

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies  
Emphasis in Church History

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPANSION OF SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISM IN WESTERN KENYA, (1906 – 2022)

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Date completed: April 2024

This research traces the history and development of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya. It has evaluated the historical backgrounds of Adventist missionaries and their major contributions to the Adventist Church in Western Kenya. Tracing Adventism in this region is significant to the present Adventists and church historians. It is an attempt to document the history of Adventism in Western Kenya, to preserve Adventist heritage within cultural Kenyan identities. This research has provided the historical development of Adventism in Western Kenya and its significance in Kenyan Christianity, filling the methodological and educational gaps in scholarship about the development of Seventh-day Adventism in this region.

The research has systematically enumerated how Seventh-day Adventism developed through strategies and methods employed by the Western missionaries. This study has also recorded numerous existential cultural issues in Western Kenya that defeated missionaries. Finally, this research has identified some of the potential church-owned instrumental entities.

The method employed in this research is Historical/documentary, which benefits from published and unpublished materials, journal articles, archival material, and oral history. The research is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduced the study, chapter two explained how Adventism is part of Kenyan Christianity, the third chapter evaluated the early stages and prevailing factors of the Adventist movement in Western Kenya, the fourth chapter examined the remarkable developments of Adventism in Western Kenya over the years, chapter five examines the challenges and prospects of Adventism in Western Kenya today, lastly chapter six presented the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

The study concludes that the origin and development of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya were a product of missionary activities by both Western and local missionaries. However, the failure of Western missionaries to understand and embrace an appropriate approach to African culture hindered the development of steadfast church members, and this remains a challenge in this region to this day.

This study suggests that examining the Seventh-day Adventist faith through its integration into specific cultural groups, such as the Luos, Kisii, and Luyha, can provide valuable insights. It emphasizes archival research to reevaluate the historical development of Adventism in Kenya.

Adventist University of Africa

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ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPANSION OF SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISM IN WESTERN KENYA, 1906 – 2022

A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Thomas Ngoko

April 2024

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AIC	African Instituted Churches
ASI	Adventist Lay Persons Services and Industries
ATR	African Traditional Religion
DYM	Dini Ya Musambwa
EKUC	East Kenya Union Conference
GC	General Conference
GMV	Junior Missionary Volunteers Society
KASMS	Kamagambo Adventist School of Medical Sciences
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
NKJV	New King James Version
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
TMI	Total Member Involvement
UCEA	University College of Eastern Africa
WKUC	West Kenya Union Conference

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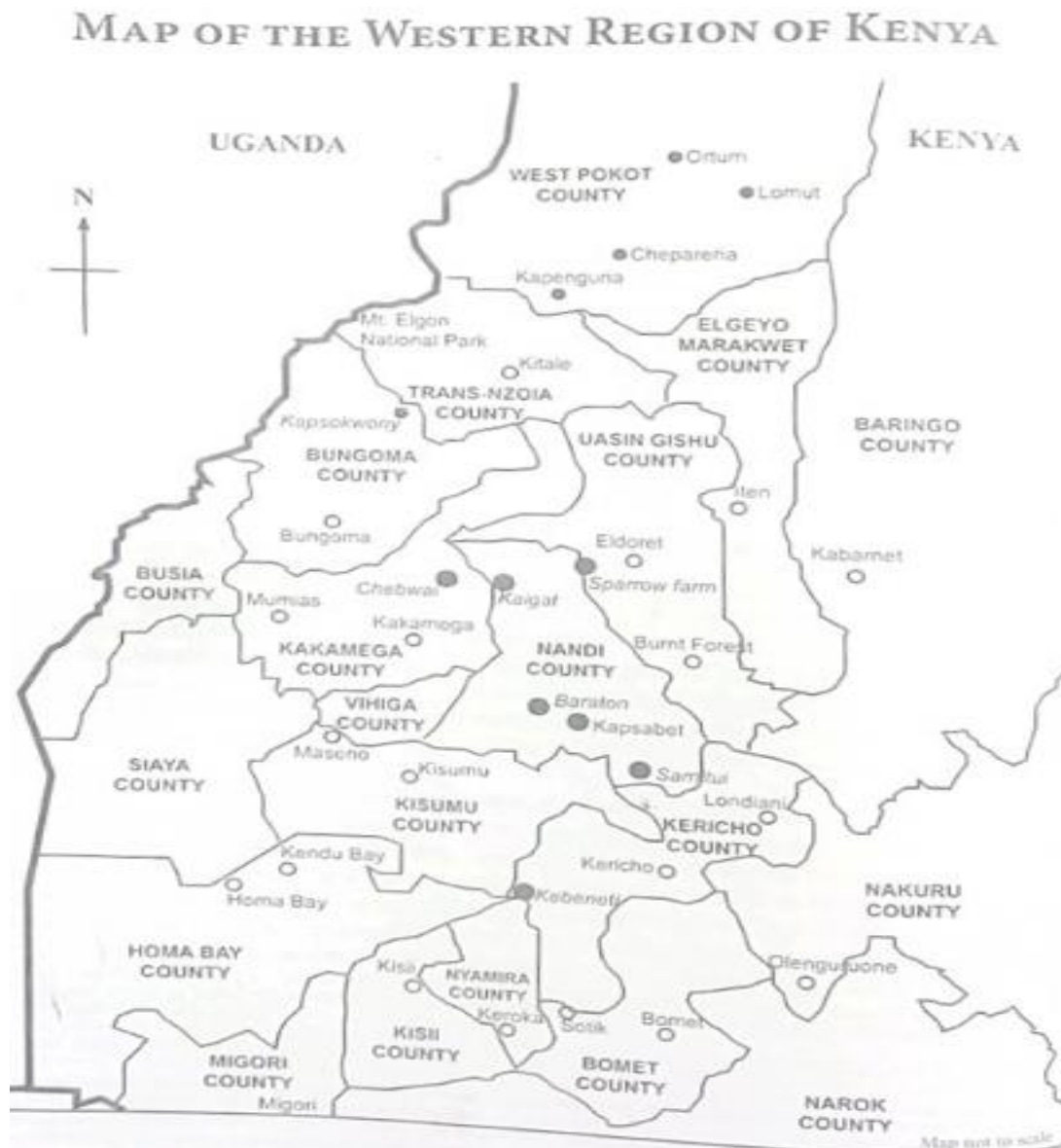
CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**The Background of the Study**

This paper delves into the historical advancement of Adventism in the Western parts of Kenya. For comparison purposes, it is important to note this particular region's political and Ecclesiastical geography. Following the political geography, it comprises the following current counties; Trans-zoia, Busia, Nyamira, Kakamega, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, Nandi, Vihiga, Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Kisii and Migori<sup>1</sup> as indicated in the Figure 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Godfrey K. Sang, and Hosea Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications, 2017), xxii.



*Figure 1.* Map of the Political Geography of Western Kenya, Showing the Number of Counties in Western Kenya Union

The Ecclesiastical geography of Western Kenya covers the following territories as shown in the map; Lake Victoria Field, North West Kenya Conference, Greater Rift Valley Conference, Central Nyanza Conference, Kenya Lake Conference, and Ranen Conference.

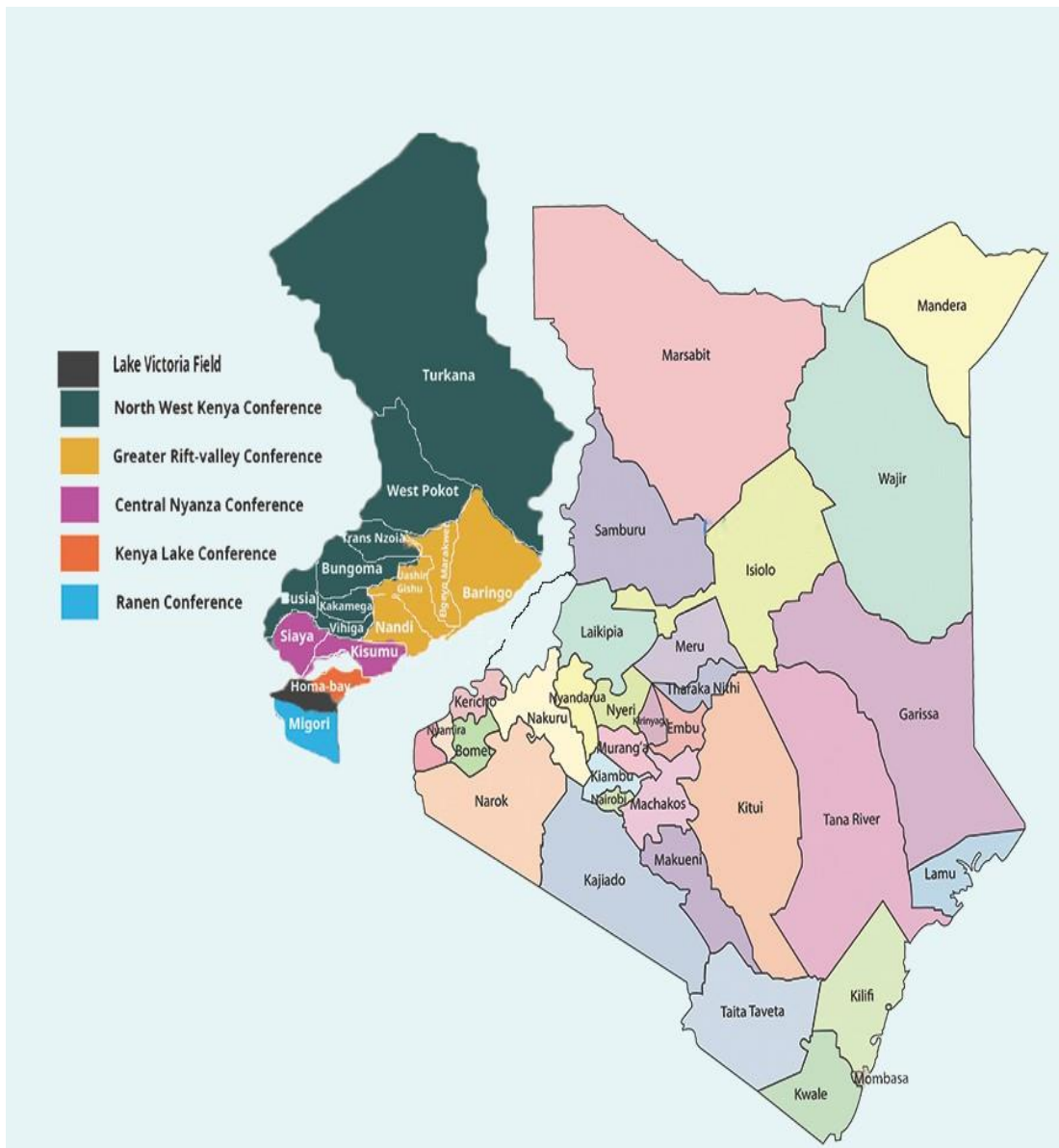


Figure 2. Map of the Ecclesiastical Geography of Western Kenya Union, showing the Number of Conferences and Field in Western Kenya Union

It will also present a brief history of Christianity in Kenya from a general perspective, with its establishment which can be traced from the coming of the early missionaries, taking note that Kenya is a religious country with diverse denominations that have been in existence for centuries. Most of them are as a result of the colonizers who ruled the country. This chapter will not give a specific period but will consider a general overview of Christianity in the Country. The notion by the pioneers that

Christianity was declining in Kenya was not true as they discovered a different story. When they came to Africa's eastern shore, they found a different situation because of Krapf's missionary work among the non-Muslim tribes on the coast of Kenya near Mombasa had been approved.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Christianity was to be planted a fresh and the decaying theocratic symbol of Mombasa's Fort Jesus replaced with a personal Christianity in which Christ ruled in the hearts.<sup>3</sup> With full energy, in 1844, Krapf regrouped and embarked on a Swahili grammar and Bible translation and in 1846 he was joined by Johann Rebman. Krapf and his colleagues created a station at a place called Rabai Mpya among the Wanyika (bush people) to attract one of the nine tribes within the Wanyika, called the Giriama, who eventually misunderstood Krapf's message.<sup>4</sup>

However, these missionaries worked hard with a handful of converts for over twenty years. Krapf and his team were so determined that it was hard for them to be discouraged, so following the new dream of Krapf, they planted a chain of mission stations stretching from Rabai Mpya across the continent of Africa to the western shore.<sup>5</sup> Working with the Kamba chief (a tribe in Kenya) named Kivoi enhanced his missionary journeys within Kenyan territories, including Mount Kenya.

The most remarkable means by which Christianity was spread in Kenya and East Africa at large was by the writings of Krapf in the Kiswahili language, producing not only Bible translations but also dictionaries and grammars, proved an immense

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 189.

aid to the later growth of an East African Christianity rooted in the African tongue.<sup>6</sup>

During the late nineteenth century in Kenya, there were various types of

Missionary Christianity was alive, well, and moving inland, whereby The Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) was one of them. It had its first spot established in 1891 in the interior of Kenya that is Kibwezi, in Ukambani, and later on in 1898, the mission was moved to Kikuyu near Nairobi. In 1901, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) began inland work in Kikuyuland, centering their work at Kabete, and then The Methodists followed suit. Africa Inland Church was also established in Nzawi in Ukambani. European colonial rule in Kenya began in the year 1895. Around the same time the colonial government began the construction of the railway linking the coastal city of Mombasa and Lake Victoria which was completed in December, 1901. Immediately many farmers began securing pieces of land for themselves in a region known as the White Highlands.

When the first Adventist missionaries, Pastor Arthur Carscallen and Peter Nyambo came, they organized the first Adventist Mission directing their focus on the African people. After a short period and actually after a survey they established the Gendia Mission on the Eastern shores of Lake Victoria and began their work among the Luo people. There was no organized effort to reach the European settlers who were occupying the fertile highlands of Kenya.<sup>7</sup> Later, F. Thomas from the United States arrived. In 1907 they were joined by J. D. Baker, Mrs. Baker, and Helen Bruce Thompson. J. H. S. Sparks came in 1908, B. L. Morse and H. Horace Brooks came in

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A sparrow*, xvii.

1909, and Leonard Lane came in 1912.<sup>8</sup> There was a steady influx of missionaries into the region with a strong interest in achieving their missionary goals. J. D. Baker commenced a mission in 1909 in Kanyadoto, supported by R. Sparks in 1913. Subsequently, in 1912-1913, Arthur Carscallen opened two missions among the Abagusii in Nyanchwa and Kamagambo.<sup>9</sup>

Penetration of Adventism into the other part of Western region of Kenya, that is, the current Greater Rift Valley Conference and Western Kenya Conference territories, was orchestrated by the Sparrows who arrived in British East Africa (Kenya) in December 1911 and settled to farm the Uasin Gishu Plateau on the west. They commenced propagating the Adventist message among the Nandi converting many of them together with their families and then built a church before going back to South Africa in 1941.<sup>10</sup> The Sparrows became Adventists in 1890 in Grahamstown in South Africa forming the Rokeby Park Seventh-day Adventist Church –Africa’s third church.

Apart from reaching out to the Nandi, the Sparrows endeavored to reach out to the Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking European settlers who were doing farming at the plateau. They disseminated tracts in both languages into their dwelling places.<sup>11</sup> In the same region Ezekiel Kimenjo Maswai, who was not originally Adventist, after being taught by the group led by Arthur Carscallen from Gendia, made up his mind and became Adventist then later on, was the foremost Adventist

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<sup>8</sup> A. A. Carscallen, “Reinforcements,” *The Missionary Worker*, June 23, 1909, 104; E. E. Andross, “President’s Address,” *The Missionary Worker*, August 28, 1907, 138.

<sup>9</sup> M. Getui, “The Establishment and History of the Activity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1912-1985,” ( MA diss., Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, 1985), 31-36.

<sup>10</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A sparrow*, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

evangelist and leader in the formative years of the denomination among the Nandi people of western Kenya.<sup>12</sup> Among Christian denominations that established their mission in Kenya in the early twentieth century was the Seventh-day Adventist Church with its historic beginning as remarked;

Seventh-day Adventism sprang from the ‘great second advent awakening’ which shook the religious world about the middle of the nineteenth century when a re-emphasis on the second advent of Jesus Christ was rampant in Britain and on the continent of Europe. Before long, many of the Old World views of Prophetic interpretation crossed the Atlantic and penetrated American theological circles.<sup>13</sup>

The movement was largely upon the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation and the great second Adventist movement which swept the United States in the 1840s stemmed largely from the activities of William Miller, who confidently taught in the year 1818, that is about twenty-five years, i.e. 1843, Jesus Christ would come again.<sup>14</sup> Additional history tracing the genesis of this movement is that;

The Seventh-day Adventists claims that their historical roots can be traced as far as the times of Wesley and the Evangelical rivavalists, and not products of Millerite movement. They believe that the modern Adventism emanated from the great awakening that took place during the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Statement of the Problem**

Adventism in Kenya has recorded remarkable growth today in the Kenyan religious market. Although some scholarly works have been done to sketch the rise and place of Kenyan Adventism within Kenyan Christianity, no systematic approach

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<sup>12</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A sparrow*, xvi.

<sup>13</sup> Walter R. Montin, Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), 25.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Richard W. Schwarz, Floyd D. Greenleaf, *A history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, (Nampa Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000), 13.

was adopted to concentrate on Adventism in Western Kenya and its significance in Kenyan Christianity. This study, therefore, intends to provide a historical development of Adventism in Western Kenya. It fills a methodological and educational gap in scholarship about the development of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya. This study seeks to identify the missing aspects of true Adventism in Western Kenya as introduced by the pioneers in the early 1900s to date. The main question that the research seeks to respond to is: How did Seventh-day Adventism develop over the years in Western Kenya? Other related important questions are: What were the strategies and methods employed by Western missionaries and early local converts in spreading the Adventist message in Western Kenya? What are the challenges and prospects of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya today?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research and study is to trace the history and development of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya. The study also evaluates the historical backgrounds of Adventist missionaries and their major contributions to the Adventist Church in Western Kenya.

### **Significance of the Study**

Tracing the roots of Adventism in the Western Kenya region is quite significant in the sense that by understanding its historical background, the present Adventist and church historians will appreciate the sacrifices, the risks, and the passion for the mission as demonstrated by the pioneers. It is an attempt to document the history of Adventism in Western Kenya, something which helps to preserve Adventist heritage within cultural Kenyan identities.

## **Delimitations**

This study focuses on Adventism in Western Kenya. Although the author makes references to Adventism in other parts of Kenya for the sake of comparison of historical facts, this work concentrates on Adventism in Western Kenya from 1906 to 2022.

## **Methodology**

This research is a documentary study that benefits from published and unpublished materials, journal articles, archival material, and oral history. This approach helps to analyze and evaluate historical facts to be as objective as possible. The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study, the second chapter discusses Christianity and Adventism in Kenya, the third chapter evaluates the early stages and prevailing factors of the Adventist movement in Western Kenya, the fourth chapter examines the remarkable developments of Adventism in Western Kenya, chapter five examines the challenges and prospects of Adventism in Western Kenya today, lastly chapter six presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

## **Review of Key Materials**

Many books and articles on the roots of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general have been written but not so much has been written on Adventism in Western Kenya. Godfrey K. Sang and Hosea K. Kili historicise Adventism in Western Kenya, first by presenting the geographical area of this territory on page xxii, covering twenty Counties, then confirm that Adventism traces its roots to this region by the coming of the first two missionaries, Arthur A. Carscallen and Peter Nyambo, who arrived in

Mombasa and made their way to Ogango, which was renamed later as Gendia where they settled and established the first Mission Station.<sup>16</sup>

Godfrey Sang holds an undergraduate degree in History and has pursued African Studies at the University of Oxford. His rich academic background and experience in research have led him to conduct extensive studies on a variety of topics related to African history, culture and society. He has featured both as an author and co-author in many books addressing the aforementioned topics.

