expenses (Gerber

1950:167). The answer was a surprise because in 1887 two ministers, C L Body and D Robinson, and their families arrived in Cape Town. Robinson remained in Cape Town, while Boyd proceeded to the diamond fields, where he found about 40 people keeping the Sabbath (Neufeld 1976:1364). A little later, Asa Robinson (brother to Dores Robinson) joined them from Canada.

Methods used in America, such as tent meetings, were also widely accepted and employed in South Africa. The Boers, who were acquainted with the English language, accepted the new teaching even sooner than the British; hence, the first SDA converts in South Africa were from among the white population. These were closely followed by some people from the colored community, and later by some Africans. The English and Dutch had colonized South Africa during the seventeenth century. In 1948 the Afrikaner National Party gained a strong majority. Strategists in this party invented apartheid as a means to cement their control over the economic and social system. Initially, the aim of apartheid was to maintain white domination while extending racial separation. Starting in the 1960s, a plan of "Grand Apartheid" was executed, emphasizing territorial separation and police repression although racial discrimination had already been institutionalized in 1948. Consequently, race laws touched on every aspect of social life, including a prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites. In 1950 the population registration act required that all South Africans be racially classified into one of three categories: white, black or colored (Halsey 1983:47). Churches were separated according to these racial groups. Unfortunately, the church followed the political authorities, contrary to the gospel, which taught that in heaven people will live together forever (John 14:1-3). However, South African white missionaries were used in the SDA conversion of Southern and Central Africa. Educational institutions, such as the Claremont College, later Helderberg College, opened in 1893 for whites which became the first college operated by Adventists outside of North America (Schantz 1983:325), and the Bethel Training College for Africans. People who graduated from these schools were sent to evangelize in neighboring countries.

From South Africa, the SDA message spread to Angola, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and the southern Democratic Republic of Congo.

#### **2.2.4 South America**

Most of South America was first explored and colonized by militant Roman Catholics, and since then that church has sought to dominate the educational, commercial, cultural, and religious sectors of society. The first Protestant mission in South America was established by Moravians around 1735 in British Guiana. This was not easy because of the said hostility and Catholic opposition which took a missionary's life for every soul won (General Conference of SDA 1956:317).

According to Spicer (1921:253), the work of SDA began in Argentina with the arrival of certain Seventh-day Adventist farmers from Kansas (USA), in the year 1888. George Riffel, the leader of this party of several Russian-German brethren, had lived in Argentina prior to receiving the message in Kansas. Happy in his newfound faith, he desired to take the good news to his former neighbors. Yet providence planted the seed of the message within the country. In 1886, a Swiss of Waldensian descent, who was living in Esperanza, Santa Fe Province, Argentina, heard of Seventh-day Adventists from a criticism of their faith in an Italian paper. The paper ridiculed Daniel Bourdeau, who was then in Europe, for preaching that the end of the world was near. Being an ungodly man, Paverini felt alarmed to hear that the end might be near, and was anxious to read the paper mentioned. His wife ordered the French version of the paper; and from their study of the truths presented in it, they began to observe the Sabbath. Several others joined them later and soon a SDA church was formed. The news from Argentina drew attention to the field. Colporteurs were sent out, and sold German and English books in Argentina and Brazil. Sabbath keepers appeared here and there as the books were read. From Argentina the message reached the whole of South America.

### **2.2.5 Asia**

The SDA message reached the Asian continent via India. The first contact with this country was supposed to have been in 1890-1895. However, it is not known precisely when the SDA teachings were first introduced into India, or when evangelism began. It is known that in 1890 Haskell and Magan crossed India from Calcutta to Bombay on their mission survey journey around the world. Traditionally, the beginning of the SDA work in this country has been dated from 1893, when Lenker and Stroup, two colporteurs from America landed in Madras and began their work of selling books among the English-speaking inhabitants of the major cities of India. "The early colporteur work met with outstanding success, the people welcoming SDA publications and at times buying duplicate copies and also volunteering to sell to their friends. At a very early stage the people asked that the books be translated into the local languages" (Neufeld 1976:625).

According to Neufeld, the first regular SDA worker to reach India under appointment by the Board was Georgia Burrus, a young Bible instructor from California, who arrived in Calcutta on January 23, 1895. On November 8, 1895, Dores Robinson and another Bible Instructor, Martha May Taylor arrived in Calcutta, and opened a regular SDA mission station.

Another pioneer in Asia was Abram La Rue, an American gold miner, seaman, and shepherd, who became an SDA at an advanced age. He wished to be a missionary in China, but because of his age, he was advised to confine his activities to the islands of the Pacific, so he first went to the Hawaiian Islands. Later, in 1889, he went to the British colony of Hong Kong. In the same year he visited Canton, before travelling to Shanghai. He sold health foods, books, and periodicals to English-speaking people, though he managed to have two tracts translated into Chinese; and gave away thousands of papers (Amorim 1990:66).

At a council held at Battle Creek (USA) in 1898, it was voted to begin work in China that year, but nothing was accomplished until, at the General Conference session of 1901, Jacob Nelson Anderson and his wife, who volunteered for service in China, were sent. They arrived at the British colony of Hong Kong, in February of 1902 (Amorim 1990:66). Like other pioneers, they began to study the language, canvassing among the English-speaking population, and opened an English school for Chinese children.

In December 1902, Edwin Wilbur and his wife, nurses and trained missionaries, travelled to Canton, and became the first permanent SDA workers in China. These two countries served as the basis for reaching the entire region, where the SDA continues to spread the gospel.

### **2.3 PROCEDURES AND METHODS IN SDA MISSIONARY OUTREACH**

As the missionaries entered non-Christian countries with a message of Jesus Christ as Savior of all mankind, they used a method similar to that of Paul in his missionary work. In any new location he first went to the local Jewish synagogue and bore witness to Christ. Upon arriving in their mission fields, SDA workers almost always first contacted the existing Christian minorities. These were generally foreign people usually living at the ports. The Adventists preached their Christendom message of “Sabbath and Judgment” to them. They have never altered what they believed is their distinctive call, namely to preach Christ, Sabbath and Judgment to non-Christians, as well as Sabbath and Judgment to Christians.

The Seventh-day Adventists believe that they were the remnant faithful to God and his commandments, according to Revelation 12:17 “...and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus...”. Their credo places an emphasis on keeping the Ten Commandments, including the fourth, which recommends remembering the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (Exodus 20:8-11). They consequently

consider other Christian churches as neglecting this commandment because they observe Sunday (which is the first day of the week), instead of the Sabbath (Saturday), as accepted in the Bible. The other fact was that they could not accept the baptism practiced by the Catholic Church because they considered it as unbiblical. This was why people who have converted from this church to the SDA were baptized by immersion. The Adventist style of life is also different from that of other Christians, especially Catholics who tolerate their church members drinking alcohol and smoking. With all this together, the Adventists felt that their call was to awaken all of God's children from the various churches to specific truths. Beach (2000:27) describes the strategy used by Adventists: "We cannot be aggressive against other Christian churches. We must learn how to be different and not antagonistic, but loving and respectful of others". This behavior helped Adventists to avoid conflict between them and other churches. The Adventists cannot use the latter's pulpits or ask permission to preach in any other church. Each SDA member is involved in personal evangelism by presenting the message from home to home. Public evangelism is also organized and everybody is invited to attend regardless of his/her church of origin. People are then free to accept or reject the truths presented from the Bible. Beach (2000:38) further mentions the reason for this strategy: "It is of course much easier to approach and talk to people who think as we do. It is easier to evangelize Bible accepting and Christian following people than those who have another or no specific ideology. That is why we often tend to direct our evangelistic endeavors toward our Christian cousins".

However, Adventists in certain countries are accused of disturbing the religious peace by engaging in unbecoming proselytism. They are regarded as sheep-stealers. In fact, those who were renewed through their message tended to leave their churches and identify with the Adventists. Certainly, however, the SDA message is also addressed to non-Christian people.

When Adventists began to achieve results in winning local people to the SDA message they would, in turn, encourage them to be messengers of the Adventist

beliefs to their own kinsmen (Schantz 1983:326). In so doing, they followed obvious church growth principles, namely that: "No paid worker from the outside and certainly no missionary from abroad can know as much about a neighborhood as someone who has dozens of relatives and intimates all about him" (McGavran 1980:286,287).

We can say that somehow the Adventists follow the law of least effort. This is provable because one can note that their presence in the Muslim countries is very weak or practically non-existent. They first attempted evangelism where people are easy to convert and thereafter went to difficult areas.

Taking into consideration the preceding discussion, one could believe that this situation poses conflicts between the SDA church and the others. Actually, no notable conflict is known, for example, in the engagements between these churches. However, the other Christian churches seem to fear the presence of the Adventists, precisely because of this method of evangelization. The Adventists thus benefit from religious freedom and individual choice. They are not ready to change this strategy because they feel that it is their right and mission to tell the message to all human kind.

### **2.3.1 SDA mission approach: general patterns**

The fairly typical pattern for the entry of the SDA church into any non-Christian country has been furnished by Schantz (1983:329):

- Publications from the USA were first distributed at the seaports and stirred some interest.
- Colporteurs arrived and began to work among the Christian population. Often the colporteurs or laymen were nationals who had immigrated to the USA and there embraced the SDA message, and began to sense a burden for their own people.

- The work would then be formally started among national Christians “converted” from existing Protestant missions. The proclamation referred to above is the distinctive SDA message: Prophecies, Judgment, Second Advent, and Sabbath.
- The “converted” national Christians who speak the language and understand the culture would then accompany the missionaries as they moved inland and began work among non-Christians. Here they would preach Christ as Savior, but also present the distinctive SDA message.

The gradual expansion of the SDA mission would adhere to the following pattern, according to the same source.

- The initial foundations had been laid in the USA, replete with doctrines, manpower, financial support, and organization.
- Springboards were then established in Christendom (Europe, Australia, and South Africa) for outreach to other parts of the world.
- Bridgeheads were then created among Christian minorities (especially in the port-cities of non-Christian countries).
- Vigorous outreach was then begun on the non-Christian bastions (inland missions).

### **2.3.2 SDA institutions**

SDA institutions were closely connected with these distinct missionary methods. The manner in which the establishment of institutions was achieved differed according to whether they were in a Christian or a non-Christian country. According to Neufeld, the following are some descriptions of the sequences, which can serve as a general outline (1976:387,510, 530,531, 976, 977, and 1367).



In a Christian area where people were literate and had knowledge of Jesus Christ, as well as a church affiliation, the first institution to be established would be a literature centre (publishing house, printing press etc). Supported by literature, the workers would then engage in evangelism with the purpose of winning converts to their message and organizing churches. Later, educational institutions would be established. According to local needs and available funds, medical services such as hospitals or clinics were provided.

However, in a non-Christian area where the majority of people were illiterate, probably in need of medical attention, and without church affiliation, the approach would be different. Evangelism with an emphasis on the spoken Word would initiate the organizing of churches. Later, educational and medical institutions would be introduced. The final stage would be to establish the work of publishing. The institutions are established so that those who frequent them will be in contact with their message. In the schools, the courses teaching religion are integrated into the programme as an opportunity to evangelize students. The hospitals and the medical centres physically look after the patient without putting aside the spiritual dimension. Adventist literature is also abundant and distributed everywhere. Thus, all SDA institutions are involved in evangelism in different ways.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered to be established in a country or area of the world when one or more of the following criteria have been met (General Conference of SDA 1981:30).

- When an organized church meets regularly.
- A mission station, health-care facility or school is functioning regularly.
- When a regular full-time denominational worker is based in the country, carrying on outreach or soul-winning activities through such units as a Sabbath school, an organized company, or a language school.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not considered to be established in a country or area when:

- it is limited to a series of evangelistic meetings.
- a literature evangelist's work is not based there.
- Sabbath keepers are scattered, workers merely travel through.
- temporary service is rendered by regular workers, student missionaries or other volunteer workers.

### **2.3.3 Chronological tables illustrating the SDA implantation around the world**

According to the criterion above, the SDA is established in the following countries. The compilation is sourced from Gerbert (1950:125-161).

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>IMPLANTATION DATE</b>	<b>PIONEERS</b>
Switzerland	1865	Michael Belina Czechowski, John Nevins Andrews
Romania	1870	Michael Belina Czechowski
Germany	1875	John Nevins Andrews, James Erzeberger
France	1876	Daniel Bourdeau John Nevins Andrews
Italy	1877	John Nevins Andrews Michael Belina Czechowski
Great Britain	1878	William Ings
Scandinavia	1878	John Gottlieb Matteson
Russia	1884	Louis Richard Conradi
Netherlands	1893	Reinhold Gustav Klingbeil
Belgium	1897	Charles Augsburg Charles Grin, James Erzeberger
Bulgaria	1898	
Hungary	1900	John Huenergardt
Czechoslovakia	1901	John Lorenz
Spain	1903	Frank Bond Walter
Greece, Albania	1903	Warren Eugene Howell
Portugal	1904	Clarence Emerson Rentfio
Austria	1906	John Wolfgarten
Yugoslavia	1907	John Huenergardt
Turkey	1924	Heinrich Erzeberger

Table no 1 Missionary expansion of SDA in Europe

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>IMPLANTATION DATE</b>	<b>PIONEERS</b>
<b>ASIA</b>		
India	1895	Dores Robinson
Japan and Korea	1896	W.C.Grainger, W.R. Smith
Syria, Palestine Iraq, Iran	1899	John Harry Krum, W.K.Ising Frank Frederic Oster
Malaysia	1900	Ralph Waldo Munson
China	1902	Jacob Nelson Anderson, Edwin Hymes Wilbur
Indochina	1904	Griffiths Francis Jones, R.H.Wentland
Philippines	1909	J.L. Mc Elhany
<b>OCEANIA</b>		
Australia	1885	Stephen Nelson Haskel, JohnOrr Corliss William Arnold
New Zealand	1885	Stephen Nelson Haskell
Pacific islands	1890	Edward Harmon Gates John Tay
<b>SOUTH AMERICA</b>		
Guyana	1887	George Albert King
Argentina	1890	G. Riffel, Elwin Winthrop Snyder Clair Nowlen
Brazil	1894	Frank Henri Westphal
Uruguay	1895	Elwin Winthrop Snyder
Chile	1895	Granville Henderson Baber
Paraguay	1898	Elwin Winthrop Snyder
Peru	1905	Franklin Leland Perry
Ecuador	1905	Homer Casebeer
Bolivia	1907	Eduardo Werner Thomann
Venezuela	1910	F.G. Lane
Colombia	1921	Ernest Max Trummer

Table no 2 Missionary expansion of SDA in Asia, South America, and Oceania

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>IMPLANTATION DATE</b>	<b>PIONEERS</b>
South Africa	1887	Daniel Robinson C.L. Boyd
Algeria	1888	J.Gomis Sven Jespersson
Malawi	1892	George James
Zimbabwe	1894	William Harrison Anderson G.B.Tripp
Egypt	1899	Henry Holser
Tanzania	1903	J. Ehlers A.L. Ens
Ghana	1905	David Caldwell. Babcock Thomas Marion French
Sierra Leone	1906	David Caldwell Babcock
Kenya	1906	Arthur Asa Carscallen
Ethiopia	1907	J. Persson P.N. Lindegren
Nigeria	1913	David Caldwell Babcock
Mauritius	1914	Paul Badant M.arius Raspal
Botswana	1920	William Harrison Anderson
Congo (DRC),Rwanda Burundi	1921	Walter Straw, C. Robinson Delhove Elie, Henri Monnier
Angola	1924	William Harrison Anderson
Morocco	1925	J. Reynand Albert Meyer
Uganda	1926	S.G. Maxwell
Malagasy	1926	Marius Raspal
Cameroon	1926	William Harrison Anderson Thomas Marion French
Liberia	1927	
Tunisia	1929	A. Gessle
Seychelles	1930	D. Ignace
Reunion	1936	Paul Girard

Table no 3 Missionary expansion of SDA in Africa

## **Observations**

The observation of these tables indicates that around the end of the nineteenth century, SDA missionaries had reached all the continents.

The majority of these pioneers originated from America, because the country was the cradle of Adventism. Another fact was that Europeans were also among the SDA pioneers. As we have seen, Europe was the first continent to receive SDA missionaries.

The SDA presence in Africa was more important compared to that of other continents. Actually, we notice that 35 percent of SDA members live in Latin America, and 33 percent dwell in Africa, while some 19 percent live in Asia and North America, and Europe has about 9 percent of the church's membership (Haloviak 2005:13).

Sub Saharan Africa was more evangelized by SDAs than the northern regions of the continent. In fact, the black people of Africa were considered by the white Christians as being purely pagan. Thus, they wanted to bring light to this part of the continent, which they compared with darkness (Gerber 1950:167). When missionaries came to Africa, their aim was to "evangelize and civilize" the black people (Eyezo'o 1985:27).

## **2.4. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

Since the early times of the beginning of the SDA, dissidents have arisen against the church and its teachings. On the one hand, opposition stemmed from groups of believers, and on the other hand, from individuals within the leadership of the church.

### **2.4.1 The Messenger Party**

This was the first offshoot from the SDAs (1853). Its members were called the “Messenger Party” led by Stephenson and Hall. They created the *Messenger* and used its columns to denounce the *Review and Herald* (for SDA), and particularly its editor, James White, hoping thereby to reduce the paper’s circulation. However, the *Messenger* ceased publication because of lack of financial support. This group worked with another publication *Age-to-come* which was relatively small. A number of the “age-to-come Adventists” and others later united and formed the “Church of God”. These two groups ceased to exist in 1857 (Neufeld 1976:870).

### **2.4.2 The Smoke and Chew Party (1858)**

A certain Gilbert Crammer was refused a license by the church to preach until he ceased using tobacco as well as solved certain home problems. Upon his refusal, he went out on his own to preach, and gained a few followers from among the SDAs. In 1863 they revived the *Messenger of Truth* and changed its name to *The Hope of Israel*. The emphasis of the new offshoot group fell on the liberty to use tobacco and indulge in other practices disapproved of by the SDAs. The *Hope of Israel* was discontinued after two years owing to the lack of financial support (Amorim 1990:50).

### **2.4.3 The Reformed Seventh-day Adventists - Rowenite (1916)**

This group was led by Mrs. Margaret Rowen, who had been a member of a SDA church in Los Angeles, California. On June 22, 1916, she began to issue messages pretending to be testimonies from the Lord, claiming to have received the gift of prophecy. The church leaders examined the Rowen writings and publicly declared that they contained error and were not from God. However, some church members accepted her and adopted the name “Reformed Seventh-day Adventists”. In 1919 Mrs. Rowen claimed to have seen, in a vision, a

document in the manuscript files of Ellen White, dated August 10, 1911, stating that Mrs. Rowen would be used of God to give messages from Him to His people. This manuscript was found, exactly as she had said, and was supposed to be a testimony written and signed by Mrs. White, naming Margaret Rowen as a future messenger sent of God. Although the document bore evidence of forgery, the mystery of how it got into the files remained unsolved until March 12, 1926 when Dr Fullmer, a physician who had been a follower and assistant of Mrs. Rowen, went to SDA leaders and confessed that while he and others were visiting the office of the Ellen White Estate at St Helena, he had opened the drawer and introduced into it a false document. On February 27, 1927, Dr Fullmer was summoned about midnight to render medical aid in a cottage near Lankershim. On entering he was struck on the head with a piece of pipe. The police, summoned by neighbors, found Mrs. Rowen and two associates. They were arrested and imprisoned for one to ten years (Amorim 1990:52). This group was not able to stand for long against the SDA.

#### **2.4.4 Conright Dudley Marvin**

He was one of the SDA ministers and a writer. He renounced his church affiliation and became the “champion” of theological opposition to SDA teachings. He was a polemic writer of considerable ability. He became intolerant of the opinions of others. In 1889 he published a book entitled “Seventh-day Adventism Renounced”. In it he set forth his arguments against the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ, denied the binding nature of the Ten Commandments, rejected the ministry of Ellen White, ridiculed the church leaders, and predicted the disappearance of the SDA (Neufeld 1976: 1190).