The two authors contend that the missionaries avoided the Nandi region for a while because they had also gained a reputation as a fierce tribe who deeply held on to their traditions and did not want anything to do with foreign religions.<sup>17</sup> The coming of Adventism to Western Kenya, according to Sang and Kili, can be attributed to a South African farmer, by the name David Sparrow, who embraced Adventism and got baptized in 1890 at the age of 23.<sup>18</sup> Due to the war that ravaged South Africa for about four years, many South Africans migrated to Tanzania and Kenya, Among the non-Afrikaners who settled among the Kalenjin people in the highland part of Western Kenya, which is known today as Uasin Gishu, was David Sparrow, a practicing Seventh-day Adventist.<sup>19</sup> Sang and Kili enumerate six parts in their work explaining the spread of Adventism in Western Kenya, namely; Adventism comes to Nandi, the work of the Adventist Pioneers in Nandi from 1914-1979, the coming of non-Nandi Adventists from 1960-1979, the Adventist Youth and Educational Institutions from

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<sup>16</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A sparrow*, xix.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., xvii.

1933-2016, Adventism comes to the Kipsigis, and Adventism comes to the Luhya, Sabaoth and Pokot of Western Kenya.

The introduction of Adventism among the Nandi was an uphill task given their nature as the Nandi people<sup>20</sup> being skeptical on matters to do with foreign religion, even the non-Adventist missionaries did not achieve much as was reported by the then Nandi District Commissioner that the Kapsabet Anglican Inland Mission had baptized only thirty-three people<sup>21</sup> in a population of forty thousand people. The conversion of David Sparrow into Adventism, his coming to Kenya and his settlement among the Nandi marked the humble beginning of Adventism in this community. The missionary work began at Kaigat by Caleb Kipkessio and later joined by Ezekiel Kimenjo who became an Adventist and baptized in 1928 at Gendia Mission.<sup>22</sup>

The establishment of the Kaigat Adventist Church in 1933, though not fully, was realized after a long period of resistance by the then District Commissioner of Nandi. In those days Kaigat was under Chebwai Mission with D. M. Swaine Esq. as the Principal. After thirteen years, Mr. Swaine wrote a request letter of approval of Kaigat Seventh-day Adventist Church, together with other three churches; Sironoi, Tendwo, and Emdin to the then District Commissioner of Nandi, Mr. H. R. Low. In response to this request, the District Commissioner wrote as follows,

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1946. I have the pleasure to inform you that the following Church sites were approved by the D. N. C., Sironoi, Kaigat, Emdin, and Tendwo.

H. R. Low, District Commissioner, Nandi.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> G.W.B. Huntingford, "Nandi Kinship and Clans," *Anthropos* 67 (1972): 771-821.

<sup>21</sup> District Commissioner Nandi, *Annual Report 1927, File No. DC/NDI/1/3* (Kenya National Archives, Nairobi), 28.

<sup>22</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow*, 41.

<sup>23</sup> H. R. Low to D. M. Swaine, 11 June, 1946, Letter LDN. 16/7/7 1946, Kenya National Archives (ED/12/7), Nairobi.

Another prolific writer and editor, Professor Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, even though his work *'Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii, Kenya'* concentrates mostly in Gusii region, is in agreement with Sang and Kili concerning the coming of the pioneers to this part of the country when he says that on November 27, 1906, the first Adventist Mission Station was opened at Gendia among the Luo people by Arthur Carscallen and Nyambo.<sup>24</sup> Giving the possible reason for their temporal settlement in this place, Nyaundi says that the station was planted at an ideal location because the Kenya-Uganda Railway that linked Lake Victoria region with the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa had its terminal not too far away at Kisumu.<sup>25</sup> Professor Nehemiah M. Nyaundi holds a doctorate in religion from Lund University in Sweden and currently serves as a professor in religion at the University of Eastern Africa Baraton. He is also an ordained minister of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. He has written three books that have been published as well as articles.

The other author, who happened to be one of the first converts to Adventism, Isaac Okeyo, alludes,

The two arrived in Mombasa and found Muslims there, then moved to Nairobi, where they began to evangelize but moved to Kisumu where they met some Missionaries from other denominations. After some time they moved to South Nyanza where they established the first Seventh-day Adventist denomination. At some point, they sailed from Kisumu to Karachuonyo where they met a Luo elder by the name of Osumba, who donated land for them and they erected two tents there temporarily before they moved to Ogango where they established the first Mission Station.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii* (Kendu-Bay, Kenya: Africa Herald Publishing House, Kenya, 1992), 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Isaac Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya, A Historical Perspective* (Kendu Bay, Kenya: Africa Herald Publishing House, 1989), 9.

Okeyo proceeded to confirm that when Carscallen and Nyambo arrived at Gendia, they began by building residential houses and church building. The first church was built of wood and grass thatched.<sup>27</sup> Pastor Isaac Okeyo was born in 1886 to Mzee Midamba in Kendu Bay, Homa Bay County. He was one of the recruits of Arthur Carscallen when he arrived in Gendia in 190 and got baptized in 1911.<sup>28</sup> When Carscallen opened a school for basic education in the area, Okeyo was taught how to write and read. After his baptism he began to teach in 1912 until 1920, then he decided to become an Evangelist in 1920 until 1922.<sup>29</sup> Pastor Okeyo was ordained in 1932 and served in several places before he retired in 1955.

The Adventist Church began to experience numerical growth which informed the opening of other Mission Stations. From Gendia Mission Station, many other Stations were opened which helped in spreading the message to other parts of Western Kenya, and these areas were; Chebwai, Maliera, Kisii, Ranen, and Kenya Lake with pastors in charge of each entity.<sup>30</sup> The other institutions that have enhanced Adventism in the territory as will be mentioned in this paper are; medical, press, and education.

Considering the materials reviewed, one of them being '*On the Wings of a Sparrow, How Adventism Came to Western Kenya*', regarding the coming of Adventism in Western Kenya. After reading through I observed that the authors did not manage to exhaust Adventism in the entire region of Western Kenya as per the map provided on page xx. of the material, but rather dwelt on the other parts of the

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<sup>27</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya, A Historical Perspective*, 10, 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

region which has the potential of extrapolation and mixed historical background information of Adventism in Western Kenya. I perceive that there are gaps in this discourse due to a lack of sufficient information to cover the entire region under discussion. The other material, '*Adventism in Kenya, a Historical Perspective*' gives a brief history of Adventism in Kenya but with concentration on a smaller portion of the region under discussion, leaving most of the parts out. This paper will endeavor to briefly discuss Adventism in Western Kenya with its achievements and developments in different aspects.

## CHAPTER 2

### CHRISTIANITY IN WESTERN KENYA

It is important to recognize that Kenya is a religious nation and even before Adventism was introduced, Christianity was already thriving in the country. This chapter confirms that the African continent is not alien to Christianity, in fact, it is the hub of Christianity, of which Kenya is part of it. This chapter highlights the uniqueness of Adventist teachings as were brought and taught by the pioneers, the interactions they had with denominations that were already in existence in the region, the efforts they made to penetrate Adventism amid diverse existential cultural issues, and teaching against the norms of the African Instituted churches of Kenya. Tracing the coming of Christianity through Mombasa by different groups of missionaries including Adventist missionaries provides a window to be able to understand that Seventh-day Adventist Church forms part of Christianity in Western Kenya.

#### **Christianity in Kenya**

Before delving into the coming of Christianity to Kenya, it is important to note and appreciate the coming of missionaries to evangelize the African continent, and evidently the Continent was very fertile for religious growth. Other religions have originated from outside the continent, and some have won many followers from among African peoples.<sup>1</sup> Mbiti, on Christianity, confirms that

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<sup>1</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. IL, (New York: Waveland Press, 2015), 180.

Christianity, a religion whose faith is in Jesus Christ, came to Africa shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, much effort was put into bringing Christianity to the whole of Africa both by foreign missionaries and African converts themselves.<sup>2</sup>

I uphold the profound statement confirming the incubation of Christianity in Africa by Emory that Africa generally was the place of escape, refuge, and preparation for the infant founder of Christianity to save his life from the wrath and venom of a jealous Herod, who had a bad reputation for murder and intrigue.<sup>3</sup> In his gospel, Luke confirms that on the day of Pentecost, there were people from Africa who witnessed the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles. (Act. 2:10). The propagation and expansion of Christianity in the continent were primarily performed by Africans themselves as Emory states, “pockets of Christianity developed among many African people and tribes. Largely responsible for this was the developing influence of the African prophets.”<sup>4</sup>

According to Mbiti, it is to be noted that Christianity is not a European or American religion. It came to Africa before it reached Europe, and it was already in Africa long before European and American missionaries began to preach it in other parts of the continent. So Africa has as much right to Christianity as Europe and America, if not more.<sup>5</sup>

The efforts toward achieving the target by the missionaries were seemingly futile due to the probable fact that missionaries overlooked the African religion as Van Der Walt

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<sup>2</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 180, 181, 182.

<sup>3</sup> John Baur, (Church History), *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), 18, 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 182.

argues that mission Christianity failed to penetrate deep into African religiosity and thus by refusing to be keen and serious on the African religion and worldview, the missionary gospel workers weakened the impact of Christianity in Africa.<sup>6</sup> One of the major impediments was the fact that Africans were already religious people, so, receiving and living up to the new Christian way of life became a challenge as Donkor rightly affirms that;

It becomes difficult for the new converts to meet the expectations of the family and community. Because they are still members of the community, they are expected to comply and participate in the ceremonies and rituals of the community, some of which carry non-Christian overtones.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of Christianity to Africa was to be gradual and steady for it to produce the expected results. I concur with the assertion that;

Christianity is not predicated upon the abdication of human being's reasoning powers. On the contrary, it places a premium upon their correct functioning – but always within the framework of faith and based upon inspired writings. Christianity, indeed, sanctifies reason and intellect, placing them upon vantage ground, all the while subordinating them to the objective control of the word of God.<sup>8</sup>

Embarking on Christianity in Kenya, the historical records ventilate that;

Christianity is not American or European culture; it is God's way of reaching and dealing with mankind. The Euro-Americans have largely forsaken the Bible-based Christianity and the real gist of the faith now remains in Africa south of Sahara, and Kenya is key in this matter.<sup>9</sup>

The ground for acceptance of Christianity in Kenya seemingly had been prepared much before it landed in the country as contended by Adogame that when

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<sup>6</sup> Van Der Walt, *A Christian Worldview and Christian Higher Education* (Potchefstroom, Republic of South Africa: Institute for Reformational Studies, 1991), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Kwabena Donkor, *The Church, Culture and Spirits, Adventism in Africa* (Hagerstown, MD: Bible Research Institute, 2011), 42.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>9</sup> Vincent M. Mulwa, *Christianity at the Crossroads, between A rock and A hard Place* (Nairobi, Kenya: Delman General Agencies, 2015), 63.

Charismatic Christianity emerged in Kenya, it found a ground that had already been prepared by classical Pentecostal Missionaries from the United States of America and Canada and by the East African revival movement.<sup>10</sup> The shape of Christianity in Kenya was a product of both charismatic and non-religious activities as mentioned by Adogame that,

Though the East African revival formed the foundation and background to the revival and charismatic Christianity in Kenya, other factors like non-religious activities are also responsible for their emergence and have contributed towards the shape that this Christianity has adopted, and although by standard, Kenya has a thriving Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

The coming of a Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, with several Catholic missionaries, who made their first stop at Malindi in 1498<sup>12</sup> also contributed to Christianity in Kenya. There was a developing interest among the missionaries, seeing the country as fertile soil for planting more missionary activities. In subsequent years, several missionaries ventured into the coastal region of Kenya. In 1542, Francis Xavier, a pioneer missionary, on his way to India, he talked with Muslim leaders in Malindi about missionary work, Portuguese viceroy of India ordered gospel to be preached around Mombasa in 1564, and after three years, Augustinian Monastery was established there.<sup>13</sup> Between 1592 and 1841 several events took place for the establishment of Christianity in the country, including but not limited to;

Building Fort Jesus in Mombasa, the conversion of the first six hundred Africans (slaves, Swahili people, and the Bantus including the exiled king of Pemba), the capture of Fort Jesus by the Arabs, the final extinguishing of

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<sup>10</sup> Afe Adogame and Roswith Gerloff Klaus Hock, *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora. The Appropriation of a scattered Heritage* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 182.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>12</sup> David B. Barret, *Kenya Churches Handbook, The Development of Kenyan Christianity, 1489 – 1973* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1973), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Portuguese influence along the East African Coast, and a temporal British protectorate in Mombasa.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Arrival of Christianity in Mombasa**

The introduction of Christianity in Kenya can be connected to the coming of The Church Missionary Society. The extension of Christianization of Kenya was a product of the intent that was exhibited by the Europeans and Americans regarding fulfilling the gospel commission when,

Men and women, young and old missionaries pledged to achieve this by taking the Christian gospel to pagans (Africans in this case). Religious societies were formed to train their members as missionaries and they were to speak of Christ to Africans, render social services to them, and assist in the overthrow of the slave trade and the practice of slavery. Europeans and Americans would claim the whole of Africa for Christ.<sup>15</sup>

With time, it was evident that this initiative was making inroads into the African continent as Neill asserts that Christian missionary societies among the protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was a successful Christianization of Africa.<sup>16</sup> According to Galgalo;

African Christianity planted in Africa in the context of colonialism and oppression, has only managed to effect a social adjustment of sorts. At a deeper level, Christianity has failed to inspire, reshape, or transform African social history and basic identity. A glance through history may unravel why Christianity even though widely accepted and followed in Africa, yet has remained a stranger within the phenomenal world of African religiosity.<sup>17</sup>

I perceive that another factor that enhanced Christianity in Africa was the slave trade that was taking place in Central and West Africa, that is, migration, which

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<sup>14</sup> Barret, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Masfa, *Seventh-day Adventism in Africa: A Historical Survey of the Interaction between Religion, Traditions, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 7.

<sup>16</sup> S. Neill, and Owen Chadwick *A History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed., ed. Owen Chadwick (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 214.

<sup>17</sup> Galgalo Joseph, *African Christianity* (Kijabe, Kenya: Zapt Chancery Publishers Africa Ltd, 2012), 7.

introduced several practices, religions, and beliefs. Isichei confirms that from some areas that first received Christianity, it spread by migration or trade through the rest of Africa. As it did, it combined with traditional African religions.<sup>18</sup> In this regard migration held the key to the presence of Christian practices in parts of Africa that predated the arrival of the European missionaries.<sup>19</sup> The New Testament records the narrative of Jesus' parents taking refuge in Africa and it remains that Africa seems to be the place of refuge for Israel. More importantly, it appears that the place of preparation for God's sons in their infancy was Africa, and Egypt, in particular, was the place of escape, refuge, and preparation for the infant founder of Christianity to save his life from the wrath and venom of jealous Herod who had a bad reputation for murder and intrigue.<sup>20</sup>

In as much as history records that the missionaries in several ways were used by the colonizers, the propagation of the gospel will always be attributed to them. Concerning the coming of Christianity to East Africa, Andrews confirms that through the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Christianity settled in East Africa as early as the year 1844.<sup>21</sup>

Tracing the roots of Christianity in Kenya goes several centuries in the past as Barret asserts that the history of the planting of Christianity in Kenya and the expected expansion is the same as that in Black Africa as a whole, which, in its attempt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not succeed, virtual obliteration, a second attempt in

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<sup>18</sup> Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa*, 2005, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Andrews, "*Christian Missions and Colonial*, 663–691.

the 19<sup>th</sup> century, finally massive expansion in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> It is worth noticing that,

For along time, the presence of the Protestant missionaries among the poor folk was felt and Independence enhanced traditional practices among Christians. In East Africa, there were remarkable conversions, for instance, the Kenyan population was less than ten percent Christian prior to World War II.<sup>23</sup>

The coming and spread of Christianity to East Africa are unquestionably attributed to the missionary endeavors who made their inroads to the continent in the nineteenth century, however, despite all these, in some way were the right arms of the colonizers. The Portuguese and Spanish, in the sixteen century, the French, German, British, and Belgian in the nineteenth century were mostly oppressors and did little to defend the rights of indigenous people.<sup>24</sup>

Kenya's coast region marks the beginning point of missionary activities since it favors overseas travelers who would have access to the country through its harbor. Some churches were built around Mombasa by these missionaries from Portugal.<sup>25</sup> The efforts of these early missionaries at the Coast did not yield many fruits since the few who remained were a handful of Christian believers, mostly Indian traders, attempted in vain to perform missionary work in Mombasa which collapsed long before the arrival of the first Protestants. After fifty years the modern era Catholic missionaries only found fifty members in Mombasa town.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Barret, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The History of Christianity, vol. II, The Reformation to the present Day* (Australia: Harper Collins e-books, 2010), 460, 461.

<sup>24</sup> Andrews, "*Christian Missions and Colonial*, 663–691.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

Kenya is a religious country with diverse religions, and Christianity occupies a bigger percentage of the Kenyan population. Berret alludes that the modern era of Christianity began in 1844 when a German Lutheran preacher employed by the church missionary of London, Johann Ludwig Krapt landed in Mombasa.<sup>27</sup> The extension of the new rail line inland to Lake Victoria brought a radical change in the missionary movement in Kenya after the beginning of the colonial era. Missionaries scattered themselves hither and thither to establish their work. CMS was located in Taita in 1883, German and Scottish mission began their activities in Ukambani. An independent missionary, Stuart Watt, traveled from Mombasa with his family in 1893 to Kikuyu land and later settled in Ukambani.<sup>28</sup> Traveling was a challenge because roads were not there and this was a great hindrance to the missionary endeavors, however, the arrival of the railway in Nairobi in 1899 and Kisumu in 1901 caused a massive movement of protestant missionaries to every direction within the country. These missionaries were concerned with the effective spreading of the gospel and ventured into new ways of achieving their purpose.<sup>29</sup>

There was a remarkable strategy by the protestant missions in Kenya regarding the propagation of the gospel as spelled out,

Many of these missions at the onset of the twentieth century were done in the open air, taking the form of evangelical crusades missions. This form of evangelism covers verbal delivery of the message of the gospel to crowds of people, subsequently calling for conversion and ultimate rebirth spiritually. This method of evangelism remained in force even in African-instituted churches where such spiritual rebirth was achieved by the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and healing.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Andrews, “*Christian Missions and Colonial*,” 663–691.

<sup>28</sup> Barret, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, 33.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Adogame, *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora*, 182.

Krapt, as mentioned before, spearheaded the missionary work among the non-Muslim tribes of the coast of Kenya near Mombasa, and there he discovered that Christianity needed to be newly planted and the decaying theocratic symbol of Mombasa's Fort Jesus replaced with a personal Christianity.<sup>31</sup>

In 1844, with full passion, Krapt regrouped, pouring his energies into Kiswahili grammar and Bible translation as he awaited reinforcements. In 1846 he was joined by Johann Rebmann. Krapt and his team created a station about fifteen miles inland from Mombasa on a low plateau of shrubland called the *nyika* (bush) to attract one of the nine tribes within the wanyika called the Giriama who eventually misunderstood Kraft's message.<sup>32</sup>

These missionaries worked tirelessly for over twenty years subsequently though with just a handful of converts as the end product but they never gave up at all and Elizabeth, in her book, confirmed in a statement that the mission enterprise on the East African mainland that began near Mombasa had singularly little success, however, the pioneer's prayer (Krapt) fervently prayed for the preservation of his life in Africa, until at least one soul should be saved.<sup>33</sup> The determination that was in Krapt and his colleagues gave them courage as far as following the dream of Krapt, they planted a chain of mission stations stretching from Rabai Mpya across the continent of Africa. Working with the Kamba chief (a tribe in Kenya) named Kivoi enhanced his missionary journeys within Kenyan territories, including Mount Kenya.

The most remarkable means by which Christianity was spread in Kenya and East Africa at large was by the writings of Krapt in the Kiswahili language, producing not only Bible translations but also dictionary and grammars, proved an immense aid

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<sup>31</sup> Berret, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Isichei Elizabeth, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 128.

to the later growth of an East African Christianity rooted in the African tongue.<sup>34</sup>

During the late nineteenth century in Kenya, there were various types of missionary Christianity that were alive, well, and moving inland, whereby The Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) was one of them, that had its first spot established in 1891 in the interior of Kenya, that is Kibwezi, in Ukambani, and later on in 1898 the mission was moved to Kikuyu near Nairobi.<sup>35</sup>

In 1901, it can be observed, that the speed with which the missionaries were moving into various parts of the country was pretty high as confirmed that

Christian Mission Society (CMS) began inland work in Kikuyu land, centering their work in at Kabete, and then The Methodists followed suit. So there was competition in this same area among the Presbyterians, Methodists, and CMS, and the tension was curbed by dividing the region into different spheres of influence. Africa Inland Church was also established in Nzawi in Ukambani.<sup>36</sup>

Endeavors to spread Christian Mission Society in the region were assisted by the local Kamba traders around Rabai Mpya, who informed the missionaries about alpine regions, and responsive tribes that promised to be good links from the Eastern side.<sup>37</sup> After the death of most of the Missionaries, and the work was dwindling, Kraft got an opportunity to journey with the Kamba chief, Kivoi who brought him closer to the snow-capped Mount Kenya. Seemingly the Kamba people were receptive and open to Kraft's message and this revived hope in Kraft that this would be a second link in the chain of stations in that area that he had found. Unfortunately, the work among the Kamba did not succeed so much due to the killing of Chief Kivoi when they were

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*, 189.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 191.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 191, 192.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

attacked by bandits as they were trying to explore near river Tana in Kitui, and Krapt barely escaped with his life.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Coming of Christianity in the Western Region**

Under this part of the study, I summarily discuss the historical background of only three major tribes in the Western part of Kenya, how they embraced their traditional understanding of the deity, and their perception of Christianity that was brought by the Euro-American Missionaries. These tribes are the Luos, the Nandis, and the Bukusu. Concerning the Luos concept of deity

They did not believe in one particular god who was responsible for the whole universe and for punishing those who had done evil during their life. They believed the gods lived very far away and could not be reached by ordinary people, they did not involve themselves directly in everyday affairs.<sup>39</sup>

They believed in an intermediary system where the living would only access the gods through the dead, Henry asserts that the only people who could reach the gods were the departed: the ancestors or the spirit of the departed acted as mediators between god and men. The deity was approached through a human hierarchy, for minor family problems the dead grandfather and grandmother of the family were consulted through a diviner and sacrifices.<sup>40</sup>

Turning to the Nandi, it was not a walk in the park for the missionaries to penetrate with their activities given the fact that this tribe was known for their hostility and non-accommodative attitude toward foreigners. Bethwell asserts that missionaries had a long uphill fight before they were accepted by the Nandi. After

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<sup>38</sup> Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*, 188.

<sup>39</sup> Henry O. Ayot, *A History of the Luo-Abasuba of Western Kenya, from A.D. 1760-1940*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), 187.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

accommodation had been arrived at with the pioneer societies, the Nandi steadfastly refused to allow the plethora of missionary bodies which had caused divisions in Nyanza.<sup>41</sup> The decision made as to whether to allow the missionaries to run their activities among the Nandis took quite a long time. Only three missions were allowed to evangelize in the territory until comparatively recently and they had to identify themselves with their adherents and who, in many cases, ministered to their flocks for long periods. A long struggle ensued between mission adherents and traditionalists on this issue.<sup>42</sup> Concerning the Nandi, Bethwell Ogot says that,

The Nandi did not use drums and despised those who did, and exhibitionism and love of noise were anathemas to the tribe. Those sentiments helped to restrict the variety of religious bodies in the territory, and also to discourage the setting up of independent schools. There were one or two attempts after the last war to introduce less conventional religions, but these met with little support.<sup>43</sup>

The last tribe is the Bukusu. Gideon S. Were, giving the origin of the prevalent religion among the Bukusu, affirms that,

*Dini ya Musambwa* (the religion of Musambwa) later referred to as DYM, originated in Babusu, among the Northern section of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya known as the Babukusu. It was led by Elijah Masinde, a former Friends Anglican Mission adherent. In 1935, at the age of about 25, he clashed with the elders of that denomination over his decision to take a second wife. Despite a threat of excommunication by the mission, he married a second wife, left the mission, and started a new sect, the DYM.<sup>44</sup>

This is a religion whose belief and understanding of Christianity is a mixture of various religious practices from various sects as upheld by Ogot that it

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<sup>41</sup> Bethwell A. Ogot, *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), 86.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Gideon S. Were, *Essays on African Religion in Western Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1977), 22.

incooperated several features from many different religious denominations.<sup>45</sup> It is one of the religious groups with diverse and contradicting concepts,

Its adherents wore the cross (Roman Catholic influence) and turbans and grew beards. They used the drums, the bible, the prayer book, and sacrificed animals. They worshiped 'Were' (God) and made frequent reference to him. As for offering sacrifices, this was an essential part of their ancient tradition and way of life which, contrary to the views held by missionaries had to be upheld.<sup>46</sup>

Were (the author) adds that,

They use the Bible and prayer book (a Church Missionary Society and a Friends African Missionary influence), the cross, (a Roman Catholic Church influence), the growing of beards and wearing of turbans was the influence of Islam and Sikh, use of drums (Salvation Army influence, and the sacrifice of animals (the influence of the traditional Musambwa religion.<sup>47</sup>

As aforementioned, Kenya is much affiliated with Christianity and religious activities considering the impact and influence of the missionaries as they ventured into the country via the Indian Ocean. Henry alludes that,

When the railway had been completed, some of the Indians who came to help in the construction opened small shops all along the line from Mombasa to Kisumu. Missionaries were another group of people who could now travel easily from Mombasa to Western Kenya, and the British administration which was responsible for their protection, also attended its sphere of influence to cover these areas.<sup>48</sup>

The Kenyan constitution upholds the right of worship of its citizens and this was on several occasions, amplified by the late President Moi during his tenure, that the government will continue to uphold freedom of worship. This freedom is, indeed, a constitutional right, and one of the many freedoms and privileges which my government will always be determined to ensure are properly respected and

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<sup>45</sup> Ogot, *Politics and Nationalism*, 86.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Were, *Essays on African Religion in Western Kenya*, 23.

<sup>48</sup> Ayot, *A History of the Luo-Abasuba*, 192.

promoted.<sup>49</sup> This former president was always against divisions within the churches for personal differences and campaigned for church unity within the country when he said, “it appeared as if personal differences have tended to lead to splits and divisions in churches. As a result, we now have in our nation many sects and religious groups...splits or divisions are not in the best interest of Christian faith, or indeed of our country.”<sup>50</sup>

### **The Then Dominating Denominations**

As mentioned before, Kenya is a religious country, and several denominations were making tremendous efforts for their presence to be felt in the country, like The Scottish Christian Mission Society, African Inland Mission, and Roman Catholicism in the 1890s.<sup>51</sup> There was also a strong movement, ‘*Kitoro*’ (refugee) Christianity, and other several forms of Missionary Christianity that were alive, well, and moving inland, like The Church of Scotland Mission that pioneered a new industrial mission in the interior of Kenya, that is, Kibwezi in Ukambani in 1891. Later in 1898, the mission was moved to Kikuyu near Nairobi.<sup>52</sup>

The emergence of various denominations in Kenya posed elements of competition as Shaw alludes that the CMS initiated inland ministry in Kikuyu land, making Kabete as their center of work, and later the Methodists followed suit. To

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel T. Arap Moi, *Continuity and Consolidation in Kenya*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, Ltd, Kenya, 1982), 57.

<sup>50</sup> Moi, *Continuity and Consolidation in Kenya*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

avoid competition among the Presbyterians, Methodists, and CMS, a committee agreement was drawn up dividing the region into different spheres of influence.<sup>53</sup>

As the missionary work was escalating in the Coastal and Western regions of the country, the Nairobi area became the hub of many missions that in 1897 there was an influx of missions into Nairobi; Gospel Missionary Society in 1897, Church of Scotland Mission in 1898, Holy Ghost Mission in 1899, Church Missionary Society in 1901, and African Inland Church also in 1901.<sup>54</sup> Some of these missions took advantage of the railway that reached Nairobi in 1899 to expand their mission activities in the Western part of Kenya, beginning with Port Florence (current Kisumu) in 1901 at the arrival of the railway at Kisumu.

In 1902 Nyanza and Rift Valley were transferred from Uganda Protectorate to Kenya, and the same year Friends Africa Industrial Mission began at Kaimosi. The following year, that is, in 1903, Mill Hill Fathers from Uganda established their mission at Kisumu and Kakamega in Western Kenya to enhance their work in this territory.<sup>55</sup>

There was an increasing interest to evangelize the Western region by the missionaries and seemingly as William mentions that

A large number of missionaries had also entered the Gusiiland armed with the Bible for evangelization. The first to arrive among the Gusi were the Catholic fathers who founded a mission station at Nyahururu, but intensive Christian activities were, to start with, mainly confined to the Luo country and were to spread to Kisii in later years.<sup>56</sup>

When the missionaries made explorations in the upcountry regions they discovered the need to open up institutional centers as baits for getting the local people into following their new religion as confirmed by William. The missionaries

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<sup>53</sup> Moi, *Continuity and Consolidation in Kenya*, 191.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>56</sup> Ochieng, *The first world Essays on Kenyan History*, 154.

did not confine their activities to spiritual teachings when they arrived. They also founded schools, first at the missions, and, as fast as they gained converts and trained teachers, in the countryside.<sup>57</sup> According to African leadership perception, there were suspicions and a high level of skepticism in regards to the newly imposed religion by the whites, claiming any African religion was archaic as alluded that the African political, moral, and religious values were labeled savage and immoral. The Gusii believed that Christianity was the spiritual arm of the white man's government.<sup>58</sup>

Another denomination that the missionaries found difficult to penetrate with their gospel was called '*Dini ya Msambwa*' (Msambwa Religion) among the Bakusu. They had a traditional understanding of religion,

They believed that traditional groundings were important for a religion that was to be comprehensible and impactful, bearing in mind the social code of the people. They thought of Christianity as an estranged idea that was, according to them, even, 'harsh'. It discouraged local traditions, songs, dances, marriage ceremonies, and other practices and frowned upon the entire foundation of orderly society as it had always existed. Christianity preached against witchcraft, rain-making, the payment of bride wealth, polygamy, African names, African marriages, and a host of other important practices and institutions. It was not homely, whether in spirit or body. Thus it became necessary to found a religion that embraced both their traditional ways and aspects of Christianity.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Coming of African Instituted Churches in Kenya**

The African Instituted Churches in the country were brands of churches that were locally initiated, and they form a bigger percentage of Christianity in Kenya. The major point of institutionalization of these churches seemingly was to maintain African heritage within Christianity whereby detachment from African culture and

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<sup>57</sup> Ochieng, *The first world Essays on Kenyan History*, 155.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ogot, *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya*, 87.

tradition became difficult. In Kenya there was a clear demonstration of skepticism in regards to embracing white Christianity due to dark periods of colonization in Kenya and their roots can be attributed to colonizers as Mugambi asserts,

AICs (African Instituted Churches) in Kenya have their origin in that turbulent period of Kenyan history characterized by missionary activity and British colonization. They thus arose primarily in areas where there was intensive contact between African traditional communities and culture and with British colonial and Christian missionary efforts, particularly in central and Western Kenya.<sup>60</sup>

The initiative to commence AICs in Kenya was motivated by a spirit of protest by the local people of Kenya against the white missionaries for the fear of losing their African identity. Mbiti also supports this idea by adding that despite the wealth of African heritage, a lack of uniformity persists. That it differs from different locations, people and time to others. The heritage that originates from Africa, is therefore, peculiar to the African people.<sup>61</sup>

According to them, adopting a new way of religious life was an indication of selling their African birthright to the white missionaries and it was a move with determination to thwart the intentions of the missionaries. In Kenya, they emerged as a reaction against missionary paternalism, attack, and destruction of their traditional, social, political, and economic structures, customs and belief systems.<sup>62</sup> It can be perceived as a unified uproar by African religious leaders against the idea, to them it was a continuation of colonization by the foreign missionaries but using a different method. They consider missionaries and British colonialists as collaborators in this

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<sup>60</sup> J.N.K. Mugambi and Mary N. Getui, *Religions in Eastern Africa under Globalization*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2004), 103.

<sup>61</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. Illinois: (Waveland Press, U.S.A, 2015), 3.

<sup>62</sup> Mugambi, *Religions in Eastern Africa under Globalization*, 104.

attack on the African heritage. They were also opposed to the type of education that was given to Africans which was vocational, rural, artisan oriented and did not go beyond the first six years of schooling.<sup>63</sup>

There was a strong feeling by Africans about an exhibition of intimidation by the missionaries. The African religious leaders were opposed to this mentality and demonstrated their ability to commence their possible way of providing education, worship, and maintaining their allegiance to culture and tradition as Mugambi alludes that,

Africans therefore protested against this and started their churches and schools where they could worship God freely, provide quality education to their children, and preserve their cultural traditions and identity. Examples of the churches that arose in this period (and later) for these reasons are the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa, the African Orthodox Church, African Christian Churches and Schools, the African Brotherhood Church, Church of Christ in Africa.<sup>64</sup>

The Churches mentioned above broke up links from among the first big churches in Kenya that contribute largely to the Kenyan Christian community such as,

The Anglican Church (Church missionary society), Presbyterian Church of East Africa (Church of Scotland mission), and African Inland Church (African Inland mission). These Churches never wanted to be under missionary control, and they were associated by the coming of African nationalism, emphasized black liberation and social action, and were deeply involved spiritually and politically in the nationalist struggle for independence from colonial rule.<sup>65</sup>

These expansions of Christianity remained steady and consistent as other smaller sects split from the mainstream Churches. As time went by, more especially after Kenyan independence, there was a further split even to smaller churches. These splinter churches included Akorino churches in Central Kenya and Rift Valley, Africa

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Church of the Holy Spirit, Africa Divine Church, Roho Ruwe Church, and Holy Spirit Church of East Africa, all these Churches came from western Kenya.<sup>66</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Christianity in Kenya is attributed to the early missionary activities in the coastal region as it expanded to other parts of the Country. Many African religious groups from Western Kenya emanated from mainstream churches that were brought by the foreign colonizers to maintain African culture and traditions within Christianity. The expansion and spread of Adventism in other areas of Kenya besides the regions in Nyanza (Western Kenya) grew slowly, however, the dedication exhibited by the few converts in the early 1930s, who turned to be evangelists and local missionaries performed remarkably and are ranked as primary contributors of the general significant growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in these regions.

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<sup>66</sup> Mugambi, *Religions in Eastern Africa under Globalization*, 105.

CHAPTER 3  
EARLY STAGES OF ADVENTISM IN  
KENYA 1906-1963

The implantation and early development of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya was a remarkable step in spreading the faith. The region, with its diverse ethnic communities and longstanding cultural traditions, presented both opportunities and challenges for the pioneering Adventist missionaries who ventured into its territory in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter examines among others, the following points: The effects of Europeans and American missionaries who began Adventism in Western Kenya, the difficult historical context linked to War I, and the opportunities of missions during this early stage of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya.

**The Arrival and Development of Seventh-day  
Adventism in Kenya: Brief Overview**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church attributes its origin to a movement known as the Millerite Movement as recorded,

The Millerite Movement was propagated by an American Baptist preacher by the name William Miller hence the name. By origin, it began with a handful of members whose goal was to recover from the great disappointment of Jesus' return in 1844 as predicted by the Millerite movement.<sup>1</sup>

Miller, the proponent of the movement, was born in Pittsburg Massachusetts in 1782, and closely studied the Bible and in particular the book of Daniel. According to his

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<sup>1</sup> George R. Knight, *William Miller* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010), 13, 14-15, 95, 181.

understanding of the prophecy of the 2300 years by Daniel, he began to preach and teach about the world's ending.

The belief by Miller and his compatriots pointed to the spring of 1844 as the time of Christ's return and the prophecy that alluded to autumn of the same year, caused misapprehension which in turn led to the disappointment of those that were guided by the Miller belief.<sup>2</sup>

In early 1840, a reasonable number of his followers sold their property with anticipation that the judgment day was to occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844, of which no event took place, as a result, many people abandoned the movement.

By ardent study and reinterpretation of Daniel 8:14, they were persuaded of Christ's entrance to the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary instead of coming to earth as per their initial prediction. Besides a large number of members who left the movement, a group of three, namely, Joseph Bates, James White, and his wife Ellen remained and later in 1863, became instrumental in formally organizing the church. Prior to the choice of the name, the leaders held several meetings to study the urgency and framework strategy of the organization, where a key issue was the name to be given to the new group of Adventist believers, hence the name 'Seventh Day Adventists.'<sup>3</sup> After the name was chosen, Ellen White was very emphatic in regards to the name by saying that the name chosen ought to be in line with that which is professed and the expression of faith in order to set the people to whom the name is

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<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, United States of America, 1939), 328, 329.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord, The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), 184.

given aside.<sup>4</sup> Herbert confirms White's assertion on the role played by the name in bearing the true aspects of the faith, likening it to the arrow from the Lord's quiver.<sup>5</sup>

The part 'Seventh-day' traces its history from Millerite Adventists in the early 1840s and bears the distinctive value in the Adventist Church which emphasizes the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath as the Biblical day of rest. Initially, Ellen .G. White was skeptical about the Sabbath issue as was taught by Joseph Bates between 1845 and 1846, claiming that the fourth commandment is not more important than the other nine, but later on, after reading Bates' first tract on Sabbath, '*The Seventh-day Sabbath, a Perpetual sign*'<sup>6</sup> she and her husband James accepted the doctrine and began to observe the Sabbath and later commented that her belief of the Sabbath truth, was not informed by the visions she received but rather, the visions came as a stress on the importance of the Sabbath even after believing.<sup>7</sup> The movement's core point of their identity and uniqueness is their anticipation of Jesus Christ's return and Sabbath observance, hence the name. There was ambiguity to what time to commence the Sabbath with various views,

Until November 1855 when J.N. Andrews brought his report after a thorough bible study on when the Sabbath begins, his report indicated that the Sabbath begins at Friday sunset and ends at Sabbath sunset according to biblical and historical evidence accepted and adopted by the Conference in Battle Creek.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Volume 1* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 223.

<sup>5</sup> Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 191, 192.

<sup>6</sup> E.G. White, *Life sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 95.

<sup>7</sup> E.G. White, *Letter 2, 1874*, in *Manuscript Releases 8:238, 1990*, Silver Spring, MD:Ellen G. White Estate.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen White: The Early Years, 1827-1862* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 1:322-325.

## **Seventh-day Adventism in Kenya: Its Expansion and Growth**

The Adventist Church was not the first one in the Country but came after several denominations, for instance, the Roman Catholic, church of Scotland, African Inland Mission, and Church Missionary Society. Since the inception of Adventism in Kenya, with its roots in Nyanza region in 1906, it only became active in Central Kenya in 1933, making its first settlement in Karura. Kisumu, being the head office of East African Union (1933-1949) all the stations including Karura, were reporting there.<sup>9</sup> When the work spread farther outside Nyanza, the head office was moved in 1950 to Nairobi until the former union was subdivided into two with West Kenya Union having its headquarters back in Kisumu. The expansion and growth of Adventism in Kenya began with the coming of several foreign Missionaries who flocked to the country in the subsequent years after the first organization of Adventist mission at Gendia in 1906 by Pastor Arthur Asa Carscallen and Peter Nyambo. After these two pioneers. Later, F. Thomas from the United States arrived. In 1907 they were joined by J. D. Baker, Mrs. Baker, and Helen Bruce Thompson. J. H. S. Sparks came in 1908, B. L. Morse and H. Horace Brooks came in 1909, and Leonard Lane came in 1912.<sup>10</sup> A mission was established by J. D. Baker in 1909, in Kanyadoto and was later supported by R. Sparks in 1913. Arthur Carscallen opened two subsequent missions in Kamagambo and Nyanchwa between 1912 and 1913.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1943-49 (SDA Yearbook 1943-49)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1943-49), 247.

<sup>10</sup> A. A. Carscallen, "Reinforcements," *The Missionary Worker*, June 23, 1909, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Getui, *The Establishment and History of the Activity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 31-36.