These are only a few examples which can help us to understand that this church experienced opposition from its believers. Fortunately, this situation did not hinder the expansion of the church’s mission.



The reaction of the Church vis à vis these dissidents was not violent. The leaders of the church employed an approach of non-confrontation. Humberto (2001:486) later argued that “Studies have demonstrated that the more efforts are expanded to combat such groups or individuals, the more they gain sympathizers, grow resistant and stubborn. The confrontation approach has caused some to grow numerically and gain ground. Instead, the church used the dialogue with the dissidents whenever an opportunity comes to clarify some issues”. Humberto (2001:496) further proposed that the dissidents be given a hearing so as to understand them so that their objections can be answered effectively.

Another approach adopted to handle the problem was to educate the lay and pastoral leadership to enable them to educate church members regarding the proper hermeneutics of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. The SDA Church continued to grow in spite of these dissidents.

### **Conclusion**

The message of the three angels in Revelation 14:12-16 formed the basic structure of the theology of mission during the formative years of the SDA Church. These messages were considered as preparing people for the Second Advent. This basic structure slowly evolved, to the view of a worldwide outreach. Thus it was not until the 1870s, when the theology of mission had sufficiently matured, that the increasing interest in the SDA message in other continents led to sending missionaries to areas outside of North America.

Having arrived in Europe, Andrews John Nevins described the importance of the world-wide SDA mission as “giving to the world the warning of the near approach of the Judgment, and in setting forth the sacred character of the law of God, as the rule of our lives and of the final Judgment, and the obligation of mankind to keep God’s commandments” (Damsteegt 1981:291). The Adventists carried out this mission by expounding the message in different parts of the world. The results were remarkable. Today the SDA message is heard in 842 languages

and dialects around the world. Every minute of every day two more people are baptized and added to church membership and the Adventist Church has a presence in 204 of the 230 countries recognized by the United Nations (Paulsen 2005:9).

In response to the question as to whether the SDA is member of the Ecumenical Movement or the World Council of Churches, Beach (2000:97), one of the leaders of the church, replies: "We have never been members, we are not now, and we have no plans to become members of the World Council of Churches as it has been organized for the past half-century". This position is radical. However, it is not easy to place the position of the SDA on the Christian field. Beach (2000:26) further wrote: "The church wants to have good relationship with other churches and participates in the meetings of Christian World Communion, but is not part of organized ecumenism". The church recognizes that the WCC has helped provide more accurate information regarding churches and has promoted human rights, including religious liberty, has combated the evils of racism etcetera; nevertheless, there are several obstacles to membership.

According to the Policy Statement of the WCC, to be a member means understanding the mission of the church as a joint responsibility shared with others, rather than engaging in missionary or evangelistic activities in isolation from each other, much less in competition with or proselytism of other Christian believers (Statement art. 3.7.7,9). Therefore the Adventists, with their concept of a worldwide commission, could not accept the idea of being "frozen out" of large areas of the world. They feel that the evangelical task can be best accomplished by remaining, organizationally, separate from the National Council and World Council of Churches and some other organizations in the religious world. For them, joining forces with church people and churches whose beliefs and goals differ from theirs would be dishonest. Certainly this attitude is not welcomed by the WCC. Fortunately, to date no friction between the WCC and the SDA has occurred.

As I have said, the position of the Church seems to be non-specific. On the one hand some Adventists have stated that SDAs cannot join the WCC yet on the other, many SDA theologians and other leaders are involved in the WCC, but in an individual capacity. Sometimes the church is invited to send observers to assemblies or some other conferences of the WCC. They can attend but only enjoy observer status. They do not pay any dues or funds to the organization. The position of the SDA towards the WCC remains the same.

The following chapter describes how this Church was implanted in Rwanda.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3. IMPLANTATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN RWANDA (1919-1931)**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

After its implantation in other African countries, the two pioneer Seventh-day Adventists arrived in Rwanda after the First World War: a Belgian, David Elie Delhove, and a Swiss, Henri Monnier. These were difficult times due to the aftermath of the First World War. As mentioned, they first occupied Protestant mission stations which had been abandoned by the Germans during the war, hoping the colonial authorities would allow them to occupy them for good. They wasted time trying to rehabilitate these mission stations instead of implanting their own. When the former owners of these mission stations returned, it was necessary to hand back their properties. Finally, after many difficulties the Adventists founded their own three mission stations, Gitwe (centre), Rwankeri (north) and Ngoma (west), in spite of the opposition by the Roman Catholic Church, which was dissatisfied with the new rival Church.

In this chapter the establishment of the SDA Church in these mission stations will be discussed. Furthermore, it will also be useful to know the geographical, historical, political, and religious background of Rwanda in order to gain a greater understanding of the situation.

#### **3.2. GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURE OF RWANDA**

Located two degrees south of the equator in east-central Africa, Rwanda is a small landlocked country, covering 10,169 square miles. It is 700 miles inland from the East coast of Africa. Rwanda is bordered by Uganda to the North, Burundi to the South, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West, and Tanzania to the East. Known as “the land of a thousand hills”, Rwanda is in the heart of the Central African plateau surrounded by Lake Kivu, Tanganyika, and Victoria. It has grasslands and small farms extending over rolling hills covering

the country, but there are also areas of swamps and mountains, including volcanic peaks north of Lake Kivu, in the Northwest border area. No navigable rivers or railways cross Rwanda. Domestic transport is therefore dependent on the road network. Regular bus services connect the larger centres once or twice a day. Most areas are frequently served by minibuses (taxi operators).

The pattern of life is overwhelmingly rural, with 95 percent of the population being engaged in agriculture. The population density is very high at 321 persons per square mile, but in some areas, it reaches more than 500 (National Census 2002:4).

The traditional ways of life remain the dominant pattern in the rural areas. Each family occupies a self-contained homestead on its own plot of land. Surrounding the enclosed compound is the family banana plantation, the produce of which is used in the making of banana wine (*urwagwa* in Kinyarwanda), a drink important in social functions, such as marriage (Nyrop 1969:39).

### **3.3 POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.3.1 Before colonialism**

Since there was no written history before the arrival of the Europeans, the available information on this period is derived from investigations of popular traditions and the oral records of the chroniclers of the royal court (*abiru*). The “*abiru*” were entrusted with memorizing the court rituals and the selection of the king’s successor. They also interpreted history (Prunier 1995:31).

The ethnic history is very important if one is to know and understand the history of this country. While, traditionally, the Rwandan population is divided into three ethnic groups, the majority being Hutu, and the minority Tutsi and the Twa, they spoke the same language (Kinyarwanda), and shared the same culture; the Tutsi later in 1444 established a monarchy headed by a Mwami (king) with a feudal caste of nobles and landlords (Muzungu B 2003:63). The Hutu were reduced to a

condition of subordination, and the relationship between the Tutsi and the Hutu came to be expressed in the form of a contract called “*ubuhake*”: an agreement by which the Hutu obtained the use of Tutsi cattle and, in return, rendered personal and military service to the owners of the cattle. The “*ubuhake*” between the ruling Tutsi minority and the subject Hutu majority became the dominant factor in the political and social organization. The “Mwami” was considered to be of divine origin and was said to be “the eye through which God looks upon Rwanda” (Nyrop 1969:7). The royal symbol of power of the king was the “*kalinga*”, a sacred drum. The popular opinion is that on this drum were hung the genitals of vanquished enemies.

According to Tutsi tradition, Gihanga (a Bantu name) led the migration of his people into Rwanda. After him, there were several other “*Bami*” (plural of Mwami). King Ruganzu I Bwimba expanded the country, according to oral historians. He began his reign in the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, the structure of the Tutsi monarchical system was organized by King Yuhi IV Gahindiro, who reigned about 1830. Under the King were members of the Council of Great Chiefs, who administered the more important of the districts into which the kingdom was divided. In each district, a cattle chief and a land chief collected tribute in livestock or agricultural produce. Districts were divided into “*umusizi*” or hills, under hill chiefs. These were divided into neighborhoods with each division being led by a type of subchief. The Tutsi held the majority of these administrative posts (Prunier 1995:11).

The military chiefs were very important in the control over the frontier districts. Their functions were both offensive and defensive. They carried out cattle raids on neighboring groups and protected the frontiers. The country was ruled by means of this structure for hundreds of years.

### **3.3.2 European Exploration**

Rwanda was one of the last regions of Africa to be penetrated by Europeans. The British explorers Sir Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke had traversed the perimeters of the area as early as 1855 in their search for the source of the Nile, but they did not enter Rwanda (Nyrop 1969:9). The Conference of Berlin in 1885 designated the Kingdoms of Rwanda and Burundi a German sphere of interest, although it was not until 9 years after the conference that the first European traversed Rwanda. He was the German explorer Count von Gotzen, who later became governor of German East Africa (Honke 1990:10). The area of Rwanda-Burundi was at the strategic junction of three empires. The Congo wanted the region owing to its access to Lake Victoria and as a link to the east coast of Africa, while Germany desired the area as part of a German Central African Empire and the British viewed the territory as a necessary link in the proposed Cape-to Cairo railroad, uniting British possessions in the north with those in the south. The death of King Leopold II in 1909 cleared the way for a 1910 agreement whereby representatives of the three powers settled on the natural frontiers as the boundaries between their possessions, with Germany officially possessing Rwanda and Burundi (Honke 1990:11).

### **3.3.3 The German Period**

In 1894, a 600-man German military expedition entered Rwanda under the leadership of Count Adolph Von Gotzen and by 1899, Rwanda was established as a German Protectorate. The Germans lived in fear of their neighbors, the British in Uganda and the Belgians in the Congo (DRC). The Belgians in control of the Congo posed a threat because they wanted access to Lake Victoria. The King of Rwanda permitted the Germans to station their forces in the country in order to provide protection against possible Belgian or British aggression. The Germans employed indirect rule to maintain the existing structure of the king's government. This structure was well organized. This German Administration was considered mutually advantageous to both the Germans and the king. The Germans ruled through the king, who in turn utilized German forces to strengthen

his own position. This permitted him absolute rule over his entire territory. Nyrop (1969:11) wrote: "The most significant aspects of German Administration were the punitive expeditions carried out against rebellious Hutu chiefs in the northern region, who had long proved difficult for the King to control". For example in 1912 Paulin Loupias, a Catholic missionary, was killed by the Rukara rwa Bishingwe (Hutu) in the northern region. Germany sent an expedition to suppress that revolutionary movement and to punish the murderers. This story is well known and local people all over the country have consequently considered the Rukara rwa Bishingwe as heroes.

In January 1916 German military forces were cited as comprising a total of 166 in the entire territory of Rwanda-Burundi. The Belgian strength in the area increased and German forces were withdrawn from Rwanda-Burundi without a major battle with the advancing Belgian troops. By May 21, 1916, the area had fallen under Belgian control. On August 23, 1923, in terms of the decision of the council of the United States of America, Great Britain, France, Italy, and other countries, the League of Nations, granted Belgium the mandate to govern Rwanda-Burundi (Prunier 1995:25).

### **3.3.4 Rwanda under Belgian Administration**

According to Nyrop (1969:13), the responsibilities of the Belgian administration were to maintain peace, order, and good administration; to work towards the emancipation of all slaves; to protect the African population from fraud, arms traffic, and the sale of alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately Belgium followed a pattern similar to that employed by Germany. The colonial administrators turned to the existing Tutsi organization; the latter still dominated the politico-socio-economic structure. The Belgians concluded however, that the abuses of the system would have to be eliminated, which they gradually set out to accomplish.



In 1917 the Belgian military forces placed limits on the arbitrary power of the king. The king, Yuhi V Musinga, was forced to officially proclaim a law regulating freedom of conscience all over the Kingdom (Nahimana 1987:130). The White Fathers initiated this law in order to enable them to reach the Tutsi group, especially the chiefs, because they were not receptive to the gospel. The white fathers knew that it was necessary to convert the Tutsi chiefs and then the Hutu mass would follow.

In 1923 the Administration issued a series of ordinances modifying the system of “*ubuhake*”. The payment of tribute to anyone other than the king was eliminated. Later in 1926 other changes were implemented in the administrative structures. One authority replaced three officers, the land, cattle, and army chiefs. King Yuhi V Musinga who tried to resist these changes was deposed in 1931 and forced into exile in the Congo, where he remained until his death in 1940. According to the tradition, the “*abiru*” held the secret of the replacement of the king. However, the Belgians bypassed this and selected his son, 18 year-old Charles Mutara III Rudahirwa (a Christian) as the new monarch (Muvara 1990:26).

These reforms were preceded by a period of soul-searching, essentially, in order to decide how to behave towards the court, the Tutsi chief complex chiefdom and the system of indirect administration instituted by the Germans. Mgr Classe, the bishop who had arrived as a simple priest and who advised the Belgians, wrote in 1927: “The greatest mistake this government could make would be to suppress the Tutsi caste. Such a revolution would lead the country directly to anarchy... We will have no better, more active and more intelligent chiefs than the Batutsi. They are the ones best suited to understand progress... The government must work mainly with them” (Prunier 1995:26). The administration accordingly declared that: “the government should endeavor to maintain and consolidate traditional cadre composed of the Tutsi ruling class, because of its important qualities, its undeniable intellectual superiority and its ruling potential. However, the mentality of this class must gradually alter. A way must be sought gradually to modify its conception of authority, which must be changed from one

of domination exercised solely for the benefit of its holders, to one of a more humane power to be exercised in the interests of the people” (Nyrop 1969:15). This situation contributed to the deterioration of the good relationship between Hutu and Tutsi. The latter felt that they were superior to the inferior Hutu, an attitude that led the latter to hate the Tutsis.

### **3.3.5 Belgian Administration under the United Nations**

After the formation of the United Nations, Rwanda-Burundi was made a Trust Territory, which ended the mandate period on December 3, 1949 when the General Assembly approved the Trusteeship Agreement and placed Rwanda-Burundi under the charge of Belgium. Belgium implemented a series of reforms in the economic, education, and administrative organization of the country.

During the Belgian mandate, changes occurred rapidly and Mgr Classe's predictions came to pass after he died in 1945. Slowly but surely the revolution of Hutu against Tutsi continued to grow. Social relationship conflicts increased between the two groups. It is in this social atmosphere that the church began to favor the growth of a Hutu counter-elite. By 1951 there were already as many black Rwandan priests as white ones. This native clergy was almost exclusively Tutsi. Being better educated than the Hutu, the Tutsi of the exalted lineage, however, had been the first to understand the implications of the new ideas regarding racial equality. They fully realized their social position was not impregnable and that they could not wait too long for Belgium to transfer power to them if they did not want to see the transfer challenged. Although nobody was yet aware of it, the hour was nigh and little time was left. Independence was near.

On July 14, 1952 a decree was issued, to create “elective councils” at every administrative level (sub-chieftaincy, chieftaincy, province, state), which did not lead to elections but to nominations of “suitable candidates” by the sub-chiefs

and the chiefs (Prunier 1995:43). The Hutu were included in these councils but only those who were pro-Tutsi; thus it was not a real sharing of power.

The Catholic Church used its periodical *Kinyamateka* in the process of change. Gregoire Kayibanda, a Hutu trained for that purpose, managed the periodical. It became the most widely read organ within the country (the *Kinyamateka* continues to exist).

In February 1957 the High Council of Rwanda, composed entirely of Tutsi released its "statement of views" calling for definite action leading toward self-government through the rapid preparation of the elite. This document brought an immediate reaction from Hutu leaders. They wrote a counter document, "*The Manifesto of the Bahutu* [plural of Hutu" signed by Gregoire Kayibanda and his group (Nyrop 1969:17). This document declared that the basic problem of the country was the political, economic, and social domination of the Hutu majority by a Tutsi minority. The Manifesto was the first indication of an organized Hutu opposition.

In June 1957, another step was taken when nine signatories formed the social Hutu Movement with the aim of promoting the democratization of institutions and combating abuses. A second Hutu organization was formed on November 1957, the Association for the Social Betterment of the Masses (APROSOMA) founded by Joseph Habyarimana Gitera. This Association launched strong attacks on the entire system.

The reaction of the Tutsi to these developments was twofold. On one hand the young educated Tutsi, led by chief Prosper Bwanakweri, sympathized with progressive ideas. They thought that they should be used in the reform of their own society as well as against the colonizers. On the other hand the extremist Tutsi engaged in an open counter offensive, first of all against the liberal Tutsi (the group of Prosper Bwanakweri). The king asked the Belgians to deport him because he was dangerous (Prunier 1995:46). In August 1959, the conservative

Tutsi created the “Rwandan National Union”, which was monarchist and hostile to the Belgians, and defended the idea of immediate independence.

During October 1959 Gregoire Kayibanda transformed his Hutu social Movement into a political party, the Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement (PARMEHUTU). The goal of this party was the termination of Tutsi hegemony and the ending of the feudal system.

By late 1959, the situation was so tense that any incident could have caused an uprising, which, unfortunately, did occur when the Hutu sub-chief Dominique Mbonyumutwa was attacked by young members of the Tutsi party and was severely beaten. The news spread like a wildfire and was transformed into a story in which some people said that he had died. The Hutu reaction was spontaneous. They attacked the Tutsi with traditional weapons, burnt their houses and killed them. The remaining Tutsi fled into neighboring countries.

According to Prunier (1995:51), from the beginning of this crisis, the Belgian authorities showed partiality towards the Hutu. They observed them burning Tutsi houses without intervening. This encouraged the Hutu to continue their killings with impunity. Prunier further reports that the Belgian Colonel Logiest, sent from Congo to contain the situation, declared: “Because of the force of circumstances, we have to take sides. We cannot remain neutral and passive”.

Because the Tutsi were demanding independence, thereby threatening colonial rule, the colonial Administration divided the two groups, insisting that the 15 percent of Tutsi in Rwanda could not rule over the majority. This represented a fairly radical shift on the part of the Belgian authorities who had previously always supported the Tutsi. They advocated Hutu self-rule only when their colonial rule was threatened.

The Hutu victory owed much to Belgian support, as previously discussed. Just before granting independence in 1962, the Belgians permitted several riots

intended to undo and undermine the authority of the Tutsi Chiefs. Hutu authority was centralized and the Tutsi were excluded from the political life of Rwanda.

Since independence, the ideology of the Hutu government has contained a genocidal element. Gregoire Kayibanda, the first President, in his speech in 1964, warned the Tutsi refugees that if they attempted to obtain political power again, the entire Tutsi community would be wiped out (oral source from Gasana Justin, a retired pastor). This ideology continued until 1994, when the genocide of the Tutsi took place. However, it was an error to pretend that all the Hutu supported the killings. The fact is that intermarriage between the two groups occurred, they spoke the same language and lived in the same villages; thus the problem was more political than ethnic or social. Applying a politics of unity and reconciliation, this problem could be solved.

The third group, the Twa, of pygmy origin, lived off the land and by hunting. Gradually, they left the forests and mingled with the other two groups, most of whom are now integrated into society because there are no forests remaining. Their main activity became pottery.

### **3.4. BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY IN RWANDA**

#### **3.4.1. Before the arrival of missionaries.**

Long before the arrival of missionaries, as noted earlier the people of Rwanda experienced a sense of worship of a creator being whom they called "Imana". Their form of worship consisted of two levels: The first, "Imana" was conceived as being all-powerful and sustaining the whole universe (*Rurema*). He is the creator of everything that exists. He sustains all forms of life. He could be offended, and in return be punished them by sending misfortune. On the second level, a daily form of worship involved the veneration of the spirits of ancestors. It is believed that when a person dies, he has not really died and that his spirit

continues to live in other forms. The dead still maintained an interest in the affairs of their living families and must be placated by offerings and gifts (Byilingiro 2002:48). When the spirit failed, Rwandans turn to “Imana”, because they knew that he is almighty and above all.