In regards to the opening of Kanyadoto by Baker, the Mission that was opened there could not operate without consulting the higher authority of The Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. The land where the Mission was situated was under lease for a long time before its permanent establishment, for instance, in 1938 it was given a lease of one year with payment as stated in the letter below,

**KANYADOTO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MISSION  
LEASE OF LAND**

The Governor of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, hereby under and by the powers vested in him by the Native Lands Trust Ordinance, 1938, leases unto Kanyadoto Seventh-day Adventist Mission of Kanyadoto...all that piece of land situated at Langi, Kanyamwa Location in the District of South Kavirondo....to hold for a term of one year from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1939 subject to the payment therefore of the rent of Ksh.25 only.<sup>12</sup>

Karura Mission Station, situated between Kiambu and Nairobi, whose initial director was W.W. Armstrong, became the central area of the mission among Kikuyu and Kamba, which are the two principal tribes in Central Kenya. From this point, the church began to grow at snail's speed and this was a result of the Kikuyu community being skeptical of receiving the new faith. A significant numerical growth was realized by the church between 1934 and 1950s, and from there the work expanded to Eastern and lower parts of Kenya.<sup>13</sup>

Moving to the Coastal region, the pioneers faced a similar experience as with the Kikuyu and the Kamba people because of their strong affiliation to traditional religion, so it was with the people on the coast because of their strong attachment to Islamic religion. The first church in the Upper Eastern region, was at Chiakariga and it had a Sabbath school branch at Changamwe which was managed by an Evangelist

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<sup>12</sup> The Governor, of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya to Mr. J. D. Baker, Director, Kanyadoto Mission, 1938, Kenya National Archives (PC/NZA/3/14/192), Nairobi.

<sup>13</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (SDA Yearbook 1935-1950) (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1935-1950), 407.

by the name Ismail Mainda.<sup>14</sup> The penetration of Adventism in this region was an uphill task with insurmountable challenges distinct from the Kikuyu and Coastal people. In this region, the contention was about the presentations of health messages, preaching against the planting and use of their cash crops (tobacco, coffee, tea, and miraa), going to church on market days (Saturdays) and spending the whole day in church was a strange practice for the locals of this region. Due to these factors, the church's growth stagnated in this area leading the church to come up with dynamic and effective ways to carry out evangelism and among the methods used was the introduction of Voice of Prophecy Correspondence Bible School in 1954. Amid all these challenges, the few converts continued to love the church and kept their faith. In 1974, Brother Moses Mutuma M'Karia brought the church to Muthara Nathu.<sup>15</sup>

Part of the Western Kenya region, which is the main focus in this discourse as will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, it is worth noticing that in as much as the orchestrators of Adventism in the early 1930s in Central, Lower Eastern, Upper Eastern, and Coastal Kenya, were few foreign missionaries, the natives of these regions after their conversion to Adventism, gradually developed interest in the Adventist message. Many of them turned out to be forefront soldiers of the gospel, spreading the same to their neighboring regions, and eventually ended up taking leadership positions from the white pioneers. The current growth in these parts of Kenya can be attributed to their relentless efforts toward fulfilling the mission of the Adventist Church in their respective areas of ministry. These few Adventist stalwarts, who emerged when Adventism was still a strange denomination with unique

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<sup>14</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (SDA Yearbook 1935-1950) (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1935-1950), 407.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

teachings and practices, left a positive and long-lasting legacy as Adventism in the current East Kenya Union Conference is concerned.

### **Adventism in Kenya (British East Africa)**

The geographical coverage of British colonization before the coming of missionaries into Kenya is key in this discourse, and this explains the reason why Kenya is called British East Africa as it can be traced from the early records.

The East Africa Protectorate may be roughly defined as the territories under British protection lying between the East Coast of Africa and lakes Victoria and Rudolf. The coastline tends from the equator to five degrees south. On the north, it is bounded by the Italian possessions and the river Juba, and on the south by German East Africa. The northwestern parts of the protectorate are very imperfectly known, and the frontier with Abyssinia has not yet been delimited. In April 1902, all the provinces of the Uganda Protectorate, east of Lake Victoria were transferred to [British] East Africa. The East Africa Protectorate is essentially a new country. A few years ago, everything between the coast towns and the kingdom of Uganda was regarded as a savage wilderness. Now, thanks to the contraction of the Uganda Railway, a line 584 miles long, extending from Mombasa to Lake Victoria, with steamers traversing the lake, parts of this vast region are well known, and have proved to be not swamps and deserts, but healthy and fertile tracts, which are suitable for European colonization. The chief town and port is Mombasa, with the magnificent harbor of Kilindini, and a population of about 20,000. Other ports are Kismayu, Lamu, Malindi, and Vanga. Upcountry, the best-known stations are Nairobi, Machakos, Naivasha, Nakuru, Mumias, and Kisumu; the last named is at the head of the Kavirondo Gulf on Lake Victoria and is the terminus of the railway. The railway station and pier are often called Port Florence.<sup>16</sup>

The entire protectorate was keenly under the administration of a commissioner of Foreign office and was divided into seven provinces, named Jubaland, Tanaland, Seyidle, Ukamba, Kenya, Naivasha, and Kisumu. Each of these was in-charge of an officer-styled sub-commissioner, and is divided into districts in charge of collectors.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> E.E. Andross, "British East Africa," London (1906): vol.10 No. 16.123.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Of significant importance to note is that, before Seventh-day Adventism came to Kenya, it began at the time of the religious shock around mid-nineteenth century which propagated for the second coming of Christ, known as the ‘great second advent awakening.’ Not long after, there was spread of the old world views that regarded interpretation of prophecy from the other side of the Atlantic and into the American theological groups.<sup>18</sup> The movement was Biblically based on the books of Daniel and Revelation and the great second Adventist movement which emanated from William Miller’s activities in teaching about the coming again of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Additional history tracing the genesis of this movement is that:

Seventh-day Adventists trace their roots a long way back. Besides the Millerite movement, they attribute themselves to Evangelical revivalists of the eighteenth century, the protestant reformers and the previous groups whose lineage go back to the persecuted church centuries after the time of Christ on earth and eventually to Jesus Christ himself as well as the apostles.<sup>20</sup>

The coming of Seventh-day Adventism into Africa began from its two extreme ends geographically, Egypt and South Africa. Contacts between the Church in America and settlers in Kimberley, South Africa, can be dated back as far as 1886. However, the beginning of Sabbath-keeping goes back a few more years.<sup>21</sup> After settling in this region, the main focus was the stabilization of the movement among the European settlers, English and Dutch. Seemingly, the arrival of missionaries from the United States remained mainly within the Anglo-American culture from 1887, and

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<sup>18</sup> Andross, “*British East Africa*,”25.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Schwarz and Greanleaf, *A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> B.E. Pfeiffer, *Seventh-day Adventist contributions to East Africa, 1903-1983* (Verlag: Peter Lang, Bern:New York, 1985), 13.

this hindered the developments among the Boers, who were the major group interested in Seventh-day Adventism during that time.<sup>22</sup>

As time went by, the missionaries believed that the mission should also be extended to the other people of Africa, beginning with Rhodesia people, among Matabele in 1894, and that is how the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries entered Black Africa first in Central Africa, then to West Africa, Ghana in the same year.<sup>23</sup>

Before the Adventist movement arrived in Kenya (British East Africa), it is prudent to establish that Adventism first came into Tanganyika. It started among the Pare people in 1903, missionaries like J. Ehlers and A.C. Enns of the Germany Union Conference were the pioneers.<sup>24</sup> Due to the politics of the day, it was required that Tanganyika have her missionaries sent from Germany, while Kenya received her missionaries from England.<sup>25</sup> Before Adventism came to Kenya,

It had already been established in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Tanzania around 1887, 1894 and 1903 respectively. The Tanzanian mission was opened by the Deutsche Advent Missionsgesellschaft, and the Kenyan missions were under the European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, whose headquarters were in Hamburg, Germany.<sup>26</sup>

### **European Settlers in Kenya**

The missionaries who came to Kenya were perceived as people who were interested in farming and whose primary concern was to

Safeguard their ownership of the Highlands, and this escalated to continual pressure by the white settlers to alienate their land and to force them to work

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<sup>22</sup> Pfeiffer, *Seventh-day Adventist contributions to East Africa*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

for the settlers, this actual revolt against missions by Africans showed itself and unfortunately culminated in the tragic murder of one of the missionaries.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Settlement at Gendia**

The first two missionaries who pioneered Adventism in Kenya were Canadian-born Arthur Asa Granville Carscallen and Peter Nyambo, an African from Malawi. Carscallen attended Union College, Duncombe Hall Training College (the current New Bold College) in North London and completed his studies in 1906 September. The same source confirms that Peter Nyambo was studying together with Carscallen in the same College.<sup>28</sup> For the sake of the passion he had for Mission, Peter Nyambo had to suspend his studies to join Brother Carscallen as E. E. Andross rightly puts it,

Peter Nyambo, our colored brother who has been attending the Training College, will soon leave for German East Africa, via Friedensan, and after spending a few weeks at our German Mission station, in company with one of our German brethren who has had a practical experience in mission work, will cross over into British East Africa, select a site, and open up a station. We now expect that within a few months more we shall have a mission station opened among the heathen of Africa. As soon as we can prepare some of our young people for this work they will be sent out to join those who will soon be on the ground.<sup>29</sup>

More historical information by Spalding confirms that in British East Africa, Arthur.A.Carscallen, J.D.Baker and B.L.Morse started the mission in 1906, at Gendia in Kisumu.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> G.C. Ousthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa, a Theological and Anthropological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 49.

<sup>28</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Andross E.E., No.16.,78.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, A revision of the books Captains of the Host and Christ's Last Legion, Vol 4* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962), 29.

The records have it that Carscallen with his colleague Nyambo traveled by sea from Humburg in 1906. Carscallen, in his description of the journey expressed that they arrived in Mombasa after three weeks without stopping, and proceeded to Tanga, Tanzania, using the same boat to pay a visit to the Missionaries who were already there.<sup>31</sup> They found a Missionary Station had been already established in the Pare Mountains (Tanzania).

The boat left Liverpool in September 1906 and arrived in Tanga, the German East Africa port in the middle of the following month. They went to Pare Mission where they met German Missionaries, A.C. Enns and J. Ehlers. After they were briefly oriented, A.C. Enns agreed to give them company to Kendu Bay on the other side of the lake, where their boat arrived in November 1906.<sup>32</sup>

### **Carscallen, Peter Nyambo, and Non-Adventist Missionaries**

An Adventist stalwart, Pr. Peter Okeyo, confirms that when Pr. Carscallen and Pr. Peter Nyambo arrived in Kisumu, they met other missionaries from other denominations such as the bishops of the CMS with whom they discussed how they should work.<sup>33</sup> The interest of establishing mission stations in this region was not only with Adventist missionaries but also with other missionaries as Pastor Okeyo says Bishop Wills of CMS did not meet Pr. Carscallen and Pr. Nyambo because he came from Uganda and established a CMS mission station at Maseno and Pr. Carscallen

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<sup>31</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Godfrey K. Sang and Hosea K. *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications, 2017), xvi, xvii.

<sup>33</sup> Isaac Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya* (Kendu Bay, Kenya: Africa Herald Publishing House, 1989), 9.

with his fellow SDA missionaries crossed the Nyanza Gulf to South Nyanza and started the Seventh-day Adventist denomination there.<sup>34</sup>

Concurrently another missionary, Rev. Harbert Woolsey Innis started an African Inland Mission Station at Ogada, and in 1911, another mission station at Nyabondo in Nyakach was put in place.<sup>35</sup> The Friends' Church was left aside as Rev. Charlton went to open a friends (Quakers) Mission station at Kaimosi while Rev. Rees of Pentecostals started a mission station at Nyangore.<sup>36</sup>

### **Orientation to Adventism at Gendia**

The commencement of Adventism around this territory emanates from significantly a humble beginning as Pastor Isaac Okeyo asserts that Pr. Carscallen began by building residential houses then the Church building which was wooden and grass-thatched. As time passed by, people relocated and settled at the station's compound.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, as other people from other clans were getting attracted to the newly-found movement,

There were only two young men who were ready in 'Kakwajuok' (the clan area where the mission station was established), and they were, Isaac Okeyo and Thomas Ojiero. The reason why other young men could not forsake their customs to join this religion was the fear of being mocked by their contemporaries. Ironically, from the neighboring clan called 'Konyango' came seven young men (Samuel Dola, Daniel Aroka, John Odago, Simeon Odindo, Samuel Adhiambo, Norman Yugi, and Daudi Obuya) who accepted the faith and joined the other two.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

The news went that there was a mission station that had been started, already seven young men had accepted the faith, and there was a need for more young men and ladies to be prepared for the propagation of the gospel. The message was well received and several young people came from a clan called 'Wikondiek'. They were; John Okello, Joseph Choni, Jacob Ochuodho, Daudi Abuor, and Isaac Ogira. Later on, they were joined by some brothers from Kanyamfwa namely; Jacob Olwa and John Tolo.<sup>39</sup> As the number of converts increased, Pr. Carscallen went on building more houses and hostels for girls. Among the first girls who came to stay in the mission station were; Hana Marindi (Rusinga), Maritha Awiti, Sarah Oyaro, and Awuor, (Karachuonyo), Rebecca Ogwe, and Pete, from Kowak, Tanzania<sup>40</sup>. Mrs. Carscallen and Mrs. Morsel taught these girls how to write and read and after that, they were taken through religious doctrines. After that, they were baptized, and were at liberty to choose life partners from their fellow Christians.<sup>41</sup>

The activities that were going on in the mission station never remained a secret anymore and the result was that other parents were encouraged by seeing a good life lived by these girls who stayed within the station premises. People developed a positive attitude toward young girls who stayed in the mission stations, admired their changed life, and permitted daughters to go and to spend time in the mission station.<sup>42</sup> Even though many young men and girls were crowding the mission station, it was not a challenge anymore because the number of teachers also increased, and as a result, many who had learned how to read and write had no difficulty

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<sup>39</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

accepting and following religious doctrines, also eager in observing worship time on Wednesdays, Friday sunset, and Saturdays.

### **Symbols of Sabbath Reminder**

Having the name ‘Seventh-day Adventists’ itself, took some time among the initial believers to come to a consensus on settling on this name. Tracing back to the given name of this church Haynes reminds us of the self-explanatory aspect;

The Adventists have a unique name – a name adopted as a result of their two primary beliefs of Sabbath-keeping and the belief in the second coming of and advent of Christ. Thereby setting themselves apart as such.<sup>43</sup>

The Sabbath subject is very important and self-evident, Norman observes, that it is included in the very name of the movement, which was chosen by its leaders.<sup>44</sup> It was not a light thing to inculcate the Sabbath truth to the minds of people for the first time, and in this case it was an uphill task for the missionaries to instill this new concept to their newly converted members, forcing them to use simple and understandable mathematics that can be comprehended by the locals as Isaac confirms that,

Some of the converts who found it difficult to distinguish between Sabbath and any other day were issued with “seven small sticks to keep on one side of the door into their sitting room. They were instructed to transfer one stick each day to the opposite side of the room, and by this, they were indicating the number of days until the seventh day. The last stick was the symbol for the Sabbath of the Lord.<sup>45</sup>

For them to remember and understand the preparation day as indicated in Luke. 24: 54, that they were to take note of the sixth stick to show them when they

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<sup>43</sup> Carlyle Haynes, *Seventh-day Adventists: Their Work and Teachings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1940), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Norman F. Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), 80.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

were to conduct vespers at the beginning of the Sabbath, and the following day they were to go to church for Sabbath service and also have vespers at the close of the Sabbath.<sup>46</sup>

It appears that they guided their converts through these experiences with a central focus on impressing upon them the importance of observing the Sabbath, its connection to the church's identity, and its significance in their relationship with God through creation and redemption. E.G. White affirmed it to be a test of salvation for people who have received or heard the message.

Moreover, in the missionary work of the denomination, it seems to be the decisive doctrine by which to win converts, at least from other churches. Adventists may regard the sanctuary teachings as the heart of their message, but the Saturday Sabbath is the one which makes the most impact upon outsiders.<sup>47</sup>

They invented another symbol as a reminder of the Sabbath by putting a flag on a tall post where everyone would see it from a distance on that day and

It was hoisted at the place where people gathered for worship. The flag itself was tricolored; black, red, and white. Black symbolizes sin and ignorance, red symbolizes the blood of Jesus, and white symbolizes the knowledge of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that creates in us clean hearts and sets us free from sin. Whenever people saw the flag, they knew the meaning of its colors and that it was Sabbath.<sup>48</sup>

### **Baptism and Naming**

The approach the missionaries gave to the naming of the new converts at baptism was based on church pioneers' understanding of both, and their significance to the new life. Baptism and getting a new name were symbols of the new spiritual journey that had just begun. This was to communicate to the new converts that they

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<sup>46</sup> Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

were part of a new community of believers with a new identity. This was a demonstration of their departure from the world and joined the royal family of God. Having bid goodbye to the old practices of the world, they now vow before God and the saints to commence a new life in Christ.

As people were joining the Adventist Church there arose some arguments by converts concerning choosing the names of prophets, patriarchs, and apostles from the Bible as a show that they had received a divine nature at their baptism. As an indication of their new position and status in the Christian community, it was necessary for them to be given Biblical names for the identification of being baptized and having forfeited their former life and received a new one as the scriptures confirm, that if one is in Christ, he becomes a new creation.<sup>49</sup>

### **Eruption of World War**

After the white missionaries had arrived, they began to make adventures in the area searching for a temporal settlement place, whereby they identified a place called Ogango, the current Gendia, and then built a Mission Station in this area. During this period in the region, there was a scarcity of Bibles and Bible readers and since he had mastered some Luo language, Carscallen helped in translating some Bible portions into Dholuo (Luo language). Through his Missionary work, Carscallen managed to establish several Mission Stations, and the work was mainly concentrated in the Lake region and it took some time before it was propagated to the Highlands.

The genesis of the First World War (1914-1918), as Jeremy Black confirms that it is often remembered in terms of the trench warfare of the Western Front in France and Belgium, where very large numbers fought, and considerable numbers

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<sup>49</sup> Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism*, 80.

died for no purpose, certainly without major gains of territory.<sup>50</sup> The demonstration of the European military system went outside Europe; this was indeed a world war. The Allies, particularly the British, overran all the German colonies.<sup>51</sup> The effects of the war were felt globally and negatively impacted the missions of the Seventh-day Adventists. There was a well-planned arrangement among European Adventists that focused on evangelizing the African continent. As mentioned above, the effects of this war were felt far and wide. Coming to Kenya in 1913, the German army invaded Kenya for the first time, and the target was the British administrative post at Kisii town.<sup>52</sup> By the time the Germans invaded Kenya, the missionary work had stalled for five years, so there was no indication of interest by them for missionary efforts, it was but war.

As the war had been declared in Europe and other parts of the world where British interests were at stake, a supply of military personnel was required. Like other colonial governments, the British found ready supplies from their colonies. And from Gusii, a section of British East Africa, this ready supply was found in the person of those unlucky men who had been conscribed to clear the bushes at Kisii town. Many were taken to Kendu-Bay, put into a steamship, and transported to Kisumu. From here, they were taken by railway to various places to fight. It was from this incident that the name '*Esegi ya Nyamioro*' (the battle of machetes) was coined among the Abagusii, referring to World War I because those who were drafted were taken from those who were clearing the town using machetes.<sup>53</sup>

The year 1914 was not favorable for the Adventist Church in Kenya. Great Britain fought Germany, a war that spread so fast and became a world war, inclusive of Africa. Nyaundi reflects on the same giving an account of how the missionaries

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<sup>50</sup> Jeremy Black, *War and the World, Military Power and the Fate of Continents 1450-2000*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 236, 237.

<sup>51</sup> Black, *War and the World*, 239.

<sup>52</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 33.

had to resettle or evacuate to Kisumu due to the hostilities and the trauma from the war.<sup>54</sup> Around the time when the hostilities in Europe started, the same started in Kenya with the British being at war with Germany a time during which the holdings in Kenya and Tanganyika had a common border.