Rwandan names indicate that they believed in God. For example Habyarimana (it is God who gives birth), Akimana (belongs to God), etcetera. When the missionaries arrived, they considered all form of Rwandan adoration as being evil and pagan.

Against this background of religious belief and practice, Christianity was later engaged, challenged and accepted.

### **3.4.2 The Roman Catholic Church**

The White Fathers, led by Monsignor Joseph Hirth, were the first European missionaries to arrive in Nyanza, the royal capital of Rwanda, on February 2, 1900 (Nahimana 1987:57). These missionaries were recommended to king Musinga by the German Captain Bethe. Because of the good relationship between Germany and the king, they received a warm welcome. However, the king feared that these missionaries would contaminate his traditional religion, which he was bound to protect. This fear was well founded because later this effectively came to pass.

The missionaries brought gifts to the king, in particular, clothes, pearls, blankets etcetera, and declared their wish to establish themselves close to the Royal courts royal. The strategy of Monsignor Joseph Hirth, initially, was to reach the king directly, convert him to Christianity, and it was hoped that then the people would follow automatically. According to Byilingiro (2002:51), between 1825 and 1892, Cardinal Lavigerie was the motive force on behalf of the Roman Catholic mission. He propagated the hierarchical theory that “grace flows from the top

downwards. This theory suggested that once the upper class was converted, the entire populace would follow". Monsignor Léon Classe, who arrived in 1906, implemented Lavigerie's theory of evangelism and concentrated on evangelizing the Tutsi ruling class. Gatwa (1995:55) confirmed that the dream of the White Fathers was summed up in the famous slogan: "once you have the heads you have no problem in obtaining the body..." It was not the first time that this strategy had been used by the Catholic Missionaries; they had employed the same tactic in the Congo Kingdom. King Musinga was categorically opposed to this request because he felt that it was a threat to his kingdom.

The Tutsi chiefs restricted interaction between the missionaries and the local people. In fact, the doors of the ruling class were closed to the Roman Catholic missionaries until the mid-1920s. The early converts consisted largely of the Hutu peasants residing around the mission stations, because the missionaries protected them from powerful feudal lords.

It was easy to understand why the Tutsi rejected the missionaries at first. The Tutsi chiefs perceived the White Fathers as a threat to their order of governance. Disappointed, the missionaries left Nyanza and founded their first mission station of Save, in the southern of the country, on February 8, 1900 (Muvura 1990:9). It was the beginning of the foundation of other Catholic mission stations within the country.

However, the relationship between the Catholic Church and traditional Rwandan authority continued to deteriorate. Monsignor Classe summarized the situation in the following words: "Until now, nothing from the political standpoint or in the administrative domains in Rwanda, has really favored Catholicism. Now, Catholics are considered enemies of the king, enemies of the customs of Rwanda" (Rutayisire 1987:167). The Monsignor's solution was the removal of King Musinga and to replace him with his son, who would probably be easy to handle with regards to Roman Catholic objectives. Thus, on November 12, 1931, the Governor, escorted by soldiers, entered Nyanza and forced King Musinga to

leave the next day for Kamembe in southwest Rwanda where a house had been prepared for his imprisonment. Monsignor Classe and the Governor destroyed the tradition of the “*abiru*” who had usually enthroned the kings. They proclaimed Rudahigwa as the new king of Rwanda and Classe gave him a legal name, Mutara III Rudahigwa. He was also baptized Charles Léon Pierre (Muvara 1990:32). The new king accepted Christianity while supporting traditional patterns of worship. This means that he had not really been converted but he wanted to win the favor of both his subjects and the Catholic fathers. Kankazi, the mother of the king, was also baptized and took the name Radegonde.

The expected result was achieved; thousands of new Christians were baptized following the king’s conversion. The departed Musinga had been like the rock that stopped the torrent; once removed, the water surged on. This has been referred to as a “conversion tornado” (Byiringiro 2002:55). However, like that of their king, these conversions were not sincere. People continued to observe their traditional religion besides Catholicism. Rwandans remarked: “*Kwemera ntibibuza uwanga kwanga*”, which meant, “to say accepting does not constrain someone from refusing” (Nahimana 1987:148). For the Belgians it was straightforward to continue ruling indirectly through the baptized Tutsi and Catholicism was declared the state religion.

The Tutsi were perceived as political leaders, as well as religious leaders. This choice of one tribe over the other once again undermined the unity of the people of Rwanda. This culminated in the genocide of the Tutsi in 1994 in a country largely dominated by Christians, but half converted.

### **3.4.3 The arrival of Protestant churches**

According to Gatwa (1990:39-66), the Protestant churches were implanted as described below.



### **3.4.3.1 The Lutherans - 1907**

Lutheran missionaries of the Bethel mission who had previously established an extensive work in Tanzania brought Protestantism to Rwanda after Catholicism in 1907. They entered Rwanda from the east and were received by the grand chief Gahigi. On July 22, 1907, they visited Nyanza, the political centre of the country where King Musinga received them positively. He spoke Swahili, a language that the missionaries knew well because it was also spoken in East Africa. King Musinga was interested in Protestant missionaries because he wanted to know whether the Roman Catholic missionaries would leave Rwanda once the Protestants were established in his country, but they answered that the country seemed to be large enough to host two missions.

The missionaries attempted to be friendly to the king by giving him gifts as the Catholics had. Johanssen gave him a magnet; the other missionary a belt. Musinga gave them a cow and ten goats (Byilingiro 2002:63). He also allowed them to set up a mission station on the shores of Lake Kivu in the western part of the country. However, they explained to him that they would be far from Bukoba, Tanzania, their port for fresh provision. He then consented to their installation in the east. The Seventh-day Adventists followed them in 1919.

### **3.4.3.2 The Baptists - 1920**

In 1920, The “Union des Eglises Protestantes Baptistes au Rwanda” from Belgium entered Rwanda and established their mission station in the southern part of the country. Much later, American missionaries from the Congo formed the “Association des Eglises Baptistes au Rwanda” (Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda) in 1964.

#### **3.4.3.3. The Anglicans - 1922**

Through education and evangelism, the Anglican Church began its activities at Gahini in the northeast in 1922. They enhanced the development of Protestant consciousness. The massive spiritual revival of the Christian Church, known as the East African Revival, started at Gahini in 1930.

#### **3.4.3.4. The Pentecostals - 1940**

The Free Swedish Mission from the Congo implanted this church in 1940, but local congregations were not united in a national organization until 1979. The Pentecostal community spread almost everywhere, offering healing and emotional power.

#### **3.4.3.5. The Methodists - 1940**

The American Methodist Church entered Rwanda from Burundi in the early 1940s. They were active mostly in the southwestern part of the country. In 1964, the mother mission granted them autonomy.

According to Sebununguri (2001:35), the Protestant churches brought about the Revival within the country (Abarokore). This revival led many people to join them; even many Tutsi chiefs were converted to Protestant Christianity. We know that they were not satisfied with the Catholic Church; hence they welcomed Protestantism, hoping that these new missionaries would be different. The Catholics watched helplessly as Protestantism spread in Rwanda, even among the ruling class. The Revival Movement led to conflict between the Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic Church as an “established” entity sought to monopolize the religious leadership of Rwanda while the Protestant churches were referred to as sects. In reality, the Catholic Church wanted to spread its message to all people in the country and expand its roots without interference from other religious groups. When they realized that people were being converted to the

Protestant creed, the Catholics were so annoyed that some Catholic sub-chiefs went so far as to whip Protestant members for not attending the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestants were not politically strong enough to challenge the Catholics. Consequently, their reaction to this situation was not important. However, these churches, contrary to the Catholics, encouraged unity and peace among their church members. They were much involved in ministry to the suffering by helping refugees during the ethnic conflicts.

When the Protestant missionaries departed on the basis of a permanent return to their homelands they reassigned their responsibilities to local leaders, many of whom were not yet intellectually mature enough to speak against the evils of government politics or Hutu extremists. They lacked adequate pastoral training to recognize their distinctive role as church leaders. They tended to become partisans of the ruling party. Finally, the result was that many of them participated in the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi.

#### **3.4.3.6 The arrival of the Seventh-Day Adventists in Rwanda**

The Seventh-day Adventist Mission in Rwanda started in difficult times after World War I; as mentioned, by an Adventist Belgian soldier, D. Elie Delhove, from a small village (Marchienne-Docherie) in the French-speaking region of Wallonia (Belgium), and who was born on June 9, 1882 from a simple peasant Protestant family. After primary school, he graduated from secondary school at Jumet. Before he entered military service like other young people in his country, he owned a shoe shop in order to earn money to survive.

Delhove came into contact with the Adventist message when he received a box sent by a relative in Canada, containing evangelical tracts printed by Adventists. He studied them but only learned about the SDA Church much later from Joseph Curdy, an evangelist from Switzerland who conducted a campaign at Liege. He decided to be baptized in the SDA in 1906 (Delhove L 1984:2). This decision attracted difficulties from his own family who attempted to cause him to alter his

views but his faith in Adventism was strong and firm. After his marriage (April 22, 1909) to Virginie, he promised God that he would be a missionary overseas and began to prepare himself accordingly. He went to England to study English and attended Stanborough College. He was also a nurse, which he thought would help him to take care of Africans. When he felt ready, he applied and prayed that God would help him to find a place in Africa. After one year, he received two calls. One was from South Africa, and another from Central Africa. He immediately accepted the latter because he was interested in that part of Africa. In the letter, he was assigned to work with Arthur Asa Carscallen in opening a school at Kamagambo (Kenya).

Delhove was ready to leave when SDA church leaders in Europe told him that he could not take his family with him because conditions of life in Africa were harsh, therefore, he left alone in 1913. Certainly, he was not discouraged because he went where he was needed the most and was enthusiastic to begin the work.

Arriving at the mission station, they began to erect the station and the school. Time passed by quickly as they were absorbed by the work. Meanwhile, his hopes were shattered because the First World War broke out in August 1914, and Germany invaded Belgium. The Delhoves found themselves in the occupied area. During that time, communication between him and his family was interrupted.

As a soldier, Delhove was obliged by his country to return home and participate in the war. However, instead of doing so, he decided to write and ask to serve in the African countries because he knew that he would experience more religious liberty in Africa than in his own country. The authorities granted him permission; hence he abandoned his mission for four years.

According to his daughter L Delhove (1984:8), it was while he was involved in the war that he arrived in Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Congo. He served as a spy for the British, became a District commissioner in Rutshuru (Congo), a police

chief, a tax collector, a recruiter for the army, and was put in charge of logistics. The question that arose was whether it is acceptable for the SDA members to be involved in any wars. The answer to this question is provided by Bert Beach (2000:51), a retired Secretary General of the International Religious Liberty Association and Director of the Department of Public Affairs of the General Conference of SDA: "...Adventists, as loyal citizens, their position is to serve in army as a non-combatant capacity, that is, not to bear arms (saving life and not taking life). Their involvement is basically humanitarian because they believe that killing people is a sin even during the war". Delhove L (1984:8) further wrote about her father: "...he never carried a gun. When he had occasion to use one, it was to shoot game for food". However we can observe that his involvement constituted more than that because the purposes of all these activities were not only to save lives. For example, as a spy his responsibilities were known to be dangerous and sometimes required a life to be taken.

When Delhove was crossing and scouting the countries of Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Congo, during the war, he learned the local languages and identified the sites where mission stations would be located. These two elements were helpful to him when he restarted the missionary work. During wartime, he never forgot that he was a missionary.

After five years of separation from his family, he was granted a furlough to England where he stayed until his country was liberated from the German occupation. In great joy, he reached his family in December 1918.

While in England, Elie Delhove met Henri Monnier, a young Swiss married to an English lady. He interested them in missionary work and they agreed to return to Africa with him as missionaries.

In March 1919, the two families left England and reached the estuary of the Congo River five months later. From this place they traveled by riverboat, railway, truck, and by foot through the vast Congo. Finally they arrived at Kibuye

(Rwanda) on the Eastern shore of Lake Kivu on August 4, 1919 (Delhove, L 1984:17).

The two missionaries separated; Henri Monnier went to Remera mission station while Elie Delhove took care of Kirinda. They refurbished houses, taught the peasants how to cultivate, planted trees around the mission station, and preached the Adventist doctrines, which had not been heard before. They introduced the keeping of the Seventh-day Sabbath instead of Sunday, the abstinence from alcoholic beverages, paying tithes etcetera (Segatwa 1958:2). The former Protestant Christians of these abandoned mission stations were confused by these new teachings, which they accepted rather passively. The resistance was internal.

Delhove and his colleague stayed for twenty months, waiting for final permission to be granted to occupy these mission stations permanently. Unfortunately, the District Commissioner informed them that they were required to leave Remera and Kirinda and hand them over to their former proprietors. They were, however, permitted to open their own SDA stations within the country.

### **3.5. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MISSION STATIONS IN RWANDA**

#### **3.5.1. The Founding of Gitwe, first SDA mission station in Rwanda**

Elie Delhove left Kirinda without any known destination, hoping that he would find land for his mission station. According to oral sources (from Gasana Justin), he took the direction of Nyanza in the east, accompanied by people from Kirinda. He was scouting the region when one day, he reached a narrow hill between Kirinda and Nyanza, which was deserted. It was said that many years before, King Mibambwe Sekarongoro had passed there from Kinyaga and suddenly a storm broke out. He could not find any shelter, so he was enraged and cursed the hill in the name of the spirits of his ancestors. Thus the inhabitants deserted the hill.

People believed that the King was like God and what he said was taken as divine.

The name of the hill was Gitwe, which means “skull” in Kinyarwanda, because many human skulls were accumulated there year by year. People used to bring their dead and throw them there, where hyenas ate them. Hence their skulls remained in the bush. L Delhove (1984:21) wrote: “When father heard this story and saw the strange hill, he was convinced that this was the leading of the Lord and that in time the curse would be turned into a blessing”. Elie Delhove was not troubled by this story because he knew that the king was not God. He then decided to obtain permission from the authorities to settle. Anet (1921:2), the Secretary General of the “Société Belge des Missions Protestantes au Congo” in his report to the Society’s Council recorded: “The authorities of Rwanda (not the king), while respecting Elie Delhove much, hesitated to allow the extension of the Adventist mission. They suspected the Adventists in general to be connected to the panafricanism movement.” According to Rumiya (1992:202), Brussels suspected that the Adventists would defend black rights. However, there were no other sources confirming these allegations. Anet (1921:8) reported that the king needed strong Protestant missions to counterbalance the influence of the White Fathers. The king felt that the situation was just like a scale with two plates. The king was to act as the centre of the balance by being in the middle, with the mission stations on each side. The king said that he was not able to maintain the balance with one mission alone. However, because E. Delhove had been asked to leave Kirinda, the authorities finally granted him this land.

January 30, 1921, he left Kirinda, accompanied by nine natives to help him build his house and the mission station. It seems that the Protestant missionaries feared that Delhove would not accept having to leave their mission stations, because in the same report Anet further said that he was very relieved when he learned that Mr Delhove had spontaneously left. He had established these mission stations only temporarily at the request of the Resident. Other missionaries, especially Roman Catholics, wished that he would build his mission

station far from theirs. They disliked what he taught about the Sabbath, abstinence from pork, tobacco, and the tithe system.

According to L. Delhove (1984:22), people around Gitwe were afraid because they thought that E. Delhove would die since Gitwe had been cursed by the King and they waited to see what would happen to him. Lydie Delhove added that her father started to search for some building materials, to build a shed around the neighboring Gitwe, but the natives did not want so much as to bring any pole or have anything to do with his project. Finally, when people realized that natives from Kirinda were not being struck dead, they came to help, one by one. E. Delhove attracted people by giving them salt and cloth.

After moving his family from Kirinda to Gitwe, he started teaching reading and writing to the natives, showed them how to plant trees, and of course taught them the Word of God. He opened a dispensary and rendered medical assistance to the needy. It was easy to communicate the Word of God to people after healing them from diseases, which were abundant. The natives, according to various oral sources, retired Adventist pastors, loved Elie Delhove. Patiently he continued to build and preach the gospel. In 1922 the first baptism of five people took place. Those baptized were mainly from Kirinda. They were the first Rwandan Adventists.

From Gitwe, he crossed the border and founded two mission stations in Burundi: Buganda (1925) and Ndora. He then returned to Gitwe in 1928. One year later he ended his work in Rwanda. He was appointed by the African Division to work in the Congo (DRC) where he founded several mission stations (Neufeld 1996:454). At the age of retirement, he preferred to settle in the North of this large country. The Government granted him a plot at Muhola (Lubero, Kivu), where he died from a heart attack on March 12, 1949.

This man was a great pioneer, especially in founding mission stations. It is clear that the SDA used him to establish mission stations in the Great Lakes region



(Burundi, Rwanda and Congo). His dynamism was evident in the fact that he liked his work and understood Rwandans by learning their language and culture. He was committed to the work, and respected by his colleagues and authorities in these countries. Two weeks before his death, the Royal Prince Regent of Belgium named him “Chevalier de l’ordre de Leopold II” for his service to the natives of the country (Congo) (Delhove L 1984:86).

### **3.5. 2. Rwankeri: Second mission station**

Henri Monnier rehabilitated Remera, another abandoned Protestant mission station, and occupied it from July to October 1920. When he was asked to leave, he went to the eastern part of the country, where he met with Alfred Matter, a Swiss Adventist pioneer from Germany who was working in Kenya among the “Luo” people. They decided to start their mission station at Kawangire (Gahini) near Lake Muhazi. Unfortunately, the authorities required them to leave the place because this region belonged to Britain and they planned to use the area for a railway from East Africa. Delhove, who was in charge of the church work in Rwanda and Gitwe mission station at that time, was informed and came to meet them. Together, they immediately decided to move to the northern part of the country. After many difficulties and much hostility from local residents on their way, they arrived in the volcanic region of Umulera, bordering the Congo and Uganda. As previously mentioned, the population of this part of the country was hostile to the Whites. Another problem was the lack of water due to frequent volcanic eruptions. The lava blocked the water sources. They continued to scrutinize the region, hoping that they would find a place where they could find water and soil to make bricks. Eventually they arrived at Rwankeri, located in a valley at an altitude of about seven thousand feet. In the North and West there were many extinct volcanoes, the highest of which, Karisimbi, lies in view of that place. The area was one of the most densely populated rural areas of Africa. They settled there in 1921.

The two missionaries worked together until Alfred Matter went on Furlough with the purpose of studying tropical medicine, leaving Henri Monnier alone for two years. He had learned to speak Kinyarwanda while he was at Kirinda, but it was probably during this long and lonely period of intimate contact with the Banyarwanda that his knowledge and use of the language was polished and perfected. He published a popular grammar book of the Kinyarwanda language for English speaking missionaries and also translated passages of the Bible, hymns, the baptismal manual, instructional booklets, Adventist doctrines, and devotional literature. He would read and reread the passages he had translated to his African associates and they would suggest alterations and refinements. He was aided by Pastor Eleazar Semutwa, one of the first Adventist pastors to be ordained in Rwanda. The name of Henri Monnier is well known among the Kinyarwanda Bible translators (Staples 1980:23).

It was not only the language that Monnier learned, he also sought to understand the Banyarwanda themselves as another strategy for evangelism. He took interest in their beliefs and religious ceremonies, knew their death ceremonies and did not condemn everything he saw, or quickly accuse them of pagan depravity. Contrary to other missionaries, he saw the good qualities and values in Banyarwanda customs and social institutions. Others may have been bolder explorers, greater founders and builders of mission stations, but Henri Monnier was a man who sought to understand what moved others, trying to comprehend their concepts of reality. He appears to have been more anxious to lead them to the Christian God than to break down and condemn the Banyarwanda's cultural practices, which was certified by certain oral testimonies of people who lived and worked with him:

“When I was sick he visited me in my house, treated me and prayed with me” (Mukecuru Zachee, Monnier's former secretary).

“He helped me as a parent helps his child” (Munzuyarwo, retired SDA pastor).

“When we were cutting grass to cover a church he helped us to carry it on his shoulders about five kilometers” (Birikunzira Efasto, retired pastor).

“When I had a misunderstanding with my friend he reconciled us” (Gasana, a SDA Christian).

“He visited people with the idea of knowing their situation and when he found that they had difficulties he helped them” (Rujangu Manzi, retired SDA pastor).

Monnier protected people and their cattle against the lions and hyenas that were a threat to everybody, by shooting the predators. He did this regardless of whether those concerned were Adventists or not. Thus he gained popularity among the natives. They gave him the nickname “Rukandirangabo”, which means “the mighty man”. The impact of his behavior on the population was tremendous. Many people came to listen to his message and accepted it. Adventists within the country bore the name “*Aba munyeri*” (People of Monnier) for a long time. He maintained a good relationship with the residents. The first baptism of Peter Rukanganjunga and John Ruvugihomvu took place on November 10, 1924 (Monnier 1924:1).

Henri Monnier later went beyond Rwanda and reached Goma and Masisi in eastern Congo. He then sent teachers and pastors to establish churches there. According to Staples (1980:23), he left Rwanda in 1944 after the inauguration of a very impressive church building at Rwankeri mission station.

### **3.5. 3. Ngoma: third mission station**

As we have seen, Rwankeri mission station was a successful evangelical experience for Henri Monnier. Another missionary, Dr Sturges from Songa Hospital in the Congo, arrived at Rwankeri in 1931. His purpose was to begin medical work in the country. Together with Alfred Matter, they left Rwankeri for the western part of Rwanda. Their aim was to search for a place where they could build a hospital and mission station. They reached Kibuye and Mubuga but unfortunately for him the Roman Catholics had already settled there. The Mandatory power, respectful of the freedom of worship and of conscience, did not seek to confine the various missions into administratively delimited zones: but to safeguard peace, it imposed the rule of a minimum distance of 5 km between stations, of 2 km between branches of different confessions (Lacger 1959:631). As a result they left the area and reached Ngoma. According to Athanase Ngarambe, son of Barnabas Bisomimbwa who accompanied these missionaries, the Chief, Ndukebuka, granted them this place. However, the “diaire” of the Catholics of Kabgayi (July 1931) said that this chief refused to give them the plot. Their position was understandable because they were opposed to the Adventist missionary progress and sometimes used local Chiefs to try to stop them.

Helped by natives, Peter Rukanganjunga and Barnabas Bisomimbwa from Rwankeri, the missionaries opened a primary school. Alfred Matter was in charge of the mission station as evangelist while Dr Sturges gave medical assistance in front of his tent. The missionary work here was quite different from the previous missions. It concentrated on healing people from physical diseases before spreading the gospel. Adventists believed that Christ used the same method. Thus, Dr Sturges played an important role. The first patient was admitted to the hospital on December 20, 1933 (Neufeld 1996:138). People began to trust the

medicine of the missionaries and abandoned traditional treatments. Ngoma Hospital later became a very important and well known medical centre in the region.

### **3.6 HOW PEOPLE RESPONDED TO THE ADVENTIST MESSAGE**

Pioneering in Rwanda, like other African countries, was not easy. The state of the country can be imagined. There were no roads, neither transportation facilities nor materials for evangelization. Traditional religion was predominant, which people found very difficult to abandon. The Rwandan traditional religion was the way of life, and everybody was involved in it. This is why they mingled the two, the traditional religion and Christianity.

Moses Segatwa (1958:2) wrote: "It was very difficult for the people to accept our message because it was not common. We preached the Sabbath, asked people to abandon tobacco and alcohol. This was not easy".

In the education sector, the problem was the same. He further recorded: "The parents were traumatized by the idea of sending their children to school. They even hid them very far from home so that we might not take them. Parents were ready to give us bribes as a substitute of their kids". At that time, teachers sought for students from the parents. The latter sometimes agreed to give them unloved children because they believed that they would die.

However, the Adventist message was accepted by people in spite of the difficulties mentioned. The membership of Adventist mission stations increased rapidly. People understood that being a Christian meant a radical change, not only being baptized. The following table summarizes the situation from 1929 to 1932, according to the reports for the Belgian Administration of Ruanda-Urundi presented to the "chambers" by the Minister of Colonies.

	1929	1930	1931	1932
Stations	3	3	3	3
Succursales	28	36	44	57
Missionaries	7	8	15	15
Catechists	51	60	61	73
Catechumens	300	1 039	1 851	4 373
Christians	239	265	432	886
Baptisms	-	87	213	498

Table no 4: situation of membership

This table shows that Rwandans gradually accepted the Adventist message.

### **Conclusion**

Like other countries around the world, Rwanda has been evangelized and its citizens accepted Christianity as a new religion instead of their traditional ones, which were considered by missionaries as being pagan.

Rwandans tried to resist the arrival of colonialists and their protected missionaries. It is true that the country was politically and religiously well organized, but the whites were more powerful and replaced them with their administration.

The SDA arrived in this environment with the same message but emphasized the observance of the Sabbath and a new style of life. People who cherished their traditional religion and culture added Christianity as another way of life but not as a radical change. However, the SDA continued with its mission. In the following chapter we will consider its growth from the three mission stations initially founded.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4. THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA (1933-1994)**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Seventh-day Adventist church was already implanted in three mission stations as previously mentioned: Gitwe, Rwankeri and Ngoma. From these mission stations the SDA spread to other areas of the country. Within a relatively short time, this church experienced tremendous expansion and growth in evangelism and social activities, as a result of its evangelical methods and theological particularities experienced in other countries.

In this chapter, the methods and the strategies used by SDA to succeed in its mission, from 1933 to the 1994 Rwandan genocide will be considered.

#### **4.2 GROWTH AFTER IMPLANTATION**

The situation within the country had altered since the first missionaries arrived. Various Protestant Churches were implanted after those of the Roman Catholics. Socially, these missions opened schools for natives, which permitted some of them to write and read the Kiswahili language. On the other hand, missionaries learned the Kinyarwanda language. This facilitated communication between them and the natives. Health centres were built in order to take care of patients because people used traditional medicine which was sometimes mixed with sorcery and magic. Malaria, fever and wounds were among the predominant medical conditions. Economically, main roads were available to facilitate the transportation of people and goods. This allowed missionaries to buy vehicles, motorcycles or bicycles, which replaced mules. In general, the situation was stable and easier for the growth of the church.

The SDA approaches in Rwanda were not different from those experienced in other countries all over the world, but were adapted to the context. Although the church's growth has been different in most places, it would be presumptuous to over generalize. However, several tendencies in church growth became apparent.

#### **4.2.1 The open-air preaching method**

In 1931, C.W. Bozarth who was in charge of East Congo Union (Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Congo) with the headquarters at Gitwe, together with R. L Jones from Cameroon, realized that they could not continue to preach alone. They then struck upon the idea of involving local lay people in evangelism. Thus, some Rwandans who had accepted the Adventist faith dedicated themselves to proclaiming the Gospel to their fellow men and women. They established open-air evangelistic crusades called "*Amavuna*" (Kinyarwanda word from the verb *kuvuna* which means evangelistic effort). Lay people trained by the missionaries conducted these crusades (Segatwa 1958:3). Their testimonies greatly contributed to the expansion of the Adventist faith and to the growth of the church. The faithful believers very often told their families and the people of their village about the joy and satisfaction they had found through the Christian faith. Their daily Christian life influenced their neighbors and friends to accept the Adventist faith. It was transmitted from one person to another and from village to village.

Prior to these crusades, lay people invited the inhabitants from house to house, visited areas, and formed prayer groups. During the meetings, the music teams (choirs) attracted crowds with their songs. People gathered in the open-air to listen to the preacher. Many conversions to the Adventist message were recorded. This method was a success for the SDA Church in Rwanda (Segatwa 1958:3). As a result, many churches were built around Gitwe Mission Station. Encouraged by this success, Church leaders continued to train lay people, and in



1934, the first Rwandan pastors were ordained for the ministry: Moses Segatwa, Daniel Kagegera and Eleazar Semutwa (information provided by Mukecuru Zacheus, a retired SDA pastor, March 17, 2005). They did not receive any theological training but were only committed to the Lord and His work. At that time, it seemed that, for white missionaries, further education for natives was not their purpose. However, the work was difficult. M. Segatwa (1958:3) wrote: "It was not easy for people to accept our message because it was new for them. We spoke about the Sabbath instead of Sunday. We asked people to abandon tobacco and alcohol beverages. People thought that those who accepted the religion of the Whites would die. In a special manner women were not allowed to accept any message because they used to be only housewife".

The Church organization did not employ lay people. They worked on a voluntary basis and were not regular workers. Only pastors and teachers received a salary from the tithe given by the believers. At that time they did not complain because they felt the burden to preach the Gospel. It was an act of faith with the hope that its reward would be received in heaven.

To illustrate the success of the "*amavuna*" method, on September 27, 1957, a decision was taken by the Union Committee, chaired by Watt, to stop evangelizing for one year, because the number of new converts had gone beyond their capacity to handle. The church was not able to control the situation (Congo Union Mission Minutes, action 450/57 of November 27, 1957). This was exceptional in the history of this church. Statistics showed that the number of baptisms was 20 247 in 1958, at the Gitwe mission station alone (Segatwa 1958:3).

In the Rwankeri mission station, Henri Monnier worked very hard. He applied the same method but was more efficient. His particular strength was that he went deeper into the Rwandan culture and tried to understand it. Consciously or unconsciously he had been a good anthropologist in the sense that he sought to

understand the institutions and functions of the culture and social structures of the people he sought to evangelize.

According to Staples (1984:8), Professor of Church History at Andrews University (USA), it is often easier to produce outward conformity than to nurture and wait for the change that grows from within. But Henri Monnier appears to have chosen a slower and gentler method. He presented the biblical message of salvation as winsomely as possible. He reinforced close personal contact and set a good example. He did this at the fireside or while working and walking and formally in teaching and preaching. The natives knew that he understood and loved them. They loved him too. Other missionaries have been forgotten, but not Henri Monnier!

A strong Christian community developed which functioned as a substitute tribe and provided a centre for organizing local religious and social activities. Henri Monnier, aided by other missionaries, united the Rwankeri community in Christian love and dedication to God. This was confirmed by A. F. Tarr (1934:13), the secretary of the Southern African Division who visited Rwankeri, and found a vast congregation of 7157 gathered together to worship God on a Sabbath morning. Considering the response of the community to the Adventist message, it seemed that nobody wished to remain pagan. It was realized that at the Rwankeri mission station, the situation was beyond the ability and resources of the mission staff. Henri Monnier approached the Union for advice. Unfortunately, he was advised to slow the work down and keep it under control. The church leaders feared that chaos might result from this situation of massive conversions.

The general opinion of the White missionaries was that the Hutu were more receptive to the gospel than the Tutsi. In Rwankeri there were more Hutu and fewer Tutsi than in Gitwe. However, it was noticed that the earlier strong response to the gospel took place, largely, but not exclusively, among the Hutu, although the Tutsi responded as well. The behavior of the people in Rwankeri was different from those in Gitwe. In fact whatever the people of Rwankeri did,

they were either fully engaged or not at all. In this case, when they accepted the message, their commitment was total. When a member of a family became converted, all the members of that family would be converted. This was more likely to happen if the head of the family became a convert first. If he was greatly respected in the whole compound, his uncles, nephews, aunts, and nieces would eventually become members of his church. This explained how sometimes almost a whole compound in a village or town would be filled with Adventists. On the other hand, if a member of a family refused the message, he became a stumbling block to the members of his family. It is evident once again how Rwandans accepted the message not by personal conviction but by following their families or relatives. This had a negative impact on their Christian life.

Staples (1984:20) further wrote: "The missionaries themselves were surprised at the general excitement aroused and by the fervent intensity of the new evangelical lay forces".

Another success of Henri Monnier was the organization of annual camp meetings which originated from North America in the early 1800s among Methodists and became popular within the ranks of the Adventist believers of the 1840s. They normally took three whole days each year. It was a quick and effective evangelistic method. The programme consisted of sermons, Bible studies, choir songs, and public reports of the work progress (Amorim 1990:18).

O. A. Olsen, then President of the General Conference of the SDA, detailed the benefits of camp meetings as observed in America (Ferch 1918:136,137):

- Conversions, particularly of a large number of youth;
- The opportunity to give daily counsel to those seeking a personal experience with God;

- Members seek to know how to serve God through Christian witness, and return to their homes, churches, and communities better equipped to do so; and
- It gives opportunity for those in attendance to witness the ordination of one or more ministers. This frequently results in others devoting themselves to fulltime work for the church.

Those camp meetings prepared people to accept Jesus as their savior. Every Adventist was asked to invite at least one non-Adventist and prepare him for this occasion. Neufeld (1976:1236) said: "Nowhere in the world has attendance at camp meetings by SDAs been larger than at Rwankeri, where as many as 20 000 have been present by actual count".

The great emphasis on camp meetings as a church growth strategy meant that, inevitably, opposition from other religious bodies would erupt from time to time. Other denominations near the Adventist mission stations were dissatisfied because their members were being invited by Adventists to attend these meetings. However, some of them went there to see the white missionaries and just shake their hands, arriving before the congregation to seek prayer. After the Camp meeting some of them returned to their churches, whereas others accepted the Adventist message. As a result, new churches were organized following the camp meetings in suburbs where formerly there were few or no existing members. Other denominations did not use this strategy, which is why their members were attracted by Adventists. The reaction of these churches towards their members was to prevent them from going back there.

In 1936, an important event took place in Rwankeri. Two natives, John Ruvugihomvu and Paul Rwangezeho, were ordained for the ministry. They had been working with Henri Monnier from Remera (information given by Mukecuru Zacheus, Rwankeri, January, 2006).

Henri Monnier left Rwanda after twenty years of fruitful work. For unknown reasons, he was transferred to the Middle East. He died young of typhoid fever in Beirut (Lebanon) in December 1944, at the age of 48 (Staples 1980:23). Pastors who worked with him testified that it was his life, not merely what he taught, that moved them. This kind of evangelism by living according to the message delivered was very attractive.

Rwankeri mission station continued to grow under different missionaries such as Spieman who replaced Henri Monnier, A. L. Davy (1946) J.A. Birkenstock (1950), and Evert (1954). In 1956, Rwankeri and other mission stations in the east Congo became the "East Congo Field Mission" with the headquarters at Rwankeri (Neufeld 1996:487). According to the same source, in 1960 the Congo gained independence from Belgium. Unfortunately, the political situation in this country deteriorated because tribal wars broke out. Due to this problem and the great concentration of membership in the two countries, Rwanda and Burundi were organized to form the new "Central African Union" in 1961, with W. R. Vail as president. In view of the political developments that took place in these two countries as well as in the Republic of the Congo during the next two years, this proved to be a wise move. The headquarters was set up in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. This choice was important not because Burundi boasted more members but because the capital city facilitated the transport of goods from the east via Lake Tanganyika.

From Gitwe and other mission stations, people moved to Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda, mainly for economic reasons. Some carried on commercial activities while others were working for government institutions. Among these people were Seventh-day Adventists. They organized "*amavuna*" together with pastors from Gitwe, like Z. Rutwa. One of the lay people, Jonathan Nsabimana of Remera Adventist Church in Kigali, told me on March 20, 2006 that it was a success and that without delay the first church was established at Nyamirambo (Kigali). Later on in 1965, a mission station was founded, led by S. Baraburiye as first

president. The church extended its evangelical activities in the eastern part of the country from the capital.

According to Neufeld (1976:1235), the Gitwe mission station had become so large in the south that it had to be reorganized. November 17, 1970, in Blantyre (Malawi), a decision was taken by the church organization to divide this mission station into two:

- The “South Rwanda Mission” with its headquarters in Butare which would be in charge of Gikongoro and Cyangugu provinces; and
- The “Central Rwanda Mission” with the headquarters in Gitwe, in Gitarama province.

The “South Rwanda Mission” was the fifth SDA mission station in Rwanda. According to the country’s geography, these mission stations were strategically planted (in the centre, north, south, east and west). Thus it was easy to spread the Adventist message to every corner of this small country. Later in 1984, the number of Adventists increased to 142 381, according to “Rwanda Union Mission” statistical reports.

Wagner (1994:33) observed that around the world, some Christians rejected the multiplication of churches. They affirmed that the education of believers was more important than evangelism. Others held that church unity was more important than extension. But for the Seventh-day Adventists, multiplication of churches was very important because their aim was to fulfill the great commission which was found in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age”. They believed that the church could grow if missions and missionaries and pastors were engaged in witnessing for Christ. For Adventists quantity and quality are both important. The church cannot pretend to make all Christians perfect

because even Jesus, with only twelve disciples, had among them Judas who betrayed him. Ralph D Winter, cited by Wagner (1994:34) said: "Recently it has become steadily clearer to me that the most important activity of all is the implanting of churches. The care, feeding and reproduction of congregations is the central activity to which all the gimmicks and means must be bent". The SDA employed a special programme to continue the teachings of its members after baptism, the Sabbath School programme. Every quarter, lessons were scheduled by a team from the General Conference and sent everywhere. Each Adventist was supposed to receive a copy to study at home. Every Sabbath, the lesson was discussed in the church. By this method, Adventists continued to study the Word of God all their life.

By the end of 1984, Rwanda received its own "Union", which was separated from Burundi, where the rate of growth of membership was low. The headquarters was situated at Kigali, and Robert Peck was elected first president, assisted by Nathanael Musaza.

A significant factor facilitated the evangelism in Rwanda: the Bible and other materials like hymns and catechism were translated into Kinyarwanda, spoken by all its inhabitants. It was also more straightforward for the missionaries to learn just one language and be able to communicate with people all over the country.

When we study the growth of the SDA church in Rwanda and its geographical situation, we realize that for a long time mission stations were mainly founded in the countryside. This was due to the pro-Roman Catholic government which only permitted other churches outside the towns. Another reason was that it was easier to convert peasants than intellectuals. Unfortunately this strategy kept the SDA far from the authorities and educated people. Intellectuals did not attend the churches, arguing that they were for uneducated people. This situation continued for a long time. For example, in the entire country, only three Adventist Rwandans are doctors in theology (2006)! However, the situation is changing because more pastors are qualified and able to evangelize in towns.

#### **4.2.2. The school approach to church growth**

The school approach to growing the SDA church was stated by White (1995:11):

“True education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being and with the whole period of existence possible to humanity. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”

With such an educational philosophy, the SDAs began to develop a distinctive school system in the USA fairly early in their history (1872). As soon as the church was established abroad, educational institutions quickly followed.

Agboola (1987:31) wrote: “In the highest sense the work of education and work of redemption are one, for in education, as in redemption, no other foundations can man lay than is laid, which is Christ Jesus”. This revealed that for Adventists, Christian Education was an important arm of the gospel message and was one of the more effective methods used by their missions all over the world. Education was linked to salvation. Thus, schools were established with an evangelistic aim.

The evangelistic aspect of education is evident in the rapidity with which the Adventist missionaries began education work in Rwanda. Other denominations had started to operate schools before the arrival of the Adventist missionaries; consequently, some Christian groups in villages were always requesting schools and teachers from the missionaries.