As the war was getting tenser the German warriors made their forceful way into Kenya, moving so fast into Kisii town, in the southwest part of Kenya, closer to the Tanzanian border. Around September 1914, the Germans positioned themselves strategically in the middle of the town, and the British were compelled to retreat shortly to a small hill behind Nyamataro, around Kisii town as they were taking vigilance on the Germans. Just as Kamagambo was in the middle of the scuffle, also was Nyanchwa, around thirteen miles away. Other mission stations that were less than thirty miles away were Gendia, Wire Hill, and Kanyadoto. After some times, the British army re-organized themselves and forced out the Germans from Kisii town.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the speculations that might have heightened this war as alluded to by Nyaundi is that the presence of German troops who were some few miles away in Tanganyika posed some threats to the British colonial administration in Kenya who were known to associate closely with Germans.<sup>56</sup> Hamburg, Germany was the center of Adventism in East Africa, and it happened that some missionaries in Kenya were German, for instance,

Alfred Matter, because of his nationality, caused all other Adventist missionaries to be detained in Kaimosi, and during that period they were financially straining because their finances and other resources that were given to them from Germany were frozen and any means of communication with the outside world was cut off by the British government.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 32, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

### **Vandalism at Kamagambo**

Pr. Carscallen seemingly had traveled to Gendia when he got information about a group of people almost invading Kamagambo. Pr. Carscallen immediately sent one of his trusted cooks, Mr. Barnabas, who went and brought Hellen (Mrs. Carscallen) and their children using donkeys as a means of transport. They traveled throughout the night and arrived safely in Gendia.<sup>58</sup> These hooligans raided the mission station at Kamagambo, stole anything they could put their hands on, broke into the building, took off with very essential documents including mission records, and eventually set some buildings on fire.<sup>59</sup>

### **Prevailing Factors that led to the Adventist Movement**

The progress of missionary activities in Kenya was at a snail's speed but was not stopped by the breaking out of World War I nearly towards end of 1916 when the missionaries were trying to make their way back. The African missionaries emerged from the shadow of the white missionaries taking advantage of their release from detention at Kaimosi. Some of the local missionaries who were in charge of various stations during the detention period were promoted to leadership positions in subsequent years. After the First World War Pastor Carscallen purposed to begin an education program in Kamagambo to advance the training of African personnel to perform greater duties and also to amplify the training of the native evangelists.<sup>60</sup> An intention of setting up an annual ministerial institute to close the possible gaps among the local evangelists existed.

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<sup>58</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 32, 33.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

A training college for teachers started in 1928 at Kamagambo and ministerial training commenced in the same area in 1929. Historically majority of the prominent Evangelists and Pastors were trained in this institution. Pastor Paul Mboya, being one of them, became the first African Minister in Kenya to be ordained on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1931.<sup>61</sup>

The mission stations that were far away suffered terrible insecurity, and

The missionaries in these places were seriously vulnerable, both in their security and the mission's security. When the War ended, all the mission stations massively suffered terrible losses except for the Rusinga Island and Wire Hill missions encountered light losses.<sup>62</sup>

It was a blessing in disguise that after World War I, some new mission stations were opened though with a lot of considerations, for instance, Kebeneti, even though the first place of missionary activities among the Kipsigis in 1939, was not the best place for a mission station, so Kabokiek was chosen instead.<sup>63</sup> On the other side is Chebwai which is located along the highway between Kakamega and Webuye town was set up as a mission station.<sup>64</sup> In the early 1950s, Chebwai experienced growth and at some point requested additional teachers through the Immigration Office as confirmed in this letter,

Dear Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter No. R. 115183/A/3 of the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1952, and am to state that there is no objection to the employment of Mr. Wilfred Arden Clark at the Chebwai Seventh-day Mission, Kakamega.

Mr. L.F.G. Pritchard

Principal Immigration Officer, Nairobi.<sup>65</sup>

Around the Nairobi region was Karura, which is not very far from Nairobi town, around ten kilometers away was picked as the center for a mission station, likewise

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<sup>61</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 32, 33.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> L.F.G. Pritchard to The Principal, Chebwai Seventh-day Adventist Mission, 23 June, 1952, Letter R. 115183/A/3 1952, Kenya National Archives (AV/12/261), Nairobi.

with Kenya Coast region, Changamwe was chosen to be the mission station headquarters.<sup>66</sup>

### **Carscallen's Defense of the Adventist Faith And Conscription Experience**

According to Merriam-Webster's Deluxe Dictionary, conscription means the compulsory enrollment of persons, especially for military service.<sup>67</sup> In this context, the decision was ill-informed by the then government that decided to use force in bringing on board all young people aged between 18 and 25, without proper understanding to fulfill the demands of the government. German forces, allude Isaac Okeyo,

Were under the directives of Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who was in charge of a well-trained army supported by heavy artillery in Tanganyika. The services of Jan Smuts, a military leader from South Africa (1916) were used by the British and there was fear in the region due to conscription orders by the governor in Nairobi.<sup>68</sup>

It emanated from Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika) and Kenya's government commanded to recruit young men aged 18-25 years to be engaged in the war. This was a decree by the Kenyan government with a directive that said, that all young men were to support the war regardless of their leadership status in the mission field.<sup>69</sup>

Upon hearing of this information,

Pr. Carscallen was not impressed and took up the matter with the provincial Commissioner, convincing him that Seventh-day Adventist members are noncombatant and don't participate in military affairs and proceeded to give reasons why they are not willing to participate, saying one, our religious principles do not allow using a gun in warfare because killing or shedding blood is contrary to our conscience, two, we keep the Sabbath Holy, the

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<sup>66</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 33.

<sup>67</sup> *Merriam Webster's Deluxe Dictionary*, 2nd ed. "conscription" accessed 2024, <https://www.amazon.com/Merriam-Websters-Deluxe-Dictionary-Collegiate/dp/0762100826>

<sup>68</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Sabbath of the Lord, but engaging in the war would compel our people to break the Sabbath.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to this, the decision did not auger well with Adventists because it concerned one of their core principles, for they are conscientious objectors in regards to participation in the war, except for very extreme situations, and still only in non-combatant activities.<sup>71</sup>

The missionaries were hesitant to the directives of the Governor and none of them was willing to participate in the war.

When the Governor learned that there was a bunch of obstinate missionaries who would not badge to his directives and mobilize to go to war, he quickly made his ultimatum: Go to war or face repatriation. The missionaries chose neither, they stuck to their guns and refused to go to war, and the Governor also stood his ground compelling the missionaries to go to war<sup>72</sup>

The Governor denied them the permission. The following day Pr. Carscallen booked an appointment with the Nairobi Governor over the same but unfortunately, the appointment fell on a Sabbath day. Unfortunately, the Governor got an accident a day before the appointment day, that is, Friday, which forced him to be flown to England for treatment, so the appointment bounced.<sup>73</sup> This incident is believed to have happened as a result of the fervent prayers that were done by the entire Gendia community, who gathered for a session of prayer about this predicament.

The occurrence after their prayers on the Friday preceding the Saturday which Northey (the Governor) demanded he see Pr. Carscallen was distinguished by many as a providential answer to prayers. The episode moderated the idea of having the missionaries sent home allegedly because of insubordination.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 16.

<sup>71</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Internship/Detention at Kaimosi**

The Bible says that all things work together for the good of those that love God and have been called according to His purpose (Rom.8:28). The incident that happened therefore, was attributed to the prayers, and all these were to some extent in favor of the Adventist missionaries. The decision was purely malicious to disorient the missionary activities in the region and God turned the governor's proposal of repatriation upside down. It was decided that all Adventist missionaries be held as prisoners. Subsequently, the missionaries were summoned back from their work locations and assembled at Gendia, thereafter ferried to Kaimosi, some 100 miles away in Nandi. Apart from a handful of German Catholic missionaries, the only individuals who were completely detained were Adventist missionaries regardless of their British nationality.<sup>75</sup> All the financial assistance and other resources that were coming from Germany had to be scrutinized by the British government, and at some point were totally frozen, and unfortunately, all other means of communication, especially internationally, were cut off completely.<sup>76</sup>

Maliciously there was a plan brewing in the mind of the provincial Commissioner, and that was to make sure all the white missionaries and everyone else who refused to be part of the war was taken to Kaimosi and detained until the war came to an end.<sup>77</sup>

It occurred that the place that became the battlefield was the same area that the Adventists had settled on, both in Tanzania and Kenya. For them to be safe, all the missionaries around Gendia had to evacuate in haste to the government post at Kisumu, and because it was quite a distance from Gendia, it was perceived as a haven for the missionaries. The Germans occupied the government administrative post at Kisii town, which was barely a kilometer

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<sup>75</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

from Nyanchwa station. At the initial stages of the war, missionaries outside the war zone were allowed to remain in their stations.<sup>78</sup>

The challenge that occurred during this period was about monthly reports (this was being done by Pr. Isaac Okeyo) that had to be taken from Kendu to Kaimosi. It would take seven days to make a round trip from Gendia to Kaimosi. It was also risky to trek through different tribal regions because of tribal conflicts, and this continued till the end of the war in 1918.<sup>79</sup>

### **Delegation of Duty among Local Missionaries**

During the detention period, the local missionaries delegated duties to themselves by assigning themselves to different mission stations as follows;

Isaac Okeyo was in charge of Gendia, Daniel Onyango- Rusinga Island, John Tolo-Wire mission, Petro Oyier-Kamagambo, Rongo, Mariko Otieno-Rapedhi, Kanyadoto, Petro Rakula-Mfangano Island, and Yakob Olwa-Kisii, Nyanchwa. For lack of ordination, they could not baptize, so the following baptism took place in 1918 after the leaders were released from detention.<sup>80</sup>

The top Administration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church took cognizance of the need to dispatch several missionaries to Africa as mentioned,

In 1920 the General Conference sent other missionaries to Africa. Pr. Carscallen was replaced by W.T. Bartlett . Others who were also sent to Africa were; Pr. Maxwell, Pr. Armstrong, Pr. E.R. Warland, Dr. G.A.S.Madgwick with two nurses, Karen Nielson and Carentze Olsen. The missionaries were dispatched to various churches and through their ministry, the work rapidly progressed, and membership also increased especially in the Luo and Kisii regions.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Pfeiffer, *Seventh-day Adventist contributions to East Africa*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

## **Negative Impacts on Missionary Activities After the first World War**

The region's missionary activities were seriously affected by the onset of the first World War leading to adverse effects on the expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Considering that 1912 and 1913 were the most fruitful years given the fact that five new stations were already opened, the missionaries were delighted seeing a brighter future ahead, unfortunately, the war erupted, which caused a long period of delay before they opened a new station.<sup>82</sup> There was difficulty communicating and interacting with the fellows at Kaimosi because of the distance (100km from Gendia). The other area that was affected by the war was the security of the far-flung mission stations, including personal security and property that belonged to the mission.

Seemingly, during the War and conscription at Kaimosi, a lot had taken place in the mission stations as recorded,

While they were away, the mission stations were looted and pillaged. The villagers perceived the world war as a heaven-sent opportunity to plunder the “*wazungu*.” (The white men) The missionaries were filled with fear because they were coerced to leave their camp in a hurry, and most of the mission facilities and personal effects were left unattended. In as much as Gendia was the only mission station that was not looted simply because of the British troops who were staying there, a fire destroyed one of the buildings there, and Pr. Carscallen lost important files of records of his experience as the first missionary in Kenya, this occurrence delayed their progress and they had to commence afresh in new areas.<sup>83</sup>

The war inevitably slowed down greatly the activities of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries and the propagation of the Adventist message in Tanganyika and Kenya was affected. After Eighteen years a mission station was built in Nakuru in 1931 as

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<sup>82</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 38.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

the North-West Kenya Mission.<sup>84</sup> The consequences of the world war could be felt in the region, for instance, the two communities which largely forms the Adventist church in Kenya are the Kisii and the Luo, who happens to reflect largely the impact of the first World War, and this has also impacted on the demographic composition of the Adventist church in Kenya up to date.<sup>85</sup>

### **Positive Impacts on Missionary Activities After World War I**

The world war that disoriented not only the country's routine of activities but also the missionary plans and functions could also have a positive side of it, for instance, the missionary activities in Kenya did not completely stop even though with some limitations. In the midst of all these, there were enough opportunities for the indigenous missionaries to proceed with leadership positions even in the subsequent years. The other point is that the mission had achieved several successes, including the number of mission stations that had increased to seven. The first attempts at printing were made with the hand press that Carscallen brought along after his furlough of 1913.<sup>86</sup> Pr. Carscallen had already introduced schooling programs in the schools around Gendia,

So they produced all those books, a reader, a spelling book, a language primer, a hymn book, and a monthly evangelistic journal called "*Jaote Luo*" (Luo Messenger), his translation of the New Testament book of Matthew into Dholuo (Luo language) that was published in 1913 by British and Foreign Bible Societies, as the first book written by an Adventist.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Godfrey K. Sang, "Whose Church? Ethnicity, Identity, and the Politics of Belonging in the Adventist Church in Kenya," *Spectrum Magazine*, 2019 part 5 of 6.

<sup>85</sup> Sang, "Whose Church? Ethnicity, Identity, and the Politics of Belonging in the Adventist Church in Kenya," 5.

<sup>86</sup> Nyaundi, *Seventh-day Adventism in Gusii*, 39.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

## **Stalwarts of the Adventist Movement and Opportunities in the Region**

Turning to Adventism in Nandi, which is part of Western Kenya at Uasin-Gishu plateau, came David Sparrow, born and reared in South Africa's Eastern Cape but his parents hailed from England. After his baptism, he served in several places as an evangelist and missionary before coming to British East Africa (Kenya). His coming to Kenya happened after his friendship with Dr. Harry Bridgeman, a renowned and prominent dentist in Cape Town, who asked him if he could manage his land in Nandi. He didn't come to Kenya as a missionary but after settling down he discovered that many natives from South Africa, the Boers had also come to do farming in the same place, and because of his passion for the mission he immediately devised a method of reaching them with the Gospel truth. He wrote back to South Africa, requesting Adventist literature in Afrikaans which would be distributed to the Afrikaans on the plateau, and other English literature for the European neighbors.<sup>88</sup>

As time went by, Sparrow moved from Bridgeman's farm to his farm and eventually stopped working for his boss Bridgeman to embark on missionary work among the Nandi People. It took the Sparrows some time to evangelize the Nandi people due to the language barrier but eventually, they developed an interest in studying the tribe and learning their language which ultimately created an opportunity to share their faith with them.

After the Sparrows, the next Adventist settler on the plateau was Mrs. Kruger who had embraced Adventism in the Orange Free State in South Africa before relocating to Kenya in 1913 along with her husband Hendrik Willem Kruger and their

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<sup>88</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A sparrow*, 9.

two sons.<sup>89</sup> Originally, Hendrik was not an Adventist but thanks to his wife's influence, he and his two sons embraced the Adventist beliefs during their stay in Kenya. This family made their home in Kitale, approximately 60 miles from Sparrow's farm. Because of the distance, they were unable to hold services on Sabbath as often as they would have liked to. The only option of getting to the place as fast as possible was by ox-cart and this plan would take probably one week if they were to hold this fellowship. The Sparrows always departed on Wednesday morning to reach the Kruger Farm by Friday evening and just on time for the Sabbath. They would return on Sundays, reaching their own farm by Tuesday evening.<sup>90</sup>

Another missionary named William Cuthbert, renowned as a colporteur and pastor, took on the role of the Head Elder while Christopher Sparrow served as the Sabbath School Superintendent for the small group. William worked so fervently for the church to be established in the African reserve. Stringent rules could not allow the Whites and the natives to socially mingle but in 1933, Adventist church and school were established in Kaigat, Nandi reserve by Sparrow and Cuthbert, periodically other White Adventists would come for worship in that place. Spencer G. Maxuel, the East Africa Union superintendent, would pay them visits and publish their progress in different church magazines.

### **Conclusion**

The Adventist message came to the African continent through various points, Egypt in the North, Sierra Leone in the West, South Africa in Southern Africa, and Tanzania in East Africa. It moved from Central Africa then to West Africa towards

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<sup>89</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A sparrow*, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

the beginning of the nineteenth century. The movement continually penetrated through two opposite countries, one from the North (Egypt) and the other one from the South (South Africa), and made its way to British East Africa (modern Kenya) via Tanganyika in 1906. The initial stages of the Adventist movement encountered insurmountable challenges including the eruption of World War I, insubordination by the then government, detention, and vandalism. Evidently, in the midst of all these, the relentless spirit of the early Adventist missionaries, both foreign and local, allowed them to grab any available opportunity to proclaim the Adventist message. During World War I, local missionaries engaged in several missionary activities that included opening more mission stations, schools, and training centers to extend the Adventist message to different parts of the country including Western Kenya, which became instrumental as Adventism in Kenya is concerned.

## CHAPTER 4

### REMARKABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN ADVENTISM IN WESTERN KENYA (1909-2002)

Considering the humble beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with a small number of members in the early stages, with years, the church has gone through tremendous and remarkable developments in different areas. This chapter will enumerate structural development, church leadership, and numerical growth, including Adventist institutions with numerous contributions toward the general growth of Adventism in Western Kenya. Periods will be a back-and-forth trend, for instance, the improvement of administration and leadership began when the need arose as early as 1909. The positive influence of the Adventist church in Western Kenya can be attributed to other instrumental Church-owned entities including but not limited to the Adventist Missionary Volunteers Society, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and Adventist Lay Persons Services and Industries.

#### **Structural Development: Church Administration/Leadership**

The Church succeeded in attracting a sizable number of members at its infancy stages which informed the necessity of organization for the smooth operation and coordination of church activities in the region. It was time to organize churches. Therefore, the General Conference sent out other missionaries such as Pastor Watson who was sent to Rusinga Island, where Daniel Onyango assisted him.<sup>1</sup> R. Sparks gave

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<sup>1</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 15.

support to J. D. Baker in 1913 after the establishment of Kanyadoto mission four years later.<sup>2</sup>

The tedious efforts of Pastor Armstrong culminated in the opening of a mission institution in Kamagambo assisted by Peter Oyier. In 1912, a second mission station was opened by Pastor Carscallen at Nyanchwa where Pastor Beavon was stationed. It gradually developed into the current South Kenya Conference.<sup>3</sup>

During the period 1914-1916 August, when World War I broke out, the Missionaries were exiled and this resulted in serious regress in Kenya, however, the missionary work did not stop entirely. The African Evangelists took advantage of this period and emerged effective and strong in missionary work, they later became instrumental in church leadership afterwards, and this necessitated the yearly ministerial training to equip the native evangelists with necessary skills.

The Missionary work in the region can be attributed to the humble beginning of the four mission stations namely, Gendia, Wire (later joined with Gendia), Kamagambo (later replaced by Ranen mission station), and Nyanchwa. Ranen Mission, curved from Kenya Lake Field, with only forty six churches with six thousand four hundred and seventy nine members was organized on December 28, 1961.<sup>4</sup> Ranen field grew and met the qualifications for Conference status and on February 15 and 16, 2010, it was organized into conference<sup>5</sup> with Pastor S. Omolo

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<sup>2</sup> Getui, *The Establishment and History of the Activity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1912-1985*, 31-36.

<sup>3</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1962 (SDA Yearbook 1962)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1962), 182.

<sup>5</sup> East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the Executive Committee." (LMS Guest House, Nairobi, Kenya: East African Union, 27-28 May 2009), 1506.

Ayugi as the leader<sup>6</sup> After seven years of growth, it was split to form another field called Lake Victoria with 509 churches, and 74,331 members, while Ranen Conference having 508 churches and 108,952 members.<sup>7</sup>

Gendia Mission Station produced the Kenya Lake Mission Field, which happened to be among the first three Mission Fields that were opened in 1953 in Kenya with its headquarters at Gendia. The Kenya Lake Field requested Conference status through East African Union in 2009 as confirmed in the minutes taken that voted to approve the report and recommend Kenya Lake Field to East-Central Africa Division for consideration for Conference status<sup>8</sup> of which was voted to record the Kenya Lake Field Conference status approval as presented.<sup>9</sup> Turning to the current Central Nyanza Field, which came from Kenya Lake Field, adopted the name North Nyanza Field<sup>10</sup> had its initiation in 1990 and was organized as Conference in 2015, covering Kisumu and Siaya Counties.<sup>11</sup> The last entity at the moment that has gone through several transitions is North West Kenya Mission Field, which began in 1933,

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<sup>6</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1962 (SDA Yearbook 1962)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1962), 182.