Wagner (1994:12) recorded: “Before 1950 almost the only way African children could get an education was to go to a mission school, where, as they were taught the Bible, day by day, by Christian teachers, they often became Christians”. He



further stated that the correct way to Christianize was through prolonged schooling. The argument was that many boys and girls would become Christians before their marriage. Many would remain Christians despite the pressure of the tribe. The old generation would die off. Educated Christians would gradually control society. Over the centuries the old pagan order would gradually wither away and Christian African populations take its place. Considering this idea, the Adventist mission stations continued to establish schools as an essential part of their evangelistic work. The number of Adventist elementary schools was almost the same as that of the SDA churches in the country. Besides regular schools, Adventist missionaries also encouraged adult education for adherents who appeared too old for formal education. They could attend evening classes where teachers, evangelists, and some bright students taught reading and writing in Kinyarwanda. Words, phrases, and sentences were taken from the Bible. Hence it was their first manual. Indeed, most of their learning activities were evangelically oriented. Often a few adults who rapidly caught up their studies were employed as evangelists. Others were taught professions such as brick making and bricklaying, tailoring, carpentry and furniture making.

In schools, the Christian message occupied a central place. As mentioned previously, the purpose of all schools in the mission fields was to bring the gospel to millions of people. Schools were to be soul-winning agencies in two ways, namely, by being witnesses in the areas in which they were situated, and by training workers for both home and foreign fields (White E 1943: 493).

Elie Delhove began the first school at Gitwe in 1921. Until 1935, six classes in the primary school had been operating. Henri Monnier did likewise at Rwankeri in 1925, whereas Rukanganjunga and Bisomimbwa founded a primary school at Ngoma in 1931. From these schools, others were formed in different churches. However, the quality of these schools was not remarkable. The infrastructure was not adequate, except at the mission stations. The teachers were not sufficient in number and were not qualified for their duties. Frequently one teacher would teach three combined classes in the church building. On the one

hand the missionaries wanted people who could merely help them to preach, but did not need to be well educated. On the other hand, they wished to convert pupils who came to seek knowledge. The church schools operated without government subsidies. It was understandable that the latter could not be obtained in the conditions described above. Thus missionaries feared applying for government recognition.

In Central Africa, the SDA operated only one secondary school, "Katanga Training School", which was established in the Congo in 1925. In 1931, F.M. Robinson started a Seminary at Gitwe, with two classes. Later on he added two for Pedagogy as well as a one year course of ministerial training. In 1935, after the Central African Union was merged into the Congo Union, the Seminary in Katanga was closed; under the direction of W. R. Vail, the equipment and some of the staff were moved to Gitwe, and the combined training school was launched. According to oral sources, this was due to the fact that pupils who finished there went to work for the government, instead of the church. However, officially it has been said that there were more students in Rwanda than in Congo (Neufeld 1976:611). The first class of graduates left Gitwe in 1936, having completed four years in the primary school and two years in teacher training classes. The school, however, served the three countries under Belgian colonial rule, under the name "Adventist Seminary of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi". Courses were offered in the Kiswahili language. In 1954, under Maillet (a Belgian), French was introduced in the school and afterwards reinforced by Daniel Gutenkust from France.

A full six-year secondary school was established in 1968 and the first graduation from the new secondary course took place in 1972. The school changed its name to "Collège Adventiste de Gitwe" and followed government programmes in mathematics and physics. However, only the church recognized the diploma. Consequently, it was very difficult for the graduates to enter the National University. Although the parents were not happy about this situation they preferred Adventist schools because it was easy for their children to study and

keep the Sabbath, whereas in government schools, courses were taught on Saturday, due to the Roman Catholic influence (Nzamwita 1988:25).

In 1976, the government recognized the diploma obtained from studying the science option (Ministerial decision No 7/07 of August 10, 1976). Step by step this college became well-known and formed not only educated people but also Adventists for the entire region. In 1984, for the first time, a native, Aaron Nzahumunyurwa was appointed as the principal of the College. This school continued to enjoy a good reputation.

At the Rwankeri mission station, those who finished the six-year primary school course were transferred to Gitwe for education in the secondary school. Later in 1955, in order to solve this problem, three classes in a secondary school were opened at Rwankeri but without success because it ceased in 1964-1965 due to the lack of teachers. In 1975 the school re-started and continued as a full secondary school, when it became the "Collège de Rwankeri" in 1981. The government recognized it on August 9, 1988. Compared to Gitwe, Rwankeri School was mainly headed by Rwandans. Its progress was very slow, because natives were not well prepared for such responsibilities.

Unfortunately, after recognition by the government, Adventist schools followed the politics of discrimination that prevailed. Only ten percent of the Tutsi were accepted in schools within the country. As a result, many Tutsi who were discriminated against fled the country to study in neighboring countries, such as Congo, Burundi and Uganda.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church established special schools for girls, because they did not attend regular schools. In the beginning, people thought that women were born to take care of their husbands and children. To attract girls, some training was organized in Rwankeri (1935) so as to teach them how to take care of children, cooking and embroidery. At the same time they learned reading and writing. The school continued until 1943 headed by the wives of missionaries. In

1956, it was re-opened by Miss Matter. According to oral sources (Mrs. Nyirantagorama, January 2006) who graduated from these schools, girls studied complementary courses in the afternoon. These schools were disbanded later on when girls studied together with boys and followed regular programmes.

The Church authorities finally realized that it was important to have well educated people in different areas for the growth of the Church. Thus, the “Africa-Indian Ocean Division” established the Adventist University of Central Africa for French-speaking countries. This University was located in Mudende, former Gisenyi Province (Rwanda), not far from Lake Kivu. The purpose of this University was to serve more than 30 African countries. Its doors opened for the first time on October 15, 1984, with majors in accounting, information science, education, construction, public health, biology-chemistry and theology. The Rector was Dr Elton Wallace from the USA. On February 22, 1988, the Ministry of Higher Education evaluated the University. As a result, it was granted accreditation by the government of Rwanda. This institution was appreciated in the region because the faculty and staff were markedly international, with five continents being represented. Enrolment reached 445 students in October 1992 (Registrar’s records). Dr Robert Pierson replaced Wallace from 1990 to 1994. This University was the pride of the Church and cost a great deal. The infrastructure and equipment were modern. It was the only private University in the country. This was a major change compared to those of the past. At that time the SDA Church operated only one University in Africa, which was located in Solusi (Zimbabwe), and the Helderberg College in South Africa. The Adventist University of Central Africa formed more qualified pastors and accountants for the Church, and of course, people also converted to Adventism (Adventist University of Central Africa 1994:2).

#### **4.2.3 Health work approach.**

In the Bible the close connection between word and deed is most clearly seen in the relationship between gospel proclamation and physical healing. Jesus’

healing ministry, which accompanied His proclamation of the Gospel, was well known and important. It should not be minimized. With this in mind it is not strange that in the modern missionary era, medical service has represented an important part of the church's total mission.

The Adventists held to a concept of health, which included the conviction that the human being could render the most effective service to God only when his body was sound. They believed that good health helped people to better understand and do God's will. In this way SDA medical services do not only aim at caring for the sick and relieving suffering. They also endeavor to promote, through education, desirable habits and practices of health whereby disease is lessened or prevented, and the body preserved in health (Neufeld 1976:574). According to the same source, the SDA health services embraced the following categories:

- Education of health professionals
- Preventive medicine and health education
- Clinical medicine and dentistry
- Health evangelism
- Health care institutions and other facilities.

Adventists realized that in the New Testament greater space was given to Christ's healing ministry than to his teaching or preaching. There was a legitimate relationship between health and salvation. Thus, they brought physical healing along with the Gospel.

The health work approach seemed to have been very effective. This included the dispensing of preventive and curative medicine. People were taught how to keep healthy by following simple rules of personal hygiene: eating good food, drinking plenty of clean water, taking regular baths and wearing clean clothes. They have been taught sanitation and that houses and their surroundings must be kept clean; houses must have adequate doors and windows for thorough ventilation etc. As part of the services in villages and towns, the local people were also taught how to keep physically healthy.

Missionaries were preachers who often did the work of medical doctors in taking care of sick people around their mission stations. They frequently maintained clinics for various emergencies at their stations. There they ministered to the sick and at the same time fed them with the Word of God. Chaplains were located at the hospital to reach the hearts of patients.

The evangelists and teachers in the Adventist mission stations were taught simple rules of First Aid and nursing. This knowledge made the Adventist mission very popular in the communities in which its workers labored. White (1942:141) wrote: "It is the divine plan that we shall work as the disciples worked. Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission: teaching and healing are never to be separated." She added: "medical missionary work has three dimensions, namely, the miraculous divine power in healing, the use of medicine as a curative means to obtain health, and preventive health education. All three are part of the Gospel commission and should, therefore, accompany the church in her foreign mission venture (White 1940:823-825).

It was in the fulfillment of this philosophy of mission that the Adventist Health work in Rwanda was dominated by the Ngoma Hospital in the western part of the country, which was founded in 1931 by Dr J.H. Sturges as we have seen. Later on in 1933 the first ward was completed and the first patient entered the hospital. Mary Matter, the sister of A. Matter, helped the doctor in his duties. Through the years the hospital developed his services under different directors from abroad and became well-known in the region. According to oral sources mentioned by Pastor Madende Zacharie, on September 10, 2005 at Kibuye, patients came even from the Congo, which was separated from Rwanda by Lake Kivu.

The hospital offered courses for training ward aids. Ruth Brown offered a midwifery course from 1959, but it was discontinued in 1972 because of the lack of teachers. The graduates were permitted to sit for the national exams and received certificates recognized by the government. Meanwhile Miss Naomi

Bullard had launched a four-year nursing school, only for students with three years of secondary school. Unfortunately, Cairn Beck who took over the leadership from Naomi Bullard in 1981 reverted back to the two-year programme, because of the lack of teachers. The same year, a government education reform brought about a new requirement: a six-year school system on the secondary level. Consequently the two-year training course was discontinued in 1983 and replaced by a six-year formal nursing school. In June 1984, the Union Committee took the action of separating this institution administratively from the hospital (Neufeld 1996:138). The school trained nurses helped in the hospital and dispensaries created nearby, such as Karora. They were appreciated because they came from an important hospital. Nurses were not only employed by the Adventist Church but also by the government and the private sector. Around 1960, an important event took place; the name Ngoma was altered to Mugonero for the mission station, the hospital, and the school. This was done due to the fact that Ngoma (Rwanda) was being confused with Goma (Congo), especially by people from outside the country. For example, letters and other materials from outside the country were directed to Goma instead of Ngoma.

Health evangelism was carried out in the hospital. Before treatment was dispensed, the minister, evangelist or any other Adventist worker in charge conducted morning worship. The Bible was read to the patients; the story from the passage read was explained simply and with the use of relevant picture rolls, sometimes of Jesus healing the sick. Every nurse was briefed to take care of patients like a good Christian. As a result, many people who visited Mugonero Hospital and dispensary accepted Jesus. The hospital, the mission station, and the school became points of attraction. People arrived not only to be treated at the hospital or to study; they also came to work. Finally by means of one of these contacts, they embraced the Adventist message.

Mugonero was the sole hospital owned by Adventists, up to 1994. The evangelistic impact of this hospital was great. The last census of the population in Rwanda (2004:22) showed that this area records a high rate of Adventists,

22.6 percent of the population. It has also contributed largely to the rapid development of the region.

Unfortunately, the missionaries did not prepare natives to replace them in heading the hospital. When the last doctor, A. Giordano, left the hospital in 1991, there was no Rwandan Adventist doctor to continue the work. The natives had only been trained to help them and take care of the dispensaries. Consequently, the number of patients drastically diminished though the institution contained 104 beds. The population, which had been served there, looted everything during the 1994 genocide and killed some of the Tutsi staff. Others left the hospital and fled to Congo. The hospital was empty and abandoned.

#### **4.2.4. Literature evangelism**

Literature evangelism was used to some extent as one of the methods employed by the Adventist mission. However, this method was limited in Rwanda. Two problems were encountered; first, the literate population was too small at the beginning. Second, there were no Adventist books in Kinyarwanda. Whatever books could be distributed or sold were in Kiswahili, French or English. This restricted the reading population to those who could at that time read in those languages. Later on, owing to the increasing number of schools, the number of people who could read also increased. This facilitated literature evangelists' work in spreading the gospel by distributing Adventist literature (books and tracts) within the country. However, these books were not free. The literature evangelists sold them, which enabled them to obtain more books from abroad. Before selling a book, it was necessary to summarize it, which was a kind of teaching. Adventists believed that books were silent teachers. One of the results of this method was the conversion of readers. The difference between the SDA and other churches in this area was that literature evangelists (also called colporteurs) went from house to house, whereas others were selling their books only at the mission stations. However, this method did not affect many people in



the beginning because it was not easy for impoverished Rwandans to obtain money to buy books, and it was known that they preferred speaking rather than reading. The situation improved later on when the schools were growing.

In 1989, H Scoggins, who was the director of the Publishing Department in the “Rwanda Union Mission”, opened a Literature Ministry Seminary in Kigali. This Seminary trained Literature evangelists from Burundi, Congo, and Rwanda in three sequences of three weeks each. The first graduation took place in 1990.

#### **4.2.5 The follow up strategy**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church used other strategies to grow rapidly, which helped those mentioned above to be more efficient. After their baptism, the previously baptized visited new members to help them understand the Word of God and become acquainted with the Adventist life style. The local church members were divided into small groups according to their sites and these groups took care of new members. The latter’s names were recorded in books and their presence during the days of worship checked, as in the classroom. It was therefore easy to know who was attending prayer meetings regularly or not. If they did not attend it was the responsibility of the members of the group to visit them and inquire about their reasons. I was told by Pastor Birikunzira Efasto, on August 15, 2005 at Rwankeri, that at the beginning, pioneers such as Henri Monnier of Rwankeri Mission Station, controlled those books severely and members who were absent three times were whipped. This was to force them to attend. One wonders whether this method was wrong or right. According to the context of that moment, he acted as a colonialist and this was not the method used by the Church. Some attended worship because they feared being whipped. Eventually, however, they began to enjoy the meetings and to like H. Monnier! Others continued to pretend to him that they were worshipping but in reality were not. The SDA in Rwanda has continued to check every name till

now, once a quarter. However, the situation became more complicated as the membership grew in size.

#### **4.2.6. Voice of Prophecy Bible correspondence school**

As soon as many people were able to read, Bible correspondence schools were opened at mission stations. These schools had originated from Glendale, Los Angeles, California (USA) in 1926 (Neufeld 1976:158). They were operated and sponsored by the General Conference of SDA Church, and offered branch or affiliated programmes in many places around the world. Various Union or local Missions operated courses in Bible subjects. They carried no school credits and were offered free of any obligation. Candidates who were registered received lessons designed for various ages and levels which were prepared according to several degrees of difficulty. Courses were accompanied by questions to be answered. After corrections, the next lessons were given, until the end of the series. A certificate was given to those who succeeded. It was not used to obtain any kind of job. It only helped people to understand the Bible by themselves. Generally their baptism followed. These schools were run in connection with a local radio broadcast (Voice of Prophecy) or under departments like those of Publishing, Communication, and Evangelism. The SDA paid particular attention to the study of the prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The school was opened to everybody, Adventists and non-Adventists as well.

#### **4.2.7. Tithing**

Introducing the tithing system did not puzzle the prospective Adventists. In the Rwandan traditional religion the gods had been pacified by offerings and sacrifices. The Rwandans donated meat, local alcohol beverages or the best of their crops at harvest time every year. They used to present offerings to the king; hence it was not difficult for them to tithe. The Adventists were usually inspired by

the promise of God to faithful tithers in Malachi 3:9-12: "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field... Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple, so that there will be plenty of food there. Put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things." Naturally each person would like to receive God's blessing. Hence Adventists must pledge a faithful tithe. As in the Old Testament where it was given to the priests, the tithe was paid to the pastors who were fully committed to the work of evangelism. This was an important factor for growth because without money nothing can be achieved. Adventists continued to be good tithe payers.

The tithe was well kept and managed from the local church to the General Conference. After collecting the tithe given by members on a monthly basis, the pastors were paid and the tithe of the tithe sent to the Union. The process continued up to the General Conference. The evangelists and pastors were given allowances such as a discount on the school fees of their children, medical assistance, house rent and other facilities and fully gave their time to evangelism and church activities.

#### **4.2.8. Indigenization**

It appeared that the Adventist missions were not rapid enough in their programme of indigenization. The majority of the missionaries took it for granted that they would be there forever. For example, Henri Monnier (1924:2), when he spoke about Rwankeri, used to say "my mission". Most of the national workers were on a lower level of education and competence than their missionary friends. As with the doctors, the Rwandans were not trained to replace them. The expatriates just taught them simple topics. I personally remember that when I entered secondary school in 1969, one of our missionary teachers told us that in maths we would only study four fundamental operations, because this would be

enough for us who were supposed to deal only with calculations of offerings and tithes! Fortunately we refused and he was obliged to find and follow the government curriculum.

Instead of indigenizing, the natives imitated the missionaries in everything. They wanted to appear like their masters and dressed like them. It was an unwritten law at that time that the officiating pastors, evangelists, teachers and lay members should dress like the Europeans. As the Rwandans copied European clothes, so did they also copy the forms of worship traditional in western countries. The African converts learned to read and sing in the way the missionaries did. They were not permitted to use traditional musical instruments because the latter were considered to be pagan.

At baptism, the convert usually took a Hebrew name from the Bible such as David or Joseph, in addition to his local name, which was likewise considered pagan. The name which was taken thus became his or her Christian name and the convert would insist that he or she be called and known by that Hebrew name. This was alienation, because to be baptized was not a matter of names but of faith. Someone can be a Christian with an African name. Many countries in Africa have altered this practice and people can enjoy their native names. Actually in Rwanda, converts are not obliged to take a Hebrew name. However, they have maintained this habit.

Since the church failed to indigenize the Gospel the natives mixed their culture with the European. They became “cultural half castes”. This was why on one hand many Rwandans seemed to be Christians, whereas on the other hand, they secretly continued to practice traditional religion. After the departure of missionaries, indigenization was not effective. The conservatism of the Rwandan leaders seemed to be the main reason.

However, the SDA reported an interesting growth in spite of these problems. The following tables indicate its growth in membership from 1933 to 1946 and from

1981 to 2000. Unfortunately statistics were not recorded by the SDA administration in Rwanda for a long time. The reason was that people did not realize their importance or were not able to do so. I gathered the following statistics from the “Rapport sur l'Administration Belge du Ruanda-Urundi” (1933:94), presented by the Minister of Colonies.

YEAR	STATIONS	MISSIONARIES	CHRISTIANS	CATECHUMENS
1933	Gitwe	6	686	2419
	Ngoma	5	26	317
	Rwankeri	4	423	3284
	Total	15	1135	6020
1934	Gitwe	8	1121	2276
	Ngoma	2	89	558
	Rwankeri	4	682	3534
	Total	14	1892	6368
1935	Gitwe	8	1825	2975
	Ngoma	6	261	1110
	Rwankeri	4	953	4476
	Total	18	3039	8561
1937	Gitwe	10	1858	3124
	Ngoma	5	474	1212
	Rwankeri	4	1315	5507
	Total	19	3647	9843

Figure No 1. Statistical report of SDA Church membership development in Rwanda from 1933 to 1937

YEAR	MISSIONARIES	CHRISTIANS	CATECHUMENS
1938	19	3 593	12 688
1939	21	4 058	11 065
1940	20	4 353	10 741
1941	18	4 261	10 405

1942	19	4 632	10 562
1944	20	5 068	8 158
1945	21	5 515	11 703
1946	23	5 800	13 579

Figure No 2. Statistical report from 1939 to 1946.

The report was did not show the situation of every mission station for unknown reasons.

<b>YEAR</b>	1981	1985	1990	1995	2000
<b>RWANDA UNION MISSION</b>	114 618	153 633	209 316	190 694	324 021

Figure No 3. Growth of membership from 1981 to 2000

Source: Rwanda Union Mission of SDA

The membership has grown year by year. Statistics were reported for each five year period in figure No 3 because in the Adventist system, planning was undertaken over such a period. In 1995, the number dropped. This was due to the consequences of the 1994 genocide. Many Adventists died whereas others fled the country. During the following period, several Adventists came back from exile while those who were recent refugees returned home. This increased the membership.