<sup>7</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2019 (SDA Yearbook 2019)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2019), 74.

<sup>8</sup> East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of Mid-year Executive Committee Meeting,” (Literature Ministry Seminary Guest House, Simba Hall, Nairobi, Kenya: East African Union, 27-28 May 2009), EAU 2110.

<sup>9</sup> East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of Mid-year Executive Committee Meeting,” (LMS/CC Guest House, Nairobi, Kenya: East African Union, 26 May 2010).

<sup>10</sup> East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting,” (Nairobi, Kenya: East African Union, 27 November 1989), S-155-89.

<sup>11</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Central Nyanza Conference,” accessed 12 June 2023, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13615>

following Kaigat Church establishment.<sup>12</sup> After twenty-eight years it changed its status to Field until 1981 when Western Kenya Field was initiated.<sup>13</sup> After twenty-nine years it was promoted to Conference status in 2010<sup>14</sup> and in 2015, The West Kenya Union Conference Executive Committee voted the split of Western Kenya Conference into two Conferences, which are, North West Kenya and Greater Rift Valley.<sup>15</sup>

When the missionaries confirmed that their efforts were bearing fruits in the region, and there was a need for administration and leadership to facilitate the running of church activities, Kisumu was preferred for headquarters of the East African

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<sup>12</sup> East Africa Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the East Africa Union Committee,” (Kamagambo, Kenya: East Africa Union, 25 January 1933), 139.

<sup>13</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1982 (SDA Yearbook 1982)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), 82.

<sup>14</sup> East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Executive Committee,” (LMS Guest House, Nairobi, Kenya: East African Union, 27-28 May 2009), EAU 1507.

<sup>15</sup> West Kenya Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Mid year Executive Committee,” (Kisumu, Kenya: West Kenya Union Conference, 20 – 21 May 2015), 245/15.

Union. As the Lord continued to bless His work in the hands of these missionaries,

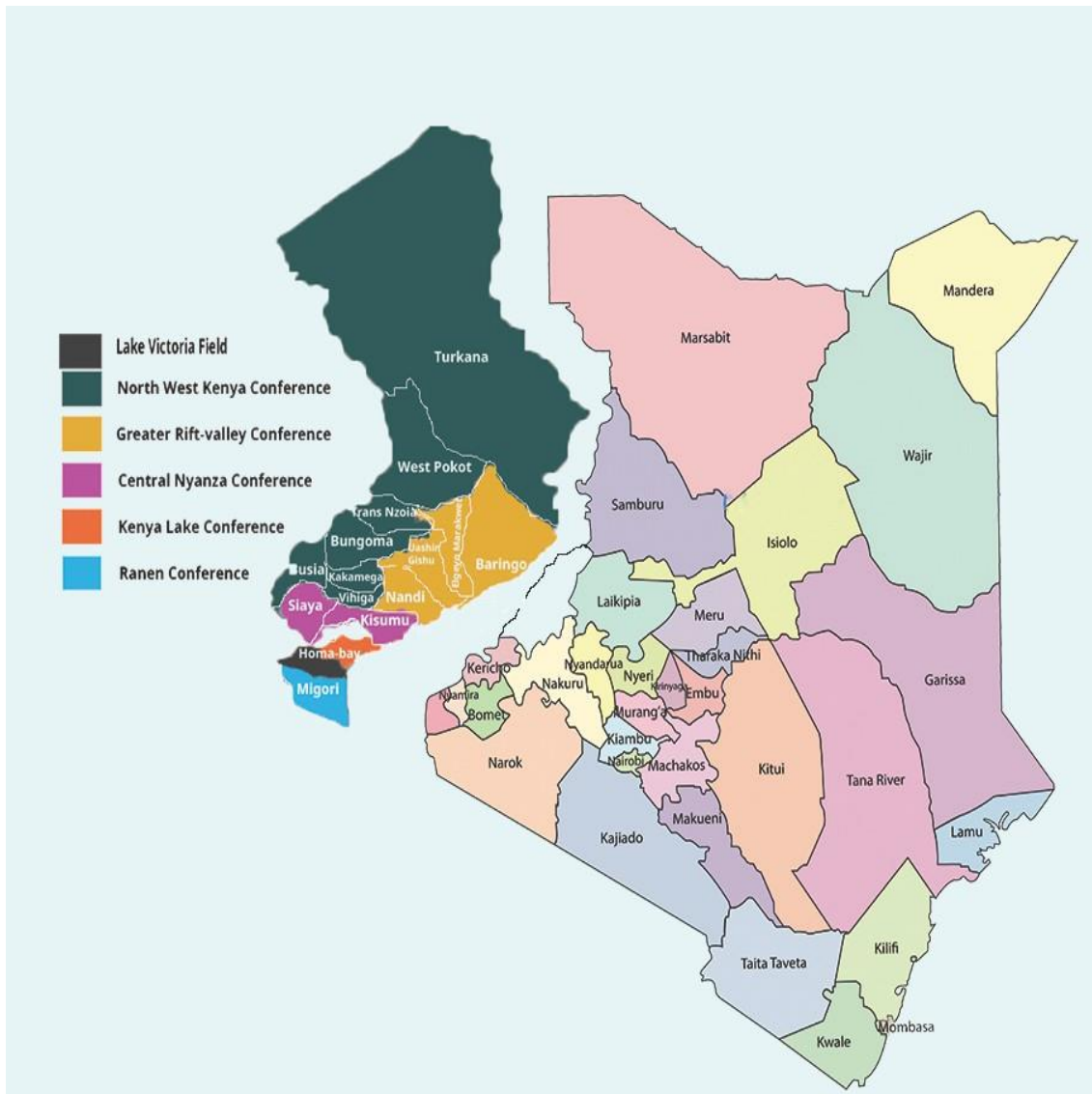


Figure 3. The Disivision of the Former East African Union into two Unions in 2014, West Kenya Union and East Kenya Union

The exponential growth of the church and its administrative framework necessitated first of all the dessolution of Kenya Union Mission as it was called then and as was voted to record the official dissolution of the Kenya Union Mission.<sup>16</sup> The subdivision and reorganization of the former larger Union into two Unions, one with

<sup>16</sup> Kenya Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Special Constituency Meeting,” (Kamagambo Adventist College, Kenya: Kenya Union, 25 – 27 November 2013), 2033.

its headquarters in Kisumu and the other one with its headquarters in Nairobi was a recommendation by the Executive Committee<sup>17</sup> Later on the Union Committee decided and voted on the subdivision of the Union for General Conference consideration as minuted that voted to officially declare that West Kenya Union Conference is officially inaugurated and launched<sup>18</sup> and also voted the official launch of East Kenya Union Conference<sup>19</sup> of which was later approved and voted by the General Conference as documented that, The General Conference Executive Committee voted the approval of the split and organization of the Kenya Union Mission into two unions.<sup>20</sup>

Another factor for this subdivision of the broad Union was to curb the leadership gaps in the rapid numerical growth, which was burdensome to leadership. By the time the West Kenya Union Conference was formed, under a new leadership as recorded that the leadership that was put in place included Pastor Kenneth Maena, Pastor Japheth Ochorokodi, and David Sande<sup>21</sup> it had four conferences as follows, Kenya Lake Conference, Central Nyanza Conference, Ranen Conference, and Grater Rift Valley Conference. The 2022 statistics show the tremendous administrative development within Western Kenya since 1906 when the pioneer Field (Kenya Lake

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<sup>17</sup> Kenya Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting,” (LMS, Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Union Mission, 23 October 2013), KU 2069.

<sup>18</sup> Kenya Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Special Constituency Meeting,” (Kamagambo Adventist College, Kenya: Kenya Union, 25 – 27 November 2013), KU 2134.

<sup>19</sup> Kenya Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Special Constituency Meeting,” (Kamagambo Adventist College, Kenya: Kenya Union, 25 – 27 November 2013), KU 2135.

<sup>20</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013 (SDA Yearbook 2013)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013), 49.

<sup>21</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2014 (SDA Yearbook 2014)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2014), 42.

Field), now Kenya Lake Conference, was initiated. Currently, there are six entities and substantive leadership in place in the entire West Kenya Union Conference.

Kenya Lake Conference, which has gone through various reorganizations and given birth to several conferences and fields.

Table 1. List of Conference and Field Leaders of West Kenya Union

Conference/Field	President	Executive Secretary	Chief Finance Officer
Kenya Lake	Pr. Benson O. Ogayo	Pr. Clifford O. Makemo	George Opande
Ranen Conference	Pr. Berine Otieno Ngore	Pr. Aggrey Juma Agar	Sis. Ann Adero Owaga
Greater Rift Valley Conference	Pr. Christopher Misoi	Pr. Benjamin Tanui	Sis. Rebecca Rutto
Central Nyanza Conference	Pr. John Ojunga	Pr. Nelson Olum	Sis. Marjory Ochola
Western Kenya Conference	Pr. Samuel Mbayi	Pr. Joseph Lumati	Pr. Boaz Ouma
Lake Victoria Field	Pr. Samson Okwach	Pr. Wilson Mandago	Eld. Johnson Ochieng

Note: the table indicates the growth and current leadership in the entire West Kenya Union Conference as per “2022 statistics.”<sup>22</sup>

### Numerical Growth

When the first missionaries arrived in the country in 1906, laying the foundation for their mission was an uphill task for they needed to cooperate with indigenous people to achieve their objective. Nyaundi states that they delayed in coming to scene, and the British colony was against competition among missions, and for several years worked around Lake Victoria region, in Western Kenya.<sup>23</sup> The

<sup>22</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2014 (SDA Yearbook 2014)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2014), 42.

<sup>23</sup> Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, *Religion and Social Change: A Sociological study of Seventh-day Adventism in Kenya* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1993), 496.

process of recruiting the locals took a long time because of the skeptical attitude toward the new religion introduced by the missionaries. Because of the relentless spirit of the missionaries, they managed to win a few locals who got baptized at the end of the day. As mentioned before, there were only sixteen converts at first baptism, and through this small group, the church began to experience numerical growth and more people got to know how to read and write, after some time they would be allowed to join baptismal classes though with stringent measures,

The baptismal class took two years, the first year was for receiving salvation and the second year was for confirming a covenant with Christ. The converts were taught from two baptismal manuals, one for the first year and the other one for the second-year baptismal candidates. It was after a second year of thorough doctrinal teaching that the qualified candidates were baptized and confirmed as church members.<sup>24</sup>

In his critique comment on Seventh-day Adventism in Kenya, responding to the aspect of numerical growth, Ronald Lawson, perceives that nominalism in the Adventist Church has contributed negatively toward her membership growth for the lack of quality preparation time for baptismal candidates.<sup>25</sup> As it was in the initial stages of the early church where God was continuously adding new converts into the fold, so it was with the increment of new members into the Adventist Church that after the first baptism many other people joined the baptismal class and on May 25, 1912, the second baptism was conducted at Wire mission station.<sup>26</sup> After a short while the first missionaries, J. D. Baker, Mrs. Baker, and Helen Bruce Thompson joined them in 1907. J. H. S. Sparks came in 1908, B. L. Morse and H. Horace Brooks came

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<sup>24</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Nyaundi, *Religion and Social Change*, 498.

<sup>26</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 14.

in 1909, and Leonard Lane came in 1912. Because of the increased numbers, Pastor Carscallen invited another pastor from Tanzania to assist him in baptism.<sup>27</sup>

There were minimal missionary activities during detention at Kaimosi, and this affected the baptism trend that had begun at a high rate. The baptism that followed took place after the return of the white men from Kaimosi after the war. From then onwards baptism went on well as normal.<sup>28</sup> The missionary work was escalating consistently in the region and there was a dire need for the church leadership to consider more workers into the territory Okeyo confirms that after the return of Carscallen to America, and the arrival of other missionaries, they were dispatched to different churches. As the mission work progressed, the number of churches and new members also increased under the leadership of the missionaries as schools were also built alongside the churches.<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned before, the subdivision of the East African Union into two Unions was informed by the need to expand the mission of the church to some remote and un-entered territories. It is imperative in this discourse to demonstrate how the church has numerically grown within the Western region, especially the Western Kenya Union Conference as per the statistics dated 2022. Commencing with the mother entity, is, Kenya Lake, which covers Homa-Bay County, after several reorganizations as shall be enumerated.

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<sup>27</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

*Table 2. Numerical growth of West Kenya Union Conference up to 2022*

Conference/Field	Churches	Membership
Central Nyanza Conference	443	79, 127
Greater Rift Valley Conference	370	52, 848
Kenya Lake Conference	373	57,735
Lake Victoria Field	653	80,025
Western Kenya Conference	312	29, 607
Ranen Conference	362	59, 127
Totals	2513	524, 790

Note: the table shows the numerical growth of all the entities in West Kenya Union Conference, with total number of churches and membership as per “2022 statistics”<sup>30</sup>

### **Adventist Institutions**

Considering the original objective of the pioneers when they made their first footing into the country, there was evidential intent to promulgate missionary activities, educational activities, and medical activities hence wherever they erected a church, next to it was a school and a medical center in most places, for instance, when they realized the sufferings caused by ignorance and deceases, they built the first medical center in Kanyadoto in 1920 in Nyanza.<sup>31</sup> The missionaries noticed some low levels of education in their prospects and thus introduced adult education programs with the main idea of getting them to know how to write and how to read the bible. This was experienced by the first Kenyan missionary, Isaac Okeyo before he was recruited into the missionary work.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately this idea was embraced by the locals and gradually attracted more people, not only adults but also the youth. This section

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<sup>30</sup> General Conference of the Seventh – day Adventists, “West Kenya Union Conference (2013-Present),” accessed 23 August 2023, [https://adventiststatistics.org/view\\_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=7849](https://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=7849).

<sup>31</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

briefly discusses key institutions managed by the Adventist Church in the Western Kenya region, namely, medical, educational, and publishing.

### **Medical Institutions**

#### **Rapedhi Dispensary (Kanyadoto)**

The locality of Rapedhi is within Homa Bay County, approximately Sixty-six kilometers from Gendia, in the former Nyanza Province, where Adventism in Kenya was birthed by Arthur Carscallen in 1906. The mission station in Kanyadoto (Rapedhi) was officially commenced by Alfred Matter in 1913.<sup>33</sup> Before he came to Rapedhi, J. H. Sparks, a trader and a hunter from South Africa had been in the area two years earlier and Matter continued from where Sparks left. Sparks had already built a church and school within that area and both were numerically growing.

The unfortunate eruption of World War 1 in 1914 disoriented the missionary activities that necessitated the closure of the Kanyadoto health facility and Alfred Matter was interned to Kaimosi because he was a German native. Immediately after the war Kanyadoto facility was returned and the first church in that area, Rapedhi, was built. Because the facility at Kanyadoto was not conducive enough to maintain the medical functions, it was decided in 1924 to relocate to Kendu Bay.

#### **Kendu Adventist Hospital**

Kendu Adventist Hospital is a renowned Adventist medical hospital in Kenya and is ranked as the largest and oldest among Adventist hospitals.

The facility was founded within the former East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists in 1924 and is currently overseen by the West Kenya Union Conference, located just a few kilometers away from the Lake Victoria shores,

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<sup>33</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914 (SDA Yearbook 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914), 42.

next to Kendu Bay town. Kendu Adventist Hospital was initially known as Kenya Hospital.<sup>34</sup>

It was under the leadership of Dr. George. A.S. Madgwick, who was the first medical director of the facility. He was assisted by two nurses namely; Karen Nielsen and Carentze Olsen, who served at Skodsborg Sanitarium in Denmark before they were deployed to Kendu Bay.<sup>35</sup> There were inspiring and encouraging reports that were coming from health workers in Kendu Hospital regarding the progress the facility was making amidst insurmountable challenges and drawbacks. The demonstration of passion and commitment by the few workers in this hospital enhanced its fame in the country and beyond. The hospital was always flocked by patients coming from various places as reported that

We are pleased to state that many patients come from quite distant places. The reputation of the hospital has spread over all of Kenya. Patients from Nairobi, Nakuru, and other towns of Kenya seek help here. European employers send their native employees here for treatment. Even African workers in Government native civil hospitals come here as patients. We pray that these contacts may get more than physical help when they visit us.<sup>36</sup>

The services of Dr. Madgwick lasted for fifteen years as the nurses offered services for twenty-five years. After some time in the early years, the hospital management engaged in medical activities that enhanced the need for services in that region. As the need for services increased some twenty more medical directors came and served after Dr. Madgwick, though in varied durations of terms. Two individuals served multiple terms: specifically, Dr. B. E. Amundsen served from 1950 to 1953,

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<sup>34</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1926 (SDA Yearbook 1926)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1926), 284.

<sup>35</sup> Don F. Neufeld, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, vol.10*. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), s.v. "Kendu Adventist Hospital."

<sup>36</sup> G.A. Madgwick, "Kendu Hospital," London The Advent Survey, Vol. 10. No. 5. May, 1938.3.

then from 1954 to 1956, while Dr. E. C. Kraft served from 1971 to 1979 then from 1985 to 1988 and briefly from 1989 to 1990.<sup>37</sup> The hospital has experienced exponential growth over time. At the moment it has several facilities including; school of medical sciences, elementary school, and a comprehensive Care Center. Additionally, the hospital that began with only six beds currently stands at a bed capacity of 170. The initiation, progress, and success of Kendu Hospital can be attributed to several personalities, one of the key and outstanding ones is Dr. E.C.Kraft together with his wife Ruby Kraft as alluded.

Dr. Kraft can be remembered for the structural expansion of the hospital and his wife, Ruby, passed on in 1989 while the husband was serving his last tenure. Ruby Kraft Primary School, an elementary school, was founded in 1991 inside the hospital premises in remembrance of Mrs. Ruby Kraft.<sup>38</sup>

Kendu Hospital has a historic close relationship with a few schools around it, for instance, the School of Medical Sciences.

It was established in 1948, and it was initially known as Kendu Adventist School of Nursing, with the aim of training Nurse Aides, however, later it offered Certificate in nursing. This continued up to 2007, when a diploma program was introduced, which created an opportunity for direct admission to the diploma level for qualified Nurses. Thereafter, the name was changed to Kendu Adventist School of Medical Sciences immediately when a diploma in clinical medicine and surgery was introduced in 2011. The college upholds high academic and moral standards, and so far has been registered by the Ministry of Education. Another school that was also associated with Kendu Hospital was Ruby Kraft which began in 1991.<sup>39</sup>

This school was established to cater for employees' kids but due to the consistent excellent performance of the school in KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) for grade Eight, which attracted an overwhelming number of

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<sup>37</sup> Neufeld. *SDAE*, "Kendu Adventist Hospital."

<sup>38</sup> Kendu Adventist Hospital, "Board Minutes," (Kendu, Kenya: East African Union, 3 April 1990), 18-90.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

admission cases, the school has exponentially grown with time, and currently with a population of over 300 pupils, distributed among early childhood development program and primary level.

### **Chebwai Seventh-day Adventist Dispensary**

Coming to the Western Kenya Conference region is the Chebwai Adventist Dispensary, one of the oldest health facilities in the North Kabras division of Kakamega County. This institution was founded under the philosophy of the Adventist Church to reach out to the world through medical ministry as one of the methods of propagating the gospel. The medical services from this dispensary are extended to the members of the local community. This facility has been instrumental in reducing the level of some common diseases in the area.

The conception of the idea of establishing this facility started back in 1966<sup>40</sup> under Pastor Fredrick Wangai.

After visiting the area in 1964, Eunice Wangai supported the initiation of the Dorcas Society. The following year, Pastor Wangai and his wife Eunice were posted to Chebwai and Mrs. Eunice Wangai went on with mobilizing the women. In the subsequent year, the thought of commencing the facility was considered.<sup>41</sup>

After a while, the proposal of choice of the area for the dispensary was done by Pastor Wangai even though he left towards the end of 1968 before the building took place due to the delayed funding. When the family of Pr. Wangai left, the project was picked up by the women of Chebwai district, the Dorcas Society who marshaled members to establish this health facility with the support of several elders coming

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<sup>40</sup> It was formerly the North-West Kenya Mission established in 1931, but which moved to Chebwai in 1935. It was incorporated into the Central Kenya Field (later conference). It became a part of the Western Kenya Conference and now it is part of the North-West Kenya Conference.