### **4.3 THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH DURING THE 1994 GENOCIDE**

#### **4.3.1 The 1994 genocide background**

As different Christian churches, including the SDA, continued to grow in Rwanda, the ethnic division between Hutu and Tutsi persisted. These Churches collaborated with the government and viewed Rwandans as two major tribal

groups. They did little or nothing to limit the growing ethnic conflict among the people.

As we have seen, after the 1959 crisis, and independence in 1962, many Tutsi fled the country due to ethnic conflicts. They preferred living in exile in neighboring countries, where many of them stayed in refugee camps for more than thirty years. It was very difficult for them to study or carry out other activities like the citizens of the host countries. Tutsi who remained in Rwanda were discriminated against by the Hutu government in political and administrative services. They were excluded from military service and other important activities. To identify them, the Belgians introduced an ethnic identity card system in 1933. The identical card continued to be used even after independence. A quota system was installed in every sector of activity, where the Tutsi were not allowed to go beyond ten percent. Thus, the quota system and ethnic cards served to preserve discrimination and to facilitate social control by the state. This strategy would assist Hutu killers to identify Tutsi during the genocide. Otherwise it would not have been easy because the two groups have intermarried.

Former Ugandan president Milton Obote mistreated the Tutsi who had settled in Uganda. As a result, the Tutsi formed a group that later would be the nucleus of future turmoil for Rwandans in exile.

In 1982, following persecution by the Uganda government, some young Tutsi generals in the Uganda National Resistance Army, a rebel movement founded by Yoweri Museveni in February 1981, which took over the country in 1986, decided to organize their return to Rwanda. Among them were Fred Rwigema and Paul Kagame (the current President of Rwanda). Prunier (1995:70) described their situation: "The 1982 crisis and the sporadic persecutions which were to follow during the next two years marked a returning-point for the Rwandese refugees in Uganda. Many of the young men had felt that Rwanda was an old story, their parents' story, and that they were now Ugandans. Then they suddenly discovered that the people among whom they had lived for thirty years were

treating them as hated and despised foreigners.” Rwandans were sensitized all over the world and organized themselves under the name “Rwandan Patriotic Front” (RPF). The aim of this organization was to end Habyarimana Juvénal’s (the President at that time) persecutory government, peacefully or by force. Unfortunately he refused to enter any kind of negotiations, arguing that Rwanda was too small to contain every Rwandan, especially the refugees who would like to come back. He feared also that the Tutsi would regain power. Finally the Rwandan Patriotic Front opted for a military solution.

At 2.30 p.m. Monday, October 1, 1990 a group of fifty men came out of the bush near the Rwandan border post of Kagitumba and opened fire on the guards, killing one and putting the others to flight (Prunier 1995:93). This was the beginning of the war by the RPF against Habyarimana’s regime. The rebels captured Nyagatare and the Gabiro barracks in the northeast without resistance. Major General Fred Rwigema and other Tutsi led them from the Ugandan Army. The majority of attackers were Tutsi, who wanted to return to their country. However, their success was short-lived because countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, and Belgium intervened to support the Hutu-led government. Not well equipped and unprepared, the Rwanda Patriotic Front suffered major losses, as its high ranking officers were killed, including Rwigema. They finally altered their strategy from conventional to guerilla warfare. Paul Kagame replaced Rwigema and continued the war.

Since the majority of attackers were Tutsi, the government in Rwanda intensified its efforts to sensitize the Hutu population, showing them that the Tutsi who remained in the country must be killed, so that the RPF would not have supporters within the country. On November 22, 1992, Léon Mugesera, Vice-president of the Gisenyi MRND (Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement), a section of Habyarimana’s party and influential within the party, addressed the party militants of the Kabaya “sous-préfecture” as follows: “The opposition parties have plotted with the enemy to make the Byumba Prefecture fall to the ‘Inyenzi’ [cockroaches, the name given to Tutsi guerrillas]. They have



plotted to undermine our armed forces. The law is quite clear on this point: any person who is guilty of acts aiming at sapping the morale of the armed forces will be condemned to death. What are we waiting for? And what about those accomplices here who are sending their children to the RPF? Why are we waiting to get rid of these families? We have to take responsibility into our own hands and wipe out these hoodlums. The fatal mistake we made in 1959 was to let them (Tutsi) get out. They belong in Ethiopia and we are going to find them a shortcut to get there by throwing them into the Nyabarongo River. I must insist on this point. We have to act. Wipe them all out" (Prunier 1995:171,172). The RPF gained the support of Hutu who were opposed to Habyarimana's regime and wanted change.

The government used media like the newspapers, especially *Kangura* and "Radio et Télévision des mille Collines" (Radio and TV of a Thousand Hills), to spread anti-Tutsi sentiments among the Hutu. This strategy was a success, because people believed that everything written or spoken on the radio was to be carried out. The situation reached the point where the Hutu felt that participation in killing Tutsi was a civic obligation. Young people were trained to kill, using traditional weapons and guns.

In 1992, the propaganda regarding "the final solution" to the Tutsi was intense. They were given names like "snake". It was believed that killing a snake was a human obligation, even according to the Bible. Thus Tutsi did not possess any human value. Songs and poems were composed to motivate and provoke hatred against them. Radio stations and newspapers repeated these every day. An example is that of Bikindi who composed the song "I hate the Hutu". He explained that this hate was toward Hutu who collaborated with Tutsi.

The Christian churches played an important role in disseminating propaganda. In Rwanda, the majority of the population was Christian, worshipping in different churches. There, they met pastors and fathers who were associated with the government as regards the "final solution". Some SDA pastors were able to find

Bible verses which they interpreted to confirm that the Tutsi had to be killed because God had abandoned them. The propaganda was well planned, and paved the way for what would be analyzed as the third genocide of the world in the twentieth century.

In Rwanda, killing Tutsi was not a problem because in the massacres of 1959, 1963, 1973, and 1991, the perpetrators had never been brought to justice. The government rewarded them by giving them important responsibilities. This created a culture of impunity before the 1994 genocide.

From 1992 negotiations took place in Arusha (Tanzania) between the RPF and the Rwandan government and a peace accord was reached, consisting of many different parts, summarized by Prunier (1995:192):

- The initial cease-fire agreement signed on 12 July 1992.
- The power-sharing agreements defining the modalities of the Broad Based Transitional Government signed on 30 October 1992 and 9 January 1993.
- The protocol on the repatriation of refugees signed on 3 August 1993.
- The armed forces integration agreement signed on 3 August 1993.

Unfortunately, this agreement was not sincere, because at the same time, preparations for the genocide continued. President Habyarimana Juvénal had consented to sign the Arusha peace agreement not as a genuine gesture marking the turning-over of a new political leaf and the beginning of democratization in Rwanda, but as a tactical move calculated to buy time, shore up the contradictions of the various segments of the opposition and look good in the eyes of the foreign donors. The Hutu-led government planned to exterminate the entire Tutsi population.

### **4.3.2. Execution of the genocide**

On 6 April 1994 Habyarimana Juvénal flew to Dar-es-Salaam to meet the regional presidents. The main topic was supposed to be the situation in Burundi but soon the discussion turned to Rwanda and concerned his refusal to implement the Arusha peace agreement. After talks, the Rwandan presidential jet flew from Arusha. The Burundian president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, decided to ask his colleague for a lift. The two heads of state were to fly to Kigali first; after dropping Habyarimana Juvénal there, the plane would proceed to Bujumbura, which was about twenty-five minutes away. The reason why the Burundian asked for such a lift is still unknown. Unfortunately when the plane was coming in low to land at Kigali airport, approximately 8:30 p.m. local time, it was hit by two missiles, crashed in the garden of Habyarimana's house (which was near the airport) and burst into flames, killing all aboard.

Who killed the two presidents and why? This remains an enigma too. There are several scenarios, some of which we shall consider here. The Belgian journalist Braeckman (1994:188-197) wrote that the plane had been shot down by two French soldiers of the "Détachement d'Assistance Militaire et de l'Instruction." Such soldiers had arrived to assist Habyarimana's regime, as we have seen. However, this version is unlikely because the French would not have wanted to see their ally dead. Another theory was propounded by the former Rwandan Ambassador to Kinshasa (DRC), who said that the plane had been shot down by Belgian soldiers who had been deployed in UNAMIR. He accused Belgium of supporting the RPF. To support this, he added that Belgian UNAMIR soldiers were patrolling Masaka Hill from which the missiles were fired. However, it was known that presidential guards patrolled the hill too. This theory was not acceptable because the Belgian government had no more interest in the death of Habyarimana Juvénal than the French. The Belgians supported the Hutu government for a long time. The most interesting theory was that the presidential plane had been shot down by the RPF, because the war was between the two parties and the RPF might have desired his death. The presidential family

adopted this scenario. However, it was not in the political interests of the RPF to kill the president. It had already obtained a positive political settlement from the Arusha agreement. The RPF knew that genocide was being prepared and that killing the president might detonate it. Another fact was that RPF had 600 lightly armed men in Kigali according to the Arusha agreement, to protect their politicians who had been selected to take part in transitional institutions. It was risky for them to face 15 000 government troops well equipped with armored vehicles and artillery. The last and most probable hypothesis was that members of his own circle, who feared that the president was finally going to comply with the provisions of the Arusha agreement, killed him because they were for the “final solution” regarding the Tutsi. One of them, Bagosora Theonest, had said to the RPF delegation in Arusha that he was going to prepare an “Apocalypse” for them. This word had a sinister meaning! None of these hypotheses has been confirmed yet because the investigations have been fruitless.

Immediately after the crash, the presidential guards, Interahamwe militias (of Habyarimana’s party) began to kill Tutsi and also Hutu who were not supportive of Habyarimana’s regime, as early as the evening of the 6th. In Kigali they manned the roadblocks and took part in the house-to-house searches. This task was easy because the victims were listed, their houses were known, and few of those marked out to die had a chance to hide. Other actors were the Hutu from Burundi, refugees who lived in Rwanda and had been trained by MRND. Due to intermarriage there were Hutu-looking Tutsi and Tutsi-looking Hutu. Along the highways, Hutu who looked like Tutsi were very often killed, even when they possessed identity cards with a mention of their ethnic group. Victims included babies who were thrown alive into pit latrines, adults, and old people. Patients in hospitals were killed on their beds. An employee of “Médecins Sans Frontière” said: “Any wounded person (supposed to be Tutsi, since he had been wounded) was killed. Right in front of our eyes, the army men would come inside the hospital, take the wounded, line them up and machine-gun them down...It was also the first time in any of our operations that we saw our local personnel being killed on a massive scale. All our Tutsi medical staff, doctors and nurses, were

kidnapped and murdered in Kigali in April 1994. We had never seen anything like it" (Quoted by Prunier 1995:254). Women and girls became victims of sexual abuse by their killers. The use of machetes often resulted in a long and painful agony. When people possessed money, they paid their killers to be finished off quickly with a bullet! The efficiency in carrying out the killings proved that these had been planned well in advance. It is believed that at least one million were killed all over the country within only 100 days. It was not easy to count all the bodies. For example 40 000 bodies were picked up in Lake Victoria and buried on the Uganda shore, whereas others were eaten by fish or burnt.

#### **4.3.3. The Church's involvement in the 1994 genocide**

As we have seen in previous chapters, the majority of Rwandan population was Christian. This was why their involvement in the killings was not understandable and indeed was beyond belief. Although there were admirable acts of courage among ordinary Christians, the leaders were at best useless and at worst accomplices in the genocide. In Rwanda, priests and pastors were respected. If they had spoken out and condemned the killings, the massacres might have stopped. But they made a few vague speeches without commitment. Even though the number of priests and pastors who were directly or indirectly involved in the genocide was small, it was a disgrace that they had betrayed the flocks they were supposed to love and protect. There were a few cases of priests being killed trying to defend their charges. Tutsi priests were killed and betrayed by their colleagues.

In the past, Tutsi used to seek refuge in the temples and people were afraid to attack them in the churches. However, this time those refuges became their tombs. The killers profaned churches. One priest in Nyange (Western Province), Seromba, gave an order to demolish the church building, which was full of Tutsi believers, using a bulldozer. This priest has been imprisoned by the International tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha (Tanzania).

For the Protestant Churches, although their association with the regime was not close like that of the Roman Catholic Church, their involvement was real. The Rev. Jorg Zimmerman of the United Evangelical Mission, cited by African Rights (1995:517), said: "What I witnessed was a sort of collective psychological repression phenomenon. Rwanda has to be re-evangelized and quite differently if we do not want such carnages to come back regularly. But unfortunately, the minds are not ripe yet."

The Adventists were not the only religious group accused of joining the killing. However, it was shocking that church pastors and members had participated in one way or another. The Church members to whom they had ministered killed Tutsi pastors! Terrible massacres took place at Mugonero Hospital (former Ngoma). Pastor Ntakirutimana Elisaphan was responsible for the mission station and his son Ntakirutimana Gerard for the Hospital. Tutsi were gathered in the church and in the hospital hoping that they would not be massacred, because the authorities had promised it. However, this was a strategy to ensure that everyone was there. After being sure that no one was missing, they called the soldiers and Interahamwe militias and the killing was efficiently carried out. It was reported by survivors that 3000 people had been killed there. The International Tribunal for Rwanda has already condemned the pastor and his son.

At Gitwe, the scenario was the same. Tutsi sought refuge in the mission station compound. They knew that this was the place where the first SDA church had been established in Rwanda and it was their only hope. But it was not long before they realized that they had been mistaken. They were confined in a truck by the government soldiers and brought to Gitovu (not far from the mission station). None of them escaped.

Close to 1000 people were killed at the Adventist University of Central Africa (Mudende) in the northern part of the country. Among them were Tutsi staff, students and peasants who sought refuge within the campus.

Adventists were involved in killing other Adventists. Alan Nichols (1994:31), executive associate at World Vision Australia, who visited Rwanda in August 1994, reported that there were other bizarre incidents. A Seventh-day Adventist pastor, in response to a question, replied: the sin is not killing; it is only a sin to kill on the Sabbath. Hence they killed - and rested on the Sabbath! Church leaders and pastors proved to be poor shepherds. They failed to put into action the love that they had been preaching for a long time. My own investigations revealed that about 100 pastors, and workers such as teachers and nurses were killed, without numbering their children and wives. Even now the exact number of Adventists who died during the genocide is not known.

The question is: why had this happened? The answer is difficult to find but it was rooted in the history of this country as has been indicated.

One could not certainly condemn every Hutu, because some of them protected the survivors. One Hutu Adventist pastor, Semisabike Mathias from Rwankeri mission station, who was married to a Tutsi, was asked to kill his wife and children. He refused, saying that he had made a vow with her before God. Immediately the militias killed him and all his family. As another example, on July 4, 2006, the president of the Republic gave a medal to an old Hutu woman who had protected one hundred persons during the genocide. In Ruhango, the Adventist church members worked hand in hand and saved more than one hundred of their neighbors. Similar cases were reported in some areas.

The majority of Christians in Rwanda were, and continued to be, half converted. The conversions were not sincere because selfish interests motivated them. The traditional religion was a culture because everybody was involved in it. Christianity was also understood in this way. Hence, every Rwandan wanted to have somewhere to worship, somewhere to be married in church, etc. Adventists believed that they had done good evangelistic work but the actions of the believers proved that this was utopian. The gospel needed to be taught

differently. Another fact was the poverty of the population. Politicians promised the Hutu to give them the Tutsis' properties and land if they killed as many as possible. So, they massacred the Tutsi not only for what they were but also for what they possessed.

The international community reacted passively. Instead of stopping the genocide, the UNAMIR withdrew its forces and left the Rwandans alone, whereafter the killers were free to act without fear.

Because the situation was so terrible, the RPF recommenced military operations on April 8, 1994 from its position in the East. It was said that the aim of the war was to stop the genocide and to rescue RPF soldiers who were in the capital. The RPF troops reached Kigali on April 11, 1994. It took three months for the RPF to control Kigali and save some people from the massacres.

#### **4.3.4. Consequences of the genocide**

The consequences of the genocide affected every aspect of life in Rwanda. Habyarimana's supporters fled the country to the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the majority of the population. Their strategy was that the RPF would take possession of an empty country. Thus, everything in their path was destroyed. They took money from all banking institutions, cars, important documents in government offices etc. Many of the peasants died from epidemics such as cholera in Congo where they had settled in camps, with the purpose of returning by fighting the RPF government.

For the RPF, the war was heavy in terms of its losses. Many young men died in fighting all over the country. The Tutsi, lacking protection, were killed in massive numbers. Knowing that RPF was mainly Tutsi, their families were horribly massacred. The country was indeed empty. The situation was described by many as the end of the world. However, Tutsi from neighboring countries came in



without delay and occupied the abandoned houses of the Hutu. The RPF formed a new government with moderate Hutu and Tutsi. Hutu who participated in the killings were arrested and jailed.

Some churches continued to worship but initially most of the Christians refused to return there, arguing that there was no God at all. Where was God during the genocide, they asked? Why did He not protect His people from death? Why had Christians killed other Christians? It was very difficult to provide answers to these questions.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the majority of its members fled to the DRC with their pastors. The President of Rwanda Union Mission, since he was a missionary from abroad, was evacuated together with other whites by the UNAMIR. The treasurer, S. Mbangukira (a Rwandan), was the only Church authority who remained in the country. He tried to reorganize what he was able to find. Fortunately, Adventists from the diaspora came back and worshipped in the abandoned churches. As security improved, the churches filled with people again. Some arrived to witness to what God had done for them because he saved them from death, others to thank him because they had returned home after thirty years in refugee camps.

Every person was asking himself what the future of the country and the church would be, since everything had to be started from scratch.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter described the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church after its strategic implantation in three mission stations at the end of 1931. The Church spread toward other parts of the country from these mission stations, by implementing methods experienced in other countries. These were mainly those of open-air preaching, schooling, health evangelism, literature evangelism, and follow up strategies. The result was a tremendous growth of membership, until

the 1994 genocide. Unfortunately, the SDA like other churches was caught in the exacerbation of the tension between two major groups as the country moved inevitably toward genocide. The Church's involvement, via its members, in the killings demonstrated that the message given through the gospel had not been well understood by the majority. The RPF ceased the genocide after the failure of the efforts of the international community represented by the UNAMIR. The consequences of the massacres and war were exceptionally severe. Many people had died and normal life seemed to have stopped.

In the following chapter, we will attempt to examine the situation after the genocide, and its impact on the country and the church up to 2000.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5. AFTER THE 1994 GENOCIDE**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The period after the genocide was one of reconstruction and reconciliation because everything had been destroyed: the infrastructure, buildings, public services, and churches. The social tissue had been torn apart. It seemed that Rwandans could no longer live together. The country was full of widows, abandoned children, and orphans. The situation was indescribable. Various NGO's arrived to give emergency aid by providing food, medical assistance, shelter, and electricity. At the same time, the churches were attempting to help as well, and attract members to return to worship by preaching sermons on reconciliation and unity.

In this chapter, we will examine the post genocide period, focusing on how the Rwandans dealt with the consequences of the genocide through the government, the churches in general and the SDA Church in particular.

#### **5.2. LOSSES**

Losses occurred at different levels, human, physical, and psychological. They had strong social repercussions. In the 1994 government survey, 97% of survivors interviewed had lost a close relative. According to government estimates, nearly one million people were killed, 400 000 of whom were children. Up to 120 000 children were orphans and as many as 85 000 households are now headed by children. Most of the people killed were males; the majority of killers were also men and are actually either in prison or refugees in neighboring countries. Consequently, the current Rwandan population is predominantly female: there are 84 males per 100 females in general and 67 males per 100

females among people aged between 24 and 29. More than a third of all households are headed by women.

As a result of the genocide, entire families and extended families were completely wiped out. The homes of some were destroyed as well. This implies the loss of important means of privacy, identity and a safe place, which fostered family union. People fled or were displaced; many families have lost communication with their relatives. This is mainly felt in actuality during marriage ceremonies where survivors are obliged to search for people who will take their dead parents' place.

### **5.2.1. Psychological aftermath of genocide**

In 1994 a new word appeared in the Rwandan vocabulary: "*Ihahamuka*" (trauma), describing a variety of psychological manifestations thought to originate from genocide. Among the problems encountered are:

**Post-traumatic stress disorder:** which mainly presents among children or people who are easily frightened, have trauma-related nightmares and often avoid reminders of traumatic events. This is true for the cases of many children or adults who cannot, for example, stand seeing soldiers in uniform because they saw some murdering their relatives in the 1994 genocide.

**Chronic traumatic grief.** In 1995 a government survey showed that 91% of survivors had not had the chance to bury their relatives or perform mourning ceremonies; this affected the bereavement process. 88 percent of survivors interviewed had not yet seen the corpses of their loved ones ([www.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org](http://www.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org)).

From 1995, nationwide reburial ceremonies have been conducted and this has aided the healing of the fortunate ones who have managed to identify the

remains of their relatives who were buried in mass graves. However, many still do not know the circumstances of death and the whereabouts of their relatives' bodies.

Many people after the genocide have developed unusual habits that are also called "*Ihahamuka*": including anti-social behaviors in young people with promiscuity in young girls or widows, excessive drinking that was not present before the genocide, and excessive aggression and irritability directed to anybody.

### **5.3 NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION**

The new RPF dominated government proclaimed itself as a government of national unity and reconciliation. This was the only way to reunite the Rwandans. Thus, under Law no 03/99 of 12/03/1999, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission was created with the aim of eradicating the devastating consequences of the policies of discrimination and exclusion which had characterized the successive repressive regimes of Rwanda.

Although the issue of unity and reconciliation was first raised in the 1993 Arusha Peace Accord, the genocide and massacres of April 1994 made it one of the top national priorities. The peace and unity of Rwandans constitute the essential basis for national economic development and social progress.

Since it was established by the government of National Unity, the NURC has striven to become a platform where Rwandans of all social conditions can meet and discuss the real problems of the nation, especially those related to unity and reconciliation, and a culture of peace, justice, democracy and development. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2003:124), the responsibilities of the Commission particularly include the following:

1. Preparing and coordinating the national programme for the promotion of national unity and reconciliation;
2. Putting in place and developing ways and means to restore and consolidate unity and reconciliation among Rwandans;
3. Educating and mobilizing the population on matters relating to national unity and reconciliation;
4. Carrying out research, organizing debates, disseminating ideas and issuing publications relating to peace, national unity and reconciliation;
5. Making proposals on measures that could eradicate divisions among Rwandans and reinforce national unity and reconciliation;
6. Denouncing and combating acts, writings and utterances which are intended to promote any kind of discrimination, intolerance or xenophobia;
7. Producing an annual report and such other reports as may be necessary regarding the situation of national unity and reconciliation.

Despite government commitments to create ethnic unity and reconciliation, the wounds are still deep and healing is difficult on both sides. Since both groups have to live together, a national healing process would probably decrease emotional barriers between Hutu and Tutsi and facilitate reconciliation. Some foreign countries have proposed the creation of Hutuland and Tutsiland to physically separate the two groups. However, this is not possible because for centuries, Rwandans have lived together in their villages. If this separation were possible, it might be necessary to create another land which would bear the name Hutsiland because for a long time the two major groups have mixed by means of intermarriage and the result has been a group of children who were neither Hutu nor Tutsi. They could be called Hutsi. They live in an ambiguous situation between the two groups.

The reaction of the population to this commission was different according to the people concerned, whether Hutu or Tutsi. The latter felt that reconciliation was not possible unless justice had been done. For a long time impunity dominated Rwandan society, especially when the killing of Tutsi was concerned. The Hutu claimed that the Tutsi had killed some Hutu after the war, as an act of revenge; hence the situation was balanced. Thus, both parties had committed the genocide. The government acknowledged that it was true that some Tutsi soldiers had been involved in acts of revenge after discovering that their neighbors had exterminated their families, but this was not genocide. The government further announced that those crimes had to be punished. The soldiers were put in jail and must face trial, too. For the survivors, justice must form the path to a genuine reconciliation and killers must be punished.

#### **5.4. “GACACA” JUSTICE**

After the genocide, more than 80 000 people were sitting in Rwanda’s prisons, awaiting trial for charges related to genocide and other crimes against humanity. This was part of the preparation for the genocide. The idea was to cause the masses to be involved in the killings so that no one could be incriminated. The sheer number of cases would block up even the world’s most developed legal systems. And, for Rwanda, whose legal system had been devastated by the genocide; the caseload would take centuries to sort through.

In attempt to quicken the trial process and dispense justice to a country that badly needs it, Rwanda has resurrected its age-old community based approach in resolving disputes and allowing justice for the purpose of reconciliation. This path is termed “*gacaca*”.

Originally, *gacaca* derives its name from a type of short, clean grass known in Kinyarwanda as “*Umucaca*”. Before the colonial period, Rwandans would elect well-respected elders in their community, known as “*inyangamugayo*”, who would

sit on “*umucaca*” to resolve disputes among certain members of the community; hence the name.

#### **5.4.1. Modern “*gacaca*”**

Post-genocide “*gacaca*” is different from its predecessor. Judges are elected from within the community to sit on 9 member panels in “*gacaca*” sessions, with the mission not of settling petty disputes, but of hearing and recording testimonies from community members who saw and witnessed what happened during the genocide: who killed whom, who stole what, and so on. After gathering enough data, they sit in community “*gacaca*” courts in their respective villages and preside over trials of genocide suspects, depending on categories.

In 1996 the Rwandan parliament enacted and voted a genocide law, dividing genocide suspects into 4 categories, according to a document elaborated by the Ministry of Justice (2000:11):

1. Suspects whose deeds during the genocide put them among the planners, organizers, instigators, leaders and supervisors of the genocide.
2. Suspects who participated in physical attacks.
3. Suspects accused of terrible assaults that did not result in the death of someone.
4. Suspects accused of looting, theft or other crimes related to property.

“*Gacaca*” courts only have jurisdiction over genocide suspects that fall into categories 2, and 4. Each “*gacaca*” jurisdiction is made up of a general assembly, a coordination committee, a seat and a president.

In the “*gacaca*”, 250 000 people elected from the general population will act as judges, in groups of 19, in over 10 000 locations around Rwanda. They will judge



the large majority of the approximately 115 000 people, most of whom have been in jail since 1994, accused of perpetrating the genocide against Tutsi. The population will be exposed to testimonies about horrible crimes such as killing, rape and atrocities of many kinds ([www.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org](http://www.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org)). According to the same source, Rwandans viewed the “*gacaca*” as having positive and negative effects as follows:

**Positive effects:**

- Truth will be established because many people witnessed the tragic events.
- Justice will be created.
- The decisions made will be respected because the whole population will have taken part in the process. Everyone will be involved in it.
- People will find out where their relatives died and bury them with dignity, which will enable them to mourn properly. Over time, the effects of trauma will be reduced.
- When perpetrators will be punished and innocent people released, reconciliation will be possible.

**Negative effects:**

- Further traumatization as people give or hear testimonies.
- Some people may give biased, untrue testimony; some won't tell the truth because as Christians, they believe they should love their enemy and God will punish them if they accuse people.
- The risk of insecurity for those who will testify.
- Hatred will arise between families that gave testimony and those found guilty. Possibility that some will leave the country.
- Released people may take revenge.
- Possibility of corruption. Survivors could be corrupted as well as the “*inyangamugayo*” in the “*gacaca*” court.

These two strategies were welcomed differently by two types of individuals in Rwanda, the extremists or moderates of both sides. The Hutu extremists did not agree that genocide had taken place in the country. They said the Tutsi were killed because they had attacked the country. Hence the Hutu acted in self-defense. This argument was not valid because they had killed even their Tutsi wives, old people, and children. On the other hand, Tutsi extremists claimed that reconciliation was not possible, unless the Hutu recognized the genocide and asked for forgiveness. However, the government had no other option, because the matter was between the two groups. Step by step, Rwandans accepted what has been done. More work with respect to reconciliation must be carried out because some people still hold to the genocide ideology whereas others might take revenge if the government were not on its guard.

### **5.5 The reaction of the churches**

As previously noted, the churches were supposed to exercise moral authority over God's people; however, they became the easiest way of spreading the "gospel" of hatred and tragedy, division, denial and discrimination based on ethnicity. Religion lost its moral sense.

When the killings started, tens of thousands of Tutsi fled to churches for sanctuary. But they found little protection there. Churches became sites of slaughter, even at the altar.

The Church hierarchy in Rwanda, especially the Roman Catholic, supported the previous regime of President Juvenal Habyarimana and failed to denounce the ethnic hatred then being disseminated.

After the genocide, some survivors have since left the Roman Catholic Church, unable to reconcile the Church's teaching with the actions of its most senior members during the genocide. Many turned to Islam because Muslims were

seen to have acted differently. This was shown by the decrease in membership of the Roman Catholic Church after the genocide. According to the third national census (2002:22), this Church lost members in favor of other denominations. As far as the Hutu were concerned, everyone was effectively saying, “as long as I look like a Muslim, everybody will accept that I don’t have blood on my hands”, whereas the Tutsi said, “let me embrace Islam because Muslims never died in genocide”. Consequently, one group was desiring purification, the other protection. In fact, the Muslims protected their members from killers and were known to have not participated in killings.

After the 1994 genocide, we witnessed an impressive devotion in the population and growth in sects, especially as regards Christian obedience. Indeed, it appears that in a moral and economic crisis, like that which prevailed after the tragedy of 1994, people tended to resort massively to the solidarity which characterized the lately emerged groups of prayer. New Protestant groups were formed from the old ones, claiming to be pure. It is believed that in Kigali, there were more than 100 new denominations, and they continued to increase. This unusual situation was the result of the genocide because Rwandans hoped to find God in other places than in the ancient churches. It was also a kind of business because some leaders of these sects requested money from their believers but later disappeared.

For SDA members, some preferred to abandon the church and stayed at home, whereas others attended the church by default.

All churches tried to follow the government policy of unity and reconciliation by encouraging their members to live together in peace. However, some church leaders feared the “*gacaca*” courts because they knew that their own church members would denounce them. One example was that of the Belgian Roman Catholic priest Guy Theunis who was denounced in “*gacaca*” and jailed. He was released after negotiations between the two sides. Belgium decided to prosecute him. At the same time it is believed that some of the churches have a hidden

agenda. The Minister of Justice, Jean de Dieu Mucyo, identified this problem, and confirmed that indoctrination by some churches was an instrument being used in some areas to obfuscate the success of “*gacaca*”. He said that some churches were sensitizing their followers not to comply with the “*gacaca*” system. Some churchgoers were being taught that God’s teaching was to forgive. Hence they were not supposed to testify against those who had offended them. Others were told not to clamour for justice, but to struggle in prayer for internal salvation. However, when the Minister met with the highest authorities of the churches, they denied being aware of this issue (Kamasa 1999: 20).

## **5.6. THE SDA AFTER THE GENOCIDE (1994-2000)**

### **5.6.1 Church reorganization**

As with the other churches, the SDA needed to reorganize everything to restart its work. Fortunately the Union offices were not looted during the genocide. Pastor Mbangukira Seraya and Carl Wilkens, the only missionary who remained in the country during the war, tried to put things in order. Carl Wilkens saved many possessions and lives, although he was in danger of being killed by the militias.

In September 1994, Jacob Nortey, former Division president, with headquarters in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), visited Rwanda. He also chaired a Union meeting in Kigali which appointed Mbangukira Seraya as Union coordinator and Association coordinators as follows: Isaac Ndwanaye (ERA), Amon Rugelinyange (CRA), David Rwasamirera (SRA), Isaac Gakwaya (WRA), and Samuel Nayigiziki (NRA). During the same meeting, another important decision was taken, that all pastors and workers who continued to be outside the country after September 30, 1994 would be requested to re-apply for a job, which meant that they would not be considered as SDA workers (RUM Minutes of September 15, 1994).

After these appointments, the new coordinators reorganized their mission stations, trying to bring together Christians from refugee camps, those who remained in the country and the returnee refugees of 1959. It was not easy because those groups were different. The returnees had won the war, the refugees from Congo were considered to be killers, and the survivors wished to take revenge. Thus the combination was difficult to manage. The ABAE (Association des bienfaiteurs Adventistes pour l'Évangélisation), which was an Association of Adventist lay people, helped in restarting the missionary work. Some of them worked for the church for a while when pastors were not available yet. They progressively returned to their former activities when the pastors began to arrive. However, other pastors continued their exile, moving from the Congo to America, Europe and other African countries.

Adventists around the world tried to help the SDA church in Rwanda, especially in rebuilding churches. Thus a “Church Roofing Project” headed by Carl Wilkens collected money from donors which was used to buy sheets for churches which had been destroyed, all over the country. According to Sebatunzi Assiel who was the assistant of the project (Report at the 2000 Union Session), at the end of 2000, a total of 406 church buildings had already been roofed, as follows:

West Rwanda Association:	114
East Rwanda Association:	88
Central Rwanda Association:	86
North Rwanda Association:	61
South Rwanda Association:	54

The infrastructure of the mission stations was rebuilt or rehabilitated. According to the same report, the damage in the West Rwanda Association was very significant compared to other mission stations because the staff restarted the activities in Kibuye town instead of Mugonero, the former headquarters.

From November 17 to 20, 1994, Gilbert from the General Conference chaired a meeting in Kigali, assisted by J. Norty from the Division. The committee

appointed presidents to replace the former coordinators, because some of them were not qualified for such responsibilities. Thus, Elie Mbuguje replaced Samuel Nayigiziki in NRA, Esdras Kayonga in SRA replaced David Rwasamirera, and Andrew Mujarugamba in WRA.(RUM Minutes of November 20, 1994).

All those leaders were not elected but appointed because the elections took place after five years, according to SDA policy. They were acting, while waiting for the ordinary procedure to be followed. The General Conference Session took place from June 26 to July 8, 1995 at Utrecht (Holland), and delegates from Rwanda attended this important session. Robert Folkenberg was elected as President of the General Conference, and Luka Daniel as Africa Indian Ocean Division President, to replace Jacob Nortey.

After this session, the Division elected Union Presidents. Pastor Amon Rugelinyange, a Rwandan, was elected President of Rwanda Union Mission. He was consequently the first native to occupy this post in the history of the SDA Church in Rwanda. Others were Pastor Elie Mbuguje (Executive Secretary), and Samuel Bimenyimana (Treasurer). The church was now in the hands of native Rwandans.

After his election, the World Adventist President visited Rwanda from November 16 to 18, 1995. He came to comfort the church. In his message delivered in Kigali Stadium, he apologized on behalf of the church, because its members had failed in their mission as Christians when they participated in the genocide. He asked everybody to alter their behavior and live as true Christians. He used Matthew 15:1-9, especially verse 8: "These people, says God, honor me with their words, but their heart is really far away from me." People were asked to surrender their lives to God and he prayed for them.

## **5.6.2 SDA Post genocide achievements**

### **5.6.2.1 Unity and reconciliation**

Since the government policy of Unity and Reconciliation was necessary to rebuild the devastated country, the SDA Church also followed this path, which did not contradict the Word of God. From January 16 to 20, 1996, the RUM Session took place at Gitwe mission station in order to elect Association leaders. The central theme of this session was "Unity in Christ". Every sermon concerned this theme. The church believed that unity with Christ enabled believers to experience unity among themselves (vertical and horizontal relationship). Delegates from all mission stations attended the session as usual. Thus, the seeds of unity and reconciliation planted within their hearts were supposed to reach the entire church in Rwanda.

At the end of 1996, at Kabusunzu in Kigali, a Unity and Reconciliation meeting was held for all SDA pastors and some church elders. The purpose of this meeting was to promote reconciliation among them and then extend it to the rest of the community. Two years later, from March 4 to 7, 1998 at Kacyiru, the Union, Associations, and the staff of all schools gathered to discuss four points:

1. What is reconciliation?
2. Who has to be reconciled?
3. The behavior of Adventists in reconciliation.
4. The solution to the problem of divisionism.

The results of these seminars and meetings, on one hand, were encouraging because Christians understood that there was no getting away from unity and reconciliation. Adventist preachers entered crowded prisons and preached to the prisoners. Thousands confessed their crimes and were baptized. An Adventist layman called John Kanimba had the ingenious idea of making a mobile

baptistery, which was attached to a van and brought into prisons where prisoners were baptized. The idea was a success as far as the SDA was concerned.

Many Adventists forgave people who killed their relatives. A well-known case was that of a widow, Mrs. Sefuku, from Rwamagana City, in the eastern part of Rwanda. She forgave Louis Kagabo, the murderer of her husband. She took him from the prison and helped him to find a wife, a house, and a chicken coop, so that he might be able to have some means to support himself (East-Central Africa Division 2003: 10, 11). However, others showed that they had apparently accepted reconciliation but were still waiting for an opportunity to revenge themselves. Fortunately the government continued using its authority to avoid such occasions. Since reconciliation is a continuous process, it may take time.

#### **5.6.2.2. Evangelism**

All pastors and lay people concentrated on evangelism by organizing “*amavuna*” all over the country. As a result, many people were baptized. The membership increased from 190 694 (1995) to 324 012 (2000). This was confirmed by the Union statistics report (Chapter 4 p. 107).

In 1998, the SDA church began satellite evangelism programmes named “Pentecost 98”, broadcast from Soweto (South Africa). The main speaker was Fitz Henry from Jamaica. In this program, churches were requested to buy a dish, which would receive pictures from Soweto via satellite. The results were remarkable because people were able to see the images and listen to the messages during four weeks. Forty translators from various countries translated from English into different languages. In Rwanda, 2 219 were baptized at the end of this program (Rwanda Union Mission Report of 1998).

During March 2000, an evangelistic team, from the USA’s “Quiet Hour”, conducted an evangelistic campaign at Remera Church in Kigali. As a result, 500 people were baptized.



### **5.6.2.3 Education**

All schools reopened but in difficult conditions. However, the unique Adventist University of Central Africa located in Mudende (Northern Rwanda) was not able to restart. Its campus had been completely looted and destroyed. On May 7, 1996, Robert Pierson, the Rector, finally reopened it in Kigali, with only three departments instead of seven. The problem which motivated this decision, was the lack of infrastructure in Mudende, its location near the DR Congo, where insecurity persisted, and the lack of staff because many of them had returned to their home countries. The Church had invested too much in this University and hesitated to reinvest where people had destroyed their own infrastructure. In Kigali, the authorities of the University rented classrooms and offices. The first graduation after the war took place in 1999, in bad conditions, with only 47 students. The aim of this institution was to serve African French speaking countries. After the genocide, students from those countries stopped studying in Rwanda. The Church authorities decided to divide the University into three, so that the former students could be served in their own countries:

Wallace University (Lukanga) in the DRC  
Cosendai University (Nanga Eboko) Cameroon  
Zurcher University (Madagascar).

These universities were named in remembrance of former missionaries who had played an important role in implanting churches or schools in Africa, especially in those countries.

Adventist parents played an important role in education because they had taken the initiative to create schools, even before 1994. After the war, especially in 1996, four secondary schools were established:

Nyanza Technical School (Central Rwanda)  
Bethel Secondary School (Central Rwanda)  
Muyira Secondary School (South Rwanda)

### Nyarubuye Secondary school (East Rwanda).

The parents managed these schools. This was a very useful system but diminished the church's expansion in the education sector because such schools were not under its authority. Tensions sometimes arose among parents because the management of the schools was lucrative and everybody wished to be a manager. The result was that the number of Church schools stayed at three whereas those run by parents continued to multiply.