<sup>41</sup> Fred K. Wangai, Mission Director at Chebwai Mission Station, telephone interview by the author, Nairobi, July 3, 2019.

from as far as Shipala, Chegulo, Kimang’eti, Mutonyi, Lwandeti, and Chebwai (these areas were covered by the former Chebwai district).

### **Segero Dispensary**

The Dispensary is an Adventist health facility found within the Greater Rift Valley Conference in Western Kenya Union Conference.

The idea was hatched back in 1969 by some elders who learned about a sale of a farm that belonged to a settler farmer Cecil Hoey, and this happened during a camp meeting at Kapcheplanget in Ziwa, Northern part of Uasin Gishu County. The elders intended to acquire a piece of land to expand the mission of the church which was still new in the region by then. Since there was no health facility in the area, it was deemed prudent to begin with building a dispensary. The matter was presented to Pastor Jackson Maiyo, the then Nandi Station Director, who forwarded the request to the higher office of the Union, who in turn gave some funds to purchase the property.<sup>42</sup>

The Member of Parliament for Eldoret North, Hon. William Saina was approached by one of the Adventist elders to secure a place where they can construct a medical institution. Before long, Hon. William Saina gave consent and the Church secured the property and paid for it, inclusive of some available facilities. Some of the facilities were still in good condition and the Church leaders settled on one of the buildings that served as the first dispensary.

As mentioned earlier, the Kendu Mission Hospital was the main health and Dr. E.C. Kraft was the Medical Officer in charge. In 1973, when he arrived in Segero, he inspected the place for some time and confirmed the viability and establishment of a dispensary, though with objections from the local elders. Some elders had a feeling of establishing the dispensary around Kaigat, where Adventism began in the region, instead, a learning institution to be built at Segero. The idea of relocating the health facility to Kaigat flopped and a dispensary at Segero was built and began to publically

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<sup>42</sup> “Kenya Exchange Rate against USD, 1973, CEIC”, accessed 20 October 2023, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/kenya/exchange-rate-against-usd>.

operate in 1975 with Samuel Malel as the first nurse to be in-charge.<sup>43</sup> From there, several health officers have served in the facility and it has attracted the surrounding community, attending also to school emergencies.

## **Educational Institutions**

### **University of Eastern Africa, Baraton**

The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton is located in Nandi County, within Western Kenya Union Conference, and happens to be one of the oldest University owned by the Adventist Church in the African continent that offers various degrees in applied sciences, arts, and natural sciences<sup>44</sup> beginning with a handful numbers of students in September 1979<sup>45</sup> Before the opening of the institution, only three Adventist Church-owned seminaries were offering Bachelor's degree programs in religion and theology, and some were offering minors in other disciplines, these seminaries were, Solusi college, Bugema Adventist College, and Adventist Seminary of West Africa.<sup>46</sup>

**Background of the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton.** The coming and establishment of the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton was informed by the four consecutive years of civil war in the Middle East and thereafter The Afro-Mideast Division was formed and organized between 1970 and 1981<sup>47</sup> with the main aim of

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<sup>43</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1976 (SDA Yearbook 1976)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1976), 439.

<sup>44</sup> Neufeld, *SDAE*, 817-818.

<sup>45</sup> Huldah Ameyna, one of the very first students, interview by the author, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, 24 April 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Neufeld, *SDAE*, 257-258.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 44

serving the following unions; Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Middle East, and Tanzania. In the entire Division, The Middle East College in Beirut, was ranked at the top since it offered major degree courses.<sup>48</sup> as an affiliate of Loma Linda University in the United States of America. The establishment of the Afro-Mideast Division was successful in terms of numerical membership growth, and The East African Union grew exponentially in the subsequent years and managed over 65% of the Division's total membership. Because of such positive growth, The Afro-Mideast Division's executive committee took action in 1978 to begin this institution<sup>49</sup> after a remarkable numerical growth in the Division.

There was an indication of interest by Africans in furthering their studies but due to some factors a big number of members in Africa could not send their children for studies in Middle East College because of the distance and political warfare which prevailed in the Middle East by then and at the same time there was desperate need a University in East Africa, since there was a continuous membership growth across the Division. Because of the rising need to establish a University within the African continent, the leadership assigned two leaders to spearhead the process of establishing a learning institution with an aim of spreading good news.<sup>50</sup>

They were two leaders who were to represent East African Union and Ethiopian Union by the name D.K. Bazarra and Bekele Heye, and both served

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<sup>48</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1971 (SDA Yearbook 1971)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1971), 97-105.

<sup>49</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1980 (SDA Yearbook 1980)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1980), 411.

<sup>50</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1972 (SDA Yearbook 1972)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1972), 93.

as Afro-Mideast Division field secretaries, and union presidents concurrently until 1980.<sup>51</sup>

Following the extended period of wars in the Middle East from 1977 to 1978, it was deemed prudent to put in place a committee to navigate and locate a suitable place for the relocation of the Division College in adherence to the philosophical guidelines of the Adventist Church, and the mandate was given to D.K. Bazarra and the president of Middle East College, Pastor R.L. Koorenney.<sup>52</sup> The committee comprised of the following members,

Fredrick Wangai, secretary of the East African Union, Mutuku J. Mutinga, in-charge of Education. Other members were; Joseph Rono, Stephen Chesumet, William Murgor, and Jackson Maiyo. The war escalated and became unbearable towards the end of 1978 which necessitated the acceleration of the search for a conducive place for the Division College. In the course of the war, a security guard was killed which forced the leadership to shut down the college in Beirut and the transfer of the head office.<sup>53</sup>

The learners from foreign countries who were in Middle East College were taken to different Adventist educational institutions across the world.<sup>54</sup>

Locating the place for the College was an uphill task given the fact that the search committee, after several attempts in several places in different countries, for instance,

In Ethiopia, there was a lack of religious expression due to political instability, and as a result, foreign missionaries were barred from accessing the country. In Uganda, the then president Idi Amin Dadah became so cruel and eventually

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<sup>51</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1980 (SDA Yearbook 1980)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1980), 109.

<sup>52</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1978 (SDA Yearbook 1978)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1978), 369.

<sup>53</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1979 (SDA Yearbook 1979)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1979), 113.

<sup>54</sup> Beatrice Adegu and Lillian Arunga Kidenda, former students of Middle East College, telephone interview by the author, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, 13 April 2020.

banned several churches in Uganda at some point informed the removal of the Theological Seminary for East African Union in Bugema College to a youth campsite at Watamu, Malindi, in Kenya by the East African Union Administration. The search for appropriate location for the College continued with Kenya.<sup>55</sup>

The search for a suitable location for this institution was a process that a committee was put in place to orchestrate this initiative. The appointment with the then Kenyan President was made as Lohne confirms that,

Our purpose in seeking this unique appointment was twofold: to assure the president of the loyalty of Kenyan Adventists, according to Biblical Principles, and to express appreciation for religious freedom and for the president's attitude toward Seventh-day Adventist educational plans in Kenya. When he welcomed us, he commended Seventh-day Adventists for their significant contribution to Kenya in the field of education and health, as well as in spiritual matters. He said our church has demonstrated its concern for his people. On the matter of religious liberty, the president made a striking statement that will be appreciated by all who are concerned about religious human rights. He said, "Freedom of worship is not something the government can give to anybody, because freedom of worship is an inherent right for all human beings. What the government can do is create the necessary atmosphere of *peace* and stability in the country to enable the people to worship God. No human being can grant another human being the right of worship. Everyone already has this right...I follow the activities of the churches very closely," the president continued. He had visited Kendu Bay on Lake Victoria, where Adventists operate a hospital and a publishing house, and was impressed by the work there. He then offered the Baraton Estate to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a center for educational work, primarily in East Africa.<sup>56</sup>

The information about the search for the land by this committee reached the office of the president of Kenya and they were asked to check,

On a piece of a fertile land measuring three hundred and thirty nine acres in Nandi District, within the municipality of Kapsabet, approximately 50 kilometers from Eldoret town. This facility belonged to the Baraton Animal Husbandry Institute. Historically, around this place was Saltlick which attracted many people and their herds across the country. The place got the

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<sup>55</sup> David M. Makohe, Secretary of the North Tanzania Union Conference, personal communication to the author, April 9, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> Alf Lohne, "African Head of State welcomes Adventist College," *Review and Herald* 156 (3), 1979, 15, 16.

name *Baraa-to 'n*, which means ‘the place of many visitors’ in the Nandi language.<sup>57</sup>

The place seemed suitable for establishing a Veterinary Research Station and Training Institute by Kenya’s colonial government for the improvement of livestock among the Nandi. Being that this place had been abandoned for some time, the committee was impressed by the facility and decided to begin the process of establishing the University in that area. At the reception of the letter and approval by the Kenyan government on December 21, 1978, a decision was made and Middle East College was transferred to Baraton in Kenya, and it was given the name University College of Eastern Africa (UCEA) under the East African Union.<sup>58</sup>

### **Kamagambo Training School**

This remarkable institution is Christian-based under Adventist philosophy on matters of education. Kamagambo Adventist Schools and College is a premier educational institution in Kenya offering Christian education from the elementary to college level. It is a co-educational institution founded on the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education. Kamagambo is bordering Kisii and Migori. This campus accommodates other several institutions like a Ministerial Training College, a primary school, a high school, and a teachers’ Training College.

The historical record has it that, Arthur Carscallen with Ludwig R. Conradi, a German missionary and evangelist, together endeavored to look for a new site for the mission in 1908, a journey that eventually landed them in a place called Kamagambo. They were so excited and enamored by what met their eyes as Carscallen exclaimed,

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<sup>57</sup> Godfrey K. Sang and Lois W. Ngenye, *Baraton @40: The Story of a Great University* (Nairobi: Gapman Publications Ltd., 2018), 47.

<sup>58</sup> Mutuku J. Mutinga, former Vice Chancellor, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, interview by author, Nairobi, 7 April 2020.

“This is the country!” as both of them felt persuaded in their hearts that God has directed them to that place.<sup>59</sup>

The place was a battleground between some two communities in ancient times and probably a no-man’s land, lying on the boundary between the Kisii and Luo. There was rapid development regarding new mission stations during the five subsequent years namely Wire Hill, Rusinga Island, Karungu, Kanyadoto, and Kisii. In 1913 Carscallen engaged the colonial administration in a negotiation over the land where Kamagambo is seated. There was an indication from the administration side of the willingness to issue out the land to them on the condition that that area would be tranquil. After a short time the construction of new buildings was done by Carscallen and upon their completion, the mission headquarters was transferred from Gendia Mission Station to Kamagambo Mission Station. The first World War of 1914 was looming with the expectation of huge damages. The German troops from Tanganyika (Tanzania) shortly high-jacked Kisii town dwellers and compelled them to join the ferocious war by the British Armies. Unfortunately, the neighbours plotted to attack and loot the mission station, a plan of which Carscallen was informed about, in haste made an urgent plan on how to rescue his family and bring them over to Gendia.

When the British powers came to know that it was the European Division that was managing the Adventist missions, they apprehended Carscallen and imprisoned on the allegation that he was a German sympathizer. All European Missionaries together with Carscallen were taken to Kaimosi for internship for around two years, and this stagnated the Missionary activities in Kamagambo and other Mission stations. Despite the cessation of hostilities in the region the British leadership was

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<sup>59</sup> Virgil E. Robinson, “Arthur Carscallen and Ludwig R. Conradi,” *The Southern Africa Division Outlook*, December 1955, 4.

skeptical about returning the Seventh-day Adventist Missionaries to South Nyanza. One of the interns in Kaimosi, B.L. Morse, made an appeal to the Commander-in-chief, who later ordered the release of the Adventist missionaries.<sup>60</sup>

Carscallen ascertained that evangelistic activities had stalled during the internship of missionaries in Kaimosi. During this period, the African missionaries took charge. For instance, Peter Oyier was in charge of Kamagambo.<sup>61</sup> Carscallen was convinced that it was imperative to equip African missionaries with sufficient skills and knowledge to perform evangelistic activities of the church through training. Towards the end of 1916, he began the training by bringing all African workers to Kamagambo, and thus the genesis of the institution. Due to the prevailing war in the region, it was not easy for the institution to get funds from Europe and this affected the progress of this new institution, however, amid all these challenges, the school continued and some six souls were ready for baptism in Kamagambo by the end of the war in 1918.

On his return from Europe, Carscallen was relieved by W.T. Bartlett when he came in the month of July, 1920 together with Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell, who were sent to Kamagambo tirelessly served during their tenure and succeeded in the expansion of education programs in Kamagambo. The following year E. Roy Warland, who was briefly stationed at Kanyadoto was now put in charge of Kamagambo School.<sup>62</sup>

In the same year, a new team of missionaries landed in the country, together with them was Ms. Grace A. Clarke, a Bible instructor, who started a girls school in Wire Hill. After a long time of struggle, she eventually won the confidence of the locals and they allowed their girls to join the school.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Neufeld, *SDAE*, s.v. "Mater, Alfred."

<sup>61</sup> Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> Neufeld, *SDAE*, s.v. "Kamagambo."

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

The main objective of commencing this facility was to promote a kind of education that would be useful for the church workers as they serve in various departments and perform various activities which are denominationally based. The school was to be unique and different from other secular schools, to fulfill its purpose and mission, without which there would be no difference from other Government schools offering secular education.

After seven years, that is, in 1928 E.R. Warland, the Principal, convinced the British authorities in the country to issue him with a permit to manage Teachers Training College, which he was granted. At some point, there was a need to have a technical instructor and Mr. Warland made a written request on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1928 to the Director of Education as follows,

Our Mission board at home has asked me to get full information about the conditions under which the government would be willing to pay the salary, or a portion thereof of a European technical instructor for the training school here. We have carpentry in mind in particular at present. ...let me know what qualifications are required both in the man and in the institution...we are very desirous that we should develop this branch of our work here.<sup>64</sup>

The principal, Mr. Warland got the response letter from the Director of Education, Nairobi as follows,

On 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1928.

No. 628/15.

To Warland.

We have no standards qualification for technical instructors – they are not quite definite at present, even in England...we obtain men of varied experience and attainments, but, chiefly we require men who have had a proper full apprenticeship to the particular trade they are asked to teach, some experience in it, and enough general education to ensure the ability to learn the vernacular (or Swahili). It is an advantage if a man also has some kind of teaching diploma.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> E.R. Warland to Director of Education, Nairobi, 22 October 1928, Kenya National Archives (MAA -2/5/171 II), Nairobi.

<sup>65</sup> Director of Education to E. R. Warland, 29 October 1928, Letter 628/15, Kenya National Archives (MAA-2/5/171 II), Nairobi.

Kamagambo was now offering a course of two years for students who had finished high school and it was reported that the College had graduated some teachers and more were in class by the year 1929. The only structures in the school were three with three training tutors.<sup>66</sup> This institution, as one of the seven, and the only one in Africa, was financed directly from the Northern European Division, was also applauded by the British authorities for its quality.<sup>67</sup>

During that period, the first priority was to send teachers to mission institutions throughout the country, and for this reason the Adventist Church sponsored schools were known for quality performance in education and in producing highly qualified teachers.

In the year 1933, a fresh and qualified trained teacher called Silvano Achia, from Kamagambo, was sent to Nandi, in Kaigat School. The hostility in the area could not allow him to stay in that area for long since the majority of the locals were opposed to Adventism. His performance in the school convinced the people in that area and he continued teaching in Kaigat for a while.<sup>68</sup>

Since the start of the institution in 1928, it has produced a big number of quality teachers who have undergone thorough training. The majority of them have served in Adventist institutions and some more have been employed and serving government schools. The institution is to integrate Adventist principles and values into the curriculum. This facility had three colleges within its premises namely; Pre-School level Training for Teachers interested in Early Childhood Development Education, Primary level Teachers, for Primary Teacher Education, Secondary level

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<sup>66</sup> Northern European Division of Seventh-day Adventists "Report of the Educational Institutions for the Year 1929," (St. Albans, Herts AL1 3EY, England: Northern European Division, 1 May 1930), 5.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow*, 50.

Teachers, for Diploma in Teacher Education. In the mid-1990s this facility was used by The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton as an extension Campus, but officially in 2008, offering a Bachelor's Degree in Education (primary option). This development was a significant milestone with an indication of the potential to offer a university degree shortly. The College was also offering Post-Graduate Diploma in Education.

After the establishment of the college, there need for Pastoral training arose, given the fact that there were quite several African evangelists already in place. An institute of African Evangelists was organized by Warland in 1929 and that is how The Pastoral Training College in Kamagambo was started. The meeting was productive and plans were put in place in 1930 to organize another institute to be attended by all the evangelists serving among the Kisii people. The institute was offering short courses suitable to the evangelists who were already deployed and serving in the field by then. The College was progressing so well in the subsequent years with significant growth in terms of students and this informed the decision for the college to go full time.

It was a requirement by the then government that before any school or college perform any activity or do any development in the compound they had to inform the related department in writing, for instance, when the Kamagambo Training School management wanted to develop the school in 1933 when it was experiencing growth, the school principal wrote a letter to Mr. H. O. Weller, Director of Education, Nairobi, saying,

.... letter dated 9/6/1933, Ref: BUILDING AT KAMAGAMBO, requesting for three things;

- i) To increase the size of the proposed playing field by cutting out the small tree plantation.
- ii) To situate the proposed bath-house near the girls' Dormitories, and drain in our own land.

- iii) To place the latrines for the married men's compound within the new 10 acres.<sup>69</sup>

This request was granted by the Education Director as follows,

“Sir, Concerning your letter, No. ED/D. E.8.6A of the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1933. I have the honor to inform you that the proposals contained therein are approved.”<sup>70</sup>

When the missionaries realized the potential that the institution had and the shortage of personnel, they emphatically reported that the upbuilding of the work in the union could be sabotaged by the deficiency in the schools. The deficiency had negative effects both on potential students and pupils who would be looking forward to joining the training school upon the completion of their elementary education. There was the hope of having at least two years' training course, which was realized sometime later on. To uphold the Adventist principles and teachings, our schools must be under the management of our Adventist teachers.

The main objective for which the church exists is evangelism, the lack of facilities for training evangelists was the greatest deficiency with a probability of jeopardizing the mission to the unreached group. The engagement of local evangelists has more weight and impact in accomplishing this work unlike if it were left to foreign workers. At the moment, there are thousands of pastors and lay preachers outside there who went through Kamagambo Pastoral Training College and they are serving in several parts of East Africa and beyond. Certificates and Diplomas in Pastoral training are being offered in Kamagambo. Most Diploma holders who had graduated would proceed to the newly opened University of Eastern Africa, Baraton to upgrade to degree level.

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<sup>69</sup> E.R. Warland to Mr. H. O. Weller, 9 June 1933, Letter AV/12/260, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

## **Publishing**

The mission of the church demands propagation of the gospel to all corners of the world and as such, the publishing institutions of the church ought to be seen by the world as a wholesome bearer of the principles upheld by the church. If the purpose of God for these publishing institutions is fulfilled, then Christ remains at the centre, directing every work in them.<sup>71</sup> The purpose for which this publishing ministry was established must be jealously safeguarded, because of its specific purpose in the propagation of the work of the church, setting it apart as the most effective of the ministerial agencies.<sup>72</sup> This work is to be done by all God's people to broadcast His truth as it is given by God as a compliment to the other agencies that work towards the spread of the truth in all parts of the world, as stated by White.<sup>73</sup> It remains a powerful tool that moves the hearts and minds of people. The worldly people use the press and any available chance to get harmful publications before the people. This poses a crucial question to God's people to be more earnest in getting publications of an elevating and saving character before the people when men who are influenced by the spirit of Satan are busy circulating corrupt books, tracts, and papers.