In 1997, the same parents created FAPADES, the Adventist Parents' Association Federation for Development of Higher Education. After the secondary schools had been established, Adventist parents faced another problem because these pupils were supposed to continue their studies at University. However, only two universities existed in Rwanda at that time: The National University and The Adventist University of Central Africa. They were not able to accommodate all applicants. Thus, the Association opened the "Université Laïque Adventiste de Kigali" (UNILAK) which, once again, was operated by Adventist lay people. The reality was that the Church operated one university, which was the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA). The Adventist Parents University was quite different from the first one and to some extent a rival. The main difference was in their management. The Church managed the AUCA, whereas the UNILAK was managed by Adventist parents.

#### **5.5.2.4 Health**

The sector of health was seriously affected because it was easy to steal medicine and materials. Those working in the health institutions were the people who looted them.

After the genocide, Mugonero Hospital was used respectively by ADRA/Rwanda, an Adventist NGO, UNHCR and AHA, in order to rescue the population and

render first aid. These organizations attempted to rehabilitate the hospital by donating some equipment, which helped to restart the activities.

In 1999, the church decided to take the hospital back and to manage it. Dr G. Araujo was then called from Brazil to be the Director of the Hospital. He brought his experience and additional equipment. This attracted patients because he was not only committed to the work, but also competent.

On October 15, 1999, a clinic was opened at Remera in Kigali, for general treatment, and the former Dental Clinic reopened at Kacyiru. The latter was well equipped because it was modern.

One can imagine that these achievements were not sufficient. However, if we compare them to the devastation that had taken place, and the short period of six years, the achievements were substantial.

### **5.5.3 Difficulties and challenges.**

The SDA church in Rwanda faced many other challenges and difficulties. The most important could be summarized thus:

- From 1997 to 1998 another war began in the north part of the country, where Rwankeri mission station was located. This war was called the “infiltrators war” because it took the form of guerilla warfare. On June 6, 1997, rebels who wanted to overthrow the new RPF government attacked Rwankeri Secondary School and the mission station, early in the morning. They killed six people, among them the wife of the School Principal and his three children. Immediately all activities of the mission station and school ceased and the rest took refuge in Gisenyi town on the border of the DR Congo. The believers were not free to gather because of this war. They feared being killed by the militia. Many people were indeed

killed, pastors as well, such as Rwagasore Ekisedi, Karekezi, Rutebuka Z, and the Association president, Pastor Ruterahagusha Theophas. The government won this war too. However, the Association did not return to its headquarters in Rwankeri. Instead, it moved from Gisenyi to Ruhengeri town, fifteen kilometers from Rwankeri.

- The history of the SDA Church, from the time of its inception, is replete with individuals and groups who have left the Church owing to one reason or another. This phenomenon is not unique only to the SDA Church. From the New Testament times to the Apostolic Era, churches have had to deal with the pain of dissidents who have broken away from the church family. In Rwanda, dissidents who were opposed to the church went by different names: Temperants, Reformers, “*Abasohotse*”, “*Abakusi*”.

Those dissidents made various accusations but the most important were announced by Humberto Rasi (2001:487-489):

- The SDA is the “fallen Babylon” because it departed from the original teachings.
- The SDA church members and leaders live unhealthy lives. They do not follow a strict vegetarian diet. Meat, coffee, tea and other intoxicants are served in SDA functions.
- The SDA collaborated with the World Church Council of Churches.
- The creation of the department of Women’s Ministry, from the General Conference to the local levels, is unbiblical.

These accusations could be summarized as conflict between conservatives and liberals within the church. The first were allergic to change. The creation of a Women’s Ministry within the church organization was not based on the Bible according to the conservatives. They said that women could not speak in the church. This was the

influence of the Jewish culture and the Rwandan as well, but the situation is changing according to a greater realization of the rights of women.

There were other general causes that produced the growth of dissidence:

- **Dissatisfaction with leadership:** This is prolific in places where the leadership is in low esteem and is not honored.
- **Weak, negligible workforce:** Where leaders and members are uneducated as regards current issues, charismatic individuals take advantage and sow seeds of discord.
- **Rejection of ecclesiastical authority:** When approached and advised to follow the church's system of governance or to conform to the church's order of operation, dissidents became emotional.
- **Misusing of church funds:** This caused members to lose confidence in the leadership of the church. Eventually, church members showed their disapproval by leaving the church.
- **Discovery of new light:** Some begin by claiming that they have been endowed with a gift of discernment. This could be Biblical. If the new light fails the test and the church authority rejects it, dissatisfied members leave the church or become embittered. When the church refused to listen to them they quit the organized work.
- **Position seeking:** Disappointed members who lost their positions of authority or were not given authority formed factions.
- **Disregard of Ellen G. White's writings:** Some people were misinterpreting them to suit their own will.

The SDA reaction in Rwanda was the same as the General Conference: a non-violent, non-confrontational approach. Past experience has shown that the church cannot stop dissidents from emerging in their backyard. Any attempt to combat them has not produced the desirable results. Instead it has caused more harm than good. The Church in Rwanda engaged in dialogue with dissidents wherever they were, led by local pastors. They were given a hearing for the

Church to attempt to understand them so that they could be heard and be answered effectively. Some of their accusations, as we have seen, constituted misinformation and were defamatory. It was not necessary to waste time in polemical defense, pastors thought. Seminars and workshops at all levels of the church were organized to educate and inform members about policy changes and doctrinal reviews.

The dissidence was not strong enough to strengthen the church. The dissidents were not recognized by their own government, which was why they operated within the SDA churches. For a long time, they tried to become a well organized movement but failed. There was a backward and forward movement of members from the church to the dissidents and vice-versa. Thus their number has remained unknown.

## **CONCLUSION**

After the terrible genocide of 1994, the country lost a great deal both in terms of material and of human lives. The new government was required to face a very delicate situation, in order to unite the Rwandans and to rebuild the country. Although the task was hard, it proposed certain solutions such as the Commission of Reconciliation and National Unity, and the traditional “*gacaca*” to solve the problem of impunity. At the same time, it tried to face the problems of economic development, which was also a solution to the problem of poverty that was endemic.

The different churches are particularly trying to renew the steps of the gospel that have not been applied, such as love and unity. The SDA reorganized its mission stations while evangelizing in order to correct the mistakes that had been committed. To address the wounds that remain open, to bring hearts closer and to maintain unity is still a challenge that all Rwandans must face, be they members of a church or not.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6. CONCLUSION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church maintains a close connection with the preaching of William Miller and his followers, who had fixed the date of October 22, 1844 for the return of Christ, wherein the religious life was marked in the United States by a spiritual revival, during which the American nation became aware of being the instrument chosen by God for the salvation of humanity.

After the great disappointment of 1844, a small minority of the Millerites gave rise to the Adventist Movement with its triple concepts: that of the heavenly sanctuary, according to which Jesus entered the most holy place to exert the judgments; that which insisted on the literal observation of the Sabbath as the weekly day of rest, because this belongs to the unchanging Decalogue and is eternal, valid for all believers; and that which insisted on the warning of Revelation 14 regarding the need that the church leave the Babylon of the confusion generated by the errors in the various denominations which had moved away from the biblical teachings.

The Adventists did not want to form new churches, because the principal error of the churches lay in their super organization, which choked the interior life and personal piety. The period after the disappointment was characterized by a disorder in organization, dominated by voluntary service, the submission to the divine will and a certain doctrinal rigidity. The preaching did not go beyond some states in the north of the USA where the majority of the nations were represented. They thus believed that they had fulfilled the biblical requirement to announce the message to every nation and that Christ could not be long in coming, in accordance with his promise.

From 1850 to 1863, the Adventist Movement was restructured towards becoming an organized church. The first local communities appeared during 1861 in Michigan (USA) and the same year, they organized the “Advent Review Publishing Association”. In October 1860 the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially created. From 1863 the supreme administrative body, the General Conference, was created with 3500 members. The church set up 27 fundamental beliefs founded on the Bible, accompanied by a single life style (Amorim 1990:44).

From 1863, Adventist preaching was addressed even to those who were not Millerites, Christians in general; whom it was necessary to warn about the imminence of the Second Coming of Jesus. The Adventists believed they had received a special mandate to transmit truths that had been ignored, such as observance of the Sabbath, baptism by immersion and others. In terms of this mission, they reached Europe by means of Michael Czechowski, a simple member who had not been elected by the Church but who wanted to share his new faith with his fellow citizens. Only after ten years was J N Andrews sent officially by the General Conference to establish churches in that part of the world. At that time the church was not yet militant because of a lack of human resources and equipment. Consequently, sending the missionaries was conditioned by the expected results.

Upon missionary sending in Europe, the church entered her era of mission, by reaching other continents such as Australia where Stephen N. Haskell and other four pioneers implanted the Adventist churches in 1885. Australia was later to be the base for Adventism in Pacific.

The Adventists penetrated Africa from the south, in 1887. The movement of expansion reached the entire continent in the span of forty years, from the south towards the north. It was easier to work in the English speaking countries because the missionaries stemmed mainly from America.



The presentation of the gospel was almost the same. This was basically carried out by colporteurs of Adventist publications, the pastors and the lay people. This preaching insists on the imminence of the return of Christ, the necessity of being prepared by the observation of the commands, and the changing of one's behavior.

Initially the distribution of printed and church papers was undertaken door to door, and public conferences were organized as well as constructive meetings. Later, the Adventists were obliged to combat certain opinions stemming from other denominations, the clergy and the pastors who were afraid to lose their flocks or the population who were shocked by the message itself, or the inappropriate way the message was presented by some evangelists. These anxieties were well founded because, when the members of these denominations once came in contact with the Adventist message, they deserted their original churches. The Adventists believe in individual religious freedom. Thus they presented biblical truths to everybody who liked to listen and allowed them to make their own choice.

In 1919, the first Adventist missionaries entered Rwanda from Europe, after the Roman Catholics (1900) and Protestants (1907). The country was being led by the minority Tutsi monarchy under the Belgian Administration. Later, in 1959, the majority Hutu took power, aided by Roman Catholic missionaries and Belgian colonizers. It seemed that the Adventists remained neutral during this crisis, because they did not exert any political influence according to the philosophy of the church. However, the Adventist Tutsi fled the country and this situation affected the membership of the church and its unity.

Between 1920 and 1931, the Adventist missionaries strategically implanted three mission stations, one in the centre, another in the west, and in the north. The evangelistic methods used in Rwanda were somewhat different at the beginning because people were illiterate. Hence orality was employed in preaching,

combined with pictures. At the same time they taught people how to read, preparing them to use their own Bibles and other materials in future.

With the open-air preaching method called “*amavuna*”, started by C.W. Bozarth in 1931, a new era opened as regards evangelism. In fact, the missionaries trained, mobilized, and equipped lay people for evangelism. Their testimonies contributed to the expansion of faith among Rwandan natives. The Adventists succeeded in this method because it was not employed by other churches. However, it was not new because it had already occurred in the early Christian church and that of the Reformation. It is important to stress that the Adventist laity in general, and particularly in Rwanda, were committed to the church and to its mission. Hence believers were the prime factor in winning people to become disciples of Christ and members of the church. A careful analysis of the facts confirms that Adventist church growth is primarily the result of the spontaneous witnessing of the believers at work, in the neighborhood, in the family circle, and among friends. This work is seen mainly as a work of assistance to the pastor. No salary was allowed to the laity and this was an advantage for the church's administration because it was not financially able to support them. Every church member took the great commission as his own burden according to the Bible (Mat. 28:19), and assumed it.

Another interesting method, particularity for the SDA, was the camp meeting, which attracted crowds for three days every year. Adventists invited their relatives and friends to attend the meetings and finally many of them decided to be baptized by immersion. The method continues, and attracts opposition from other churches, but without open conflict because religious liberty is granted by the law.

The SDA used classical methods too. Schools were implanted with the purpose of using them as the channels to transmit the Gospel. Its philosophy of education was to prepare people for the life in this earth and for the world to come (White 1995:11). Education altered the life of Rwandans. They learned various

professions, and later entered secondary schools and university. This enhanced their revenue and social situation, and permitted them to communicate with the rest of the world.

Health work seemed to have been effective in preventive and curative medicine. This improved the health of the population and affected social and economical development. The healing ministry was also bound up with the gospel commission.

Literature evangelism was not efficient at the beginning, as noted earlier, because people could not read. In addition, the materials were not available in Kinyarwanda. Another problem was cultural. Usually Rwandans like talking rather than reading. Thus, this ministry did not succeed as in other countries. This is certainly a bad habit which must be changed if people want to move towards development.

In 1994, the country experienced the horrible genocide of Tutsi and moderate Hutu, following the war began in 1990 by the RPF, from Uganda. This political party was mainly composed of Tutsi who had fled the country in 1959. About one million died within one hundred days. Unfortunately, Christians were involved in the killings. Although there were acts of courage among ordinary Christians, leaders failed to protect their flocks. It was a shame for the church in general and for the Adventists in particular because they claimed to observe the Ten Commandments, of which the sixth said: "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). They failed to practice the love they had learned about for many years, demonstrating that their conversion was not complete.

The genocide produced refugees, orphans, widows, traumatized people and more hate between the two major ethnic groups. Many survivors questioned the existence of God and abandoned their churches. They accused him of not protecting them during the atrocities. On the other hand other survivors held a different opinion: they felt that God had protected them and praised Him.

The new government led by the RPF tried to reunite the Rwandans by creating the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission with the purpose of eradicating the policies of discrimination and exclusion which had characterized the successive regimes of Rwanda. Churches were asked by the government to reconcile their members. This was also another failure. The Churches should have been the first institutions to promote the reconciliation process.

It was obvious that justice had to be done in order to reconcile the Rwandans. However, this was a major issue because so many people had participated in the killings. Hence the government initiated the modernization of the traditional tribunal called “*gacaca*” to judge the thousands of suspects in jail. Churches were asked to sensitize their members to tell the truth about what happened. The results were not encouraging. Like other Christians, the Adventists continued to hide the truth and it is very difficult for many of them to confess what they have did. Yet reconciliation is an absolute necessity because the wounds are still open.

The Seventh-day Adventist church tried its best to reorganize itself after the war. It was noticeable that once again, the laity played an important role in the reorganization by sharing the responsibility of leading the local churches with the pastors. The opportunity was given to the church to prepare more pastors to replace those who had been killed or fled the country. The church continued to renew the gospel that had not been applied.

Based on what the present research has revealed, it is important to offer some suggestions which will help the church to fulfill its mission and satisfy the spiritual, social and economical needs of Rwandans in general and of its members in particular.

**A mobilized laity.** To foster the spiritual growth of the church, therefore, believers should be made aware of the potential of spontaneous witnessing.

They should be equipped and trained to give an account of their faith according to their specific gifts and in the particular context of their life and location. Witnessing is a way of life; a way of doing, acting, thinking; not only a temporary job on special occasions, like camp meetings. The Church should continue to prepare pastors mentally, theologically, and practically to see their role as being equippers of the laity, enhanced for the former's work of ministry and the building up of the church (Eph 4:11,12). The motivation of the laity must be carried out according to the specific gifts which the Lord has given to every believer, as cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. It is noticeable that growing churches are those where the pastors stimulate the congregational initiative and responsibility for evangelism, helping members to discover and use their spiritual gifts for service in the community.

Local churches should continue to constitute the basis of evangelism. The rapid missionary advance of the early Christian church was centered likewise in local congregations. Hence the same is true for the Adventist church expansion in Rwanda. This does not mean that the pastors will not be involved, but the initiative and the planning ought to come from the local churches themselves, and the pastors should assist and support them. New converts would discover fellowship and support from those churches' members.

**Fellowship.** Church growth studied from across the world clearly indicate that fellowship is the single most important factor of growth today. It appears to be a very strong factor in leading people to the church and keeping them members. In Rwanda people joined the Adventist church because they were loved into it. But now the situation has altered. Love has diminished and some new converts have abandoned the church because they did not find the affection they expected. Fellowship can be provided through an increased love and concern for each other in the church, as well as for those outside. It is the responsibility of the church to make sure that the gospel of love is well taught and practiced. The lack of true love was one of the origins of the genocide. Fellowship could offer one of the solutions to this problem.

**Communication of the Gospel.** The rapid and radical changes in the world of the past few decades and religious pluralism demand that the Adventist message be communicated in ways that are meaningful and relevant to people affected by those conditions. Otherwise the church runs the risk that it “scratches where it does not itch”. For example, the context of an African Christian differs radically from that of a European. The church needs to understand the particular historical, social, cultural, economical, and religious context in which it lives. This should help to decrease the number of Adventists who are half converted.

**Population is urbanized.** The Adventist Church in Rwanda was operating in the countryside. Its mission stations had been implanted far from the cities. Until recently, urbanization was a typical development mainly in Europe and North America, but today it has become the common pattern of world development. In Rwanda the towns are growing rapidly. Urban society is a culture of its own, a way of thinking, acting and doing which differs radically from that of the traditional rural world. It possesses its own needs and quests, forms of communication, its own rhythm and relationships and its own resistance and receptivity to the Gospel. The Adventist Church has not faced the challenge of the cities realistically or made a serious attempt to reach them with the gospel. Its mission has been oriented towards people of a rural location, mind and mentality. The church should revise its vision and adapt its methods to reach the towns in earnest.

**Danger of secularism.** The devaluation of religious values and morals around the world is evident and is also notable in Rwanda. There are now towers of learning and technology; the media receives more attention than the message of the holy books. As a result, there is a loss of faith. Many other gods will arise and dominate the life of people. The church should deal with this situation by creating modern Bible study centres which will attract people. It is obvious that modern technology must be applied to evangelism, such as the use of the internet and other methods. Otherwise, the traditional way of doing will not be appropriate.

The country speaks only one language, Kinyarwanda. This facilitates the spreading of the Gospel. Since the number of literate people has increased, it is necessary to provide books and other evangelical materials in this language. Adventist literature is mainly in English and French, which means that the majority of Adventists in Rwanda are not able to read and use them. Hence the translation of books from those languages into Kinyarwanda must be undertaken.

**Increasing the number of Schools.** The number of church members has increased, but Adventist schools did not follow the same rhythm of growth. For example the number of secondary schools belonging to the church remained at three for 86 years! It operates only one university. This situation should alter because it is not in accord with the educational philosophy of the church. When Adventist children attended public schools, they missed out on Adventist education, which affects their beliefs. The multiplication of schools and options will also help to build the country in which the church is operating. This is also a part of its mission.

**Hospital and health centres.** After 1931, the church medical services consisted of one hospital and a number of dispensaries. According to the healing mission of the church, this is not adequate. More work must be done in the rural areas and in the cities as well. The church should provide the medical staff and materials. This will enable health centres to become self supporting.

**Economic development.** The church exists not only for the spiritual development of the population, but also for its well being. People need to be trained in small projects which will generate revenues for their economic growth. ADRA, which is present in the country, should supervise and furnish support.

**Involvement in politics.** The SDA church is apolitical. It must continue to be so. It is to be remarked that when the church is involved in politics, the consequences are disastrous. The case of the 1994 genocide is an example. In

order to avoid a similar situation in the future, a neutral attitude towards politics is necessary. This means, for the Adventists, the necessity to obey the government in place, insofar as its demands are not contrary to the Word of God.

**Keeping records.** It is very important that its records be kept by the church for its use when necessary. I strongly recommend that the SDA church in Rwanda establish such an activity in their departments and offices. In fact, it was impossible to find documents in their offices dated prior to 1984.

It was notable that the SDA growth in membership in Rwanda is constant. It is hoped that the tendency will continue even in the future. The authorities of the church, and members as well, should be attentive to these recommendations which will help them to prepare for and manage the situation.



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## **INTERNET RESOURCE**

"Modern gacaca" [WWW.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org](http://WWW.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org) Date last accessed: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