Translating the Bible into the local mother tongue was a milestone and even in Kenya Colony every station but one operates in more than one language, not reckoning the Ki-Swahali. The opening of this press was a gift to Africans, for it made it possible for the natives to appreciate the word of God in their tongues. For instance, at the Greater Rift Valley Conference, there was no songbook in the local

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<sup>71</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Publishing Ministry* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), 40.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

native language until 2015 when the leadership selected a team to work on coming up with an Adventist Kalenjin hymn book entitled “*Tienwogikab Kristo*.” This team included

Helen Tum, chief translator, assisted by Pr. Paul Chepkuony, Pr. John Kemboi, Pr. Paul Mutai, Pr. Eliud Ruto, Pr. Daniel RonoPr. John Ruto, Pr. Vincent Rono, Elder David Korir, Paul Keino, and James Ruto. The writing of music notation was done by Naftali Korir. The principal books they used included; Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, Nyimbo Za Kristo, Adventist Hymnal, Revision Songs of Praise, Church Hymnal, Tienwogikab Kalenjin, Nandi Songbook, Wende Nyasaye, Salmer og Sanger, Barne Sangboka, and Redemption Songs.<sup>74</sup>

It is encouraging to observe even after several decades, we can remember the amicable cooperation between these foreign evangelists and the Kenyan people that informed the understanding of the word of God in local languages.

### **Influence of Seventh-day Adventism on Western Kenyan Society**

#### **Adventist Missionary Volunteer Society in Kenya**

The Kenyan government restricted Adventist activities in Nandi between 1932 and 1963, and there were no Adventist schools in the area, so the Missionary Volunteer Societies could be used by the Adventists to fulfill the mission of the church. There was an indication of the need to introduce the Missionary Volunteer Societies in Kenya, and the East African Union Committee that sat on February 28, 1932, took an action and voted the establishment of these two societies (MV and JMV) in Kenya.<sup>75</sup> The leadership encouraged every church to involve the youth aged

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<sup>74</sup> Eliud Ruto, District Pastor, Greater Rift Valley Conference, interview with the writer, 24 February, 2022.

<sup>75</sup> East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes on Adventist Missionary Volunteer Society,” (Nakuru, Kenya: East African Union, 28 February 1932), 17.

below 25 years in MV and JMV. These programs commenced immediately in Nandi and they comprised literacy classes and other practical skills available.

The Kenya Union Mission Superintendent, Spencer Maxwell, by 1938, reported some seventy four Missionary Volunteer Societies in the country with one thousand Eight hundred members, mentioning the numerous contributions to numerical growth by several missionary activities.<sup>76</sup> He confirmed that more than Eight thousand members have joined the church in a quarter. Each MV Society had its motto in its mother tongue. Spencer Maxwell gave a report on various activities done by these young people including Bible studies and charity activities that culminated in winning some souls to the Adventist church.<sup>77</sup>

These two societies became so active in the Nandi region as a result of the exemplary commitment and dedication of Metto Jackson, one of the pioneers of this society, who later on became the senior leader of the society covering the current three counties; Trans-Nzoia, Uasin-Gishu, and Nandi. There was a significant growth of MV Societies in the Nandi territory that required more leaders in place. Along with him were several young people including Daniel Birir, Joseph Arap Nabei, who became a powerful preacher. As a big team of young evangelists, they involved in several evangelistic efforts conducted by the youth and many other missionary activities.<sup>78</sup>

Pastor Jackson Maiyo began his leadership in 1961, and during his tenure, he endeavored to organize young people under these two categories, which are JMV and

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<sup>76</sup> Maxwell S. G., 6.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow*, 152-162.

MV. After a short period, MV Societies were introduced in all new churches in all the four counties; Elgeyo- Marakwet, Nandi, Trans-Nzoia, and Uasin-Gishu. In each church entity across these four counties, evangelists were dispatched to take care of the available members.<sup>79</sup>

Beyond Nandi MV and JMV programs spread to new areas in the Uasin-Gishu region. New leaders were put in place to spearhead and establish these programs in their respective areas of service, Elijah Lagat came to Tarakwa, in Uasin Gishu, the other twelve served in different places.

The activities that were organized by MV and JMV societies were very important in planting the Adventist values to the young people in the Church. Before the introduction of MV and JMV, these young people were attending public institutions managed by other churches and for this reason they got frustrated the more, especially on Sabbath observance. These two societies served to fill what these young people could not find in their formal education.

The first evangelistic campaign by the MV Society from Nandi was conducted in 1959 at a place called Chepnego, and 10 people were converted to Christ. After four years another evangelistic campaign by the youth at Kapkerer brought 14 new members to the Adventist Church. The zeal for evangelism that the young people demonstrated prompted the Central Kenya Field leadership to organize for public evangelism training which was done in 1968, to equip the young people with adequate skills in public preaching. This marked the beginning of youth evangelistic efforts famously known as *Mashambulio*,<sup>80</sup>

### **Adventist Development and Relief Agency**

The Adventist Church has created several means through which it can fulfill its mission mandate in the entire globe. It can be attested that the current members of

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of A Sparrow*, 162.

this church got converted and joined the denomination through diverse methods, some through camp meetings, some through evangelistic campaigns, some through associations, some were born within the Church, and some through charity activities. Adventist Development and Relief Agency is a foundation that deals with charity activities and donations and has been one of the key arms by which the church has reached out to many people in and out of the church. Coming to Western Kenya, it is confirmed that

The ADRA Polska Foundation directed its development action to the poorest region of the country – Western Kenya. It is here that 18% of children are orphans, and another 15% live under the care of only one parent. We are trying to change the fate of these children by creating decent living conditions for them.<sup>81</sup>

Even though the ADRA foundation has branches in several countries, the objective remains the same, to alleviate human pain and offer humanitarian services among others. The foundation engages volunteers to participate in helping and educating people and equipping them with sufficient knowledge and skills on moral and healthful living. The few who had attained these experiences would be found in our health facilities assisting patients suffering from different ailments. ADRA foundation is founded based on Jesus' statement "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me."(Matthew. 25: 35, 36). The activities of the ADRA foundation in Western Kenyan society are numerous with remarkable impacts. Engaging in charity activities, education assistance, and paying hospital bills for financially unstable community members cannot go unnoticed in this region.

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<sup>81</sup> The ADRA Polska Foundation, "Help for Children in Kenya," accessed 28 January 2024, <https://www.adra.pl/en/adoption/help-for-orphaned-children-in-kenya>.

## **Adventist Lay Persons Services and Industries**

This is an entity managed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church members, with a passion for sharing Jesus Christ with people who are engaged in diverse employments. It is in the interest of God that, Church leaders should create methods by which all members of the Church will play a role by ministering to their neighbors and friends.

In Kenya, the ministry commenced in 2002 after the former president of the Central Kenya Conference, Pr. John Macharia, who was motivated after attending a session at the General Conference in the year 2000. He developed an interest after reports were given about how lay church members were supporting the church mission voluntarily out of their bounties. He received information about big numbers who were enlightened about knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and the many members who got baptized through their ministry.

Members like Fitz Henry, a lay person, who was both an engineer and an established businessman, dedicated three months annually to engage in missionary activities worldwide. During the General Conference session, it was recognized that he had led over 53,000 individuals to Christ, thereby becoming new church members.<sup>82</sup>

After these thrilling reports, Pr. Macharia felt challenged and decided to bring it back to his union and conference for application and implementation. Pastor Macharia, after his election as Central Kenya Conference President struggled with this burden in his heart for more than one year before he shared it with the professional Adventist lay members.

The church made remarkable strides as soon as the ASI ministry was introduced in the western part of Kenya when Pr. Francis Njoroge was the leader,

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<sup>82</sup> Iris Henry, "Harrington Fitz Henry: Dialogue with an Engineer Evangelist in Jamaica," *Dialogue* 10, no. 1 (1998), 23.

These lay members, empowered by the Lord, played a crucial role in the resolution of a longstanding dispute between certain church members at Kapsokwony Mission Station near Mount Elgon and the leadership of the Western Kenya Field and East Kenya Union Conference. This conflict had the potential to divide the church, leading to a sense of despair among the leadership due to the hostility developed by the members towards them.<sup>83</sup>

The ASI ministry in the Western Kenya region has also contributed towards boosting faithfulness and commitment in returning faithful tithes and giving offerings to God, in other words, the ASI active members are instrumental in supporting pastoral ministry. Concerning recruitment to the ministry, one has to be an active and consistent member that tithes and gives offerings faithfully and the member should not be an employee of the church. Some of the achievements of the ASI ministry in this region include but are not limited to; involvement in evangelism, financial support of Global Mission Pioneers, construction of churches, encouragement of stewardship, education on income-generating activities, engagement in and backing of ‘Total Member Involvement’ (TMI) on both local and global stages

### **Conclusion**

Considering the humble beginnings of Adventism in Western Kenya, reflecting on the infancy stages with scanty leadership structures in the early 1900s, and few dedicated men of God, it is quite fulfilling to see the fruits of the visionary founders of the Adventist Church in our time. The numerous and remarkable developments in the Adventist Church in this region including leadership structure, numerical growth, church institutions, and other evangelistic entities have profusely contributed toward fulfilling the mission of the Church with tangible shreds of evidence in the Western Kenya region.

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<sup>83</sup> Sang and Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow*, 249.

## CHAPTER 5

### IDENTITY STRUGGLES OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN WESTERN KENYA AND MULTIPLE CHALLENGES

This chapter will deal with contemporary challenges that go back to the pioneers' period, and for that reason, it has no historical period. The Seventh-day Adventist Church encountered a series of challenges in Western Kenya as the pioneers struggled to identify themselves with the people of this region since these people were inclined to African traditions like ancestor veneration, witchcraft, sorcery, and rites of passage among many other practices, which made it difficult for them to embrace a new religion whose intention is to divert their allegiance. This chapter will also attempt to briefly mention the struggles the missionaries encountered against other pertinent issues touching on Cultural realities such as; polygamy, wife inheritance, spiritualism, interpretation of E.G. White's writings, politics and bullying in leadership, responses to these crises, and the potential prospects of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Western Kenya.

#### **Examining the Crises**

It was an uphill task for Seventh-day Adventism to be accommodated because it was perceived as a strange movement with strange teachings that were capable of interfering with the people's normal way of life and others embraced inclinations in this territory. This chapter will attempt to briefly examine a few crises that the Adventism pioneers encountered in Western Kenya.

## **Crisis Linked to African Traditions and Religion**

The coming of Adventism to Western Kenya and its teachings encountered several antagonistic views as the pioneers attempted to penetrate the region with the Adventist message. The practice of African Traditional Religion was rampant on the land and affiliation to it was so strong that it could not be easily broken by the teachings of the missionaries. I will mention and define a few in this section:

**Ancestor veneration.** This is the practice of honoring the deceased (called the living dead). It stems from the belief of the dead being alive in the spirit world and performing the role of intercessors, protectors, and facilitators between those who are living and the spirit world. Ancestors are believed to visit their families and share meals with them from time to time.<sup>1</sup>

**Witchcraft and evil magic.** Witchcraft can be defined as:

A manifestation of mystical forces that may be inborn in a person, inherited, or acquired in various ways. For some people, it is said to function without their being aware of it, or having control over it. More often, however, the two forces are believed to be a unit and work evil regardless of the bearer's awareness or intention.<sup>2</sup>

**Sorcery.** Sorcery in general:

Occurs as either spells, poisoning or any other form of physical injury that is done in secret by one to another or another's property (plants or animals). Witches, evil magicians and sorcerers are the most hated and often feared individuals in their communities for the reasonable fear of being bewitched by them.<sup>3</sup>

**Traditional healing.** Traditional healers are

Persons who have a store of knowledge and practices that have been passed on from one generation to another either orally or in writing. This traditional knowledge, based on experiences and observations, is used to diagnose, prevent, or eliminate a physical, mental, or social disease. The traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Kwabena Donkor, *The Church, Culture, and Spirits*, 232.

<sup>2</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 166, 167.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

healer draws on materials from nature and the sociological environment, as well as metaphysical forces.<sup>4</sup>

**Rites of passage.** In the African worldview, there are different stages of life.

Rites of passage are rituals and ceremonies performed to mark and empower these stages of growth and development. These rites begin at birth and continue even after death. The final stage of this process is the living dead existence. The traditional stages of life are birth, puberty, marriage, death, and the afterlife.<sup>5</sup>

**Diviners.** They normally also work as medicine men.

They can be either men or women. They deal with identifying the root cause of problems, whether it is the person or forces that cause things to happen. They also provide solutions for the troubles identified.<sup>6</sup>

**Mediums.**

They act as links between the physical and spiritual world (often women). They are also related to the diviners. They initiate connections to the spiritual world by ritual dancing, drumming and singing meant to possess the physical person. During this process, they are able to communicate with the spiritual realm.<sup>7</sup>

**Seers.**

They are said to have natural power through which they 'see' certain things hidden from ordinary people. They are also deemed to have a powerful capacity for foresight and insight into things. They receive visions and dreams about occurrences and are able to use their intuitions.<sup>8</sup>

As mentioned before, the coming of Adventism was preceded by other Christian denominations, and seemingly they condoned the traditional practices in this region, so when Adventist missionaries came, they were perceived as interferers of the traditional norm. One major challenge that made it hard for the white missionaries

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<sup>4</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 236.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 159.

to penetrate through was that even the few members who joined the Adventism came from devoted families to traditional religious systems which the white missionaries combatted.<sup>9</sup> The observation of the tenets of the newly found faith were at a slow speed and were not readily accepted, the few who had embraced it were not ready to let go of their traditions as asserted by Benjamin when he opines that when Africans accepted Christianity, they soon woke up and found themselves within the strands of Christianity and African traditions.<sup>10</sup>

I perceive that the missionaries did not spend enough time in laying a strong foundation for their mission considering that the main goal of the Church is to share Christ, and to get people to receive His healing and freedom from the wounds and slavery of Satan<sup>11</sup> and this calls for intentional strategies on getting to the bottom of the traditional background of the prospects before attempting to convert them to the new religion as confirmed that the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries, foreign or indigenous, failed and are still failing to recognize that religion is integral in the culture of which it forms a part.<sup>12</sup> The missionaries, as contended by Alalade, refused and are still refusing to take cognizance of the rich cultural heritage of non-western societies taking instead cultures as the norm of a good life and sound Christianity.<sup>13</sup> It

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<sup>9</sup> Gabriel Masfa, *African Adventism (Unpublished work)*, 142.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin C. Ray. *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Njagi Mbui, *Making Discipleship Simple* (Grantham, Lincolnshire: Autumn House Publications, Europe, 2018), 115.

<sup>12</sup> Nwaomah, Osei-Bonsu, and Onongha, *Music and Worship in Africa, Adventists' Dialogue from Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University, 2014), 105.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

is an irrefutable truth that ATR is part and parcel of the African lifestyle and to uproot it is a process that requires tact and deep understanding because,

It has been observed that far too many African Christians accept Christianity without abandoning their traditional values and ideas. They publicly detach themselves from traditional rituals and practices but maintain tacitly the values and ideas of these traditions as part of their Christian experience and, thus, stand between two opposing opinions.<sup>14</sup>

Mbiti confirms that even people accept conversion to a religion such as Christianity or Islam, they hardly ever fully let go of their traditional religions instantly.<sup>15</sup> In as much as the white missionaries perceived African religion as backward and archaic, the tendency to stigmatize everything African as primitive, evil, and idolatrous has been condemned by many African critics.<sup>16</sup> According to the assertion of B. J. van der Walt, Mathema upholds that their message did not produce fully baked Christians who would once and for all disassociate themselves from their African heritage.<sup>17</sup>

The missionaries did not manage to explain in detail to the Africans the difference that would be wrought by the new religion in case they relinquished their old traditional beliefs, and because of this gap, there was minimal detachment from African traditions by the new converts as Mathema argues that in order to be converted to a different system, one must cut off all connections that may seem to make life meaningful and complete. A fact that ought to be considered while

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<sup>14</sup> Kwabena Donkor, *The Church, Culture and Spirits*, 149.

<sup>15</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Bolaji Idowu Olodumare, *God in African Belief* (N.P.: Tom Mboya, Freedom and After) (London, UK: Andre Duetsch: 1963), 20.

<sup>17</sup> Zaccheaus Mathema, "The African Worldview: a serious challenge to Christian Discipleship," (Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, 2007), 7.

evangelizing traditional Africans.<sup>18</sup> The missionaries approached ATR with a skeptical mind without studying the African mind, which eventually made contextualization of their message difficult as Donkor rightly says that, doctrinally, some traditional African values and beliefs continued to be held by the African converts.<sup>19</sup> One of the main causes of this crisis was the lack of appropriate approaches and evangelistic methodologies in dealing with coherent issues such as cultural and traditional, as Knowles illustrates that one cannot fill a cup that is already full. To attempt to impart truth to one whose mind is filled with error may cause hostility in him and bring frustration to you.<sup>20</sup>

In regards to culture, it has been described as the social heritage people receive and transmit. It includes speech, education, tradition, myth, science art, philosophy, government law, rite, beliefs, inventions, and technologies.<sup>21</sup> The assumption that Africans would consume anything Western yielded very little with many challenges. It is imperative to note that we also must learn to adjust to the condition of the people in order to meet men where they are.<sup>22</sup> For lack of these considerations by the pioneer missionaries, the majority of the converts, being not well grounded in the newly adapted faith, and at the same time not ready to relinquish the old traditional practices, Donkor claims that failure to make a radical shift from the status quo to a new beginning in Jesus Christ leads the African Christian to accept substitutes for God.

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<sup>18</sup> Mathema, "The African Worldview: a serious challenge to Christian Discipleship," 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>20</sup> George E. Knowles, *How to Help Your Church Grow* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Graphics, Maryland, USA), 66.

<sup>21</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), 32.

<sup>22</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, USA, 2002), 484.

Such members are placed in a position of vulnerability.<sup>23</sup> The total eradication of African traditional beliefs among the professed Christians including Adventists in Western Kenya is almost impossible as Mbiti maintains that it is probable that as long as African rural life continues, we can expect African religion to survive there, therefore, much African Religion will continue to be found among these people whose life is still tied to the land and traditional culture.<sup>24</sup> There is an evidential precarious position of Adventism and even Christianity in general in Western Kenya given that there is a thin distinctive line between Christianity and African Religion among the adherents because of the unconflicting features of both African religion and Christianity.<sup>25</sup>

### **Crisis Linked to Other African Cultural Realities and the Adventist Faith**

Adventism in Western Kenya has experienced exponential growth since its introduction in the early nineties as enumerated in the numerical growth section of this work. Over one hundred years of Adventism's existence, statistically it is tempting to celebrate the membership expansion and other several Church administrative and missionary achievements in the region, however, it lacks the original apostolic foundation, the expected firmness and uncompromising spiritual integrity of its adherents since it is being confronted and continuously battling with several pertinent issues that pose an identity crisis threat.

The fact that the Western Adventist missionaries spearheaded the Adventist message in this territory, it is worth noting that their message was like a new patch on

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<sup>23</sup> Donkor, *The Church, Culture, and Spirits*, 149.

<sup>24</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 191.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

an old garment (culture and traditions). White and local missionaries, converts and non-converts to any religion, are all products of a particular culture, which of course embedded within the fabric of our beings. The white missionaries, seemingly undermined or ignored the magnitude, impact, and power of the African culture, hoping that the Western culture was superior and the new converts would automatically adapt to it and abandon their mundane and inferior one (according to the whites). There is an apparent conundrum between cultures and a clear demonstration of propensity to ATRs by quite several Seventh-day Adventists, and this makes the Seventh-day Adventist Church identity a crisis indeed.

This section briefly highlights a few of the pertinent issues that are currently rocking the church and equally threatening its identity but not limited to the following: polygamy, wife inheritance, spiritualism, interpretation and place of Ellen White's writings, Church Politics, and Bullying. These challenges can be attributed to the missionaries who endeavoured to create a 'Christian mentality' from the Western culture and concept of otherness rather than use of substitution.<sup>26</sup> This kind of mentality, accompanied by extrapolation elements and assumptions, has proved its limitations in producing an unwavering and non-compromising generation of Christianity as can be seen today. In the subsequent section, I will briefly highlight each of these cultural issues and their impact on the Adventist faith in Western Kenya.

**Polygamy.** This is the practice of having more than one wife or husband at the same time.<sup>27</sup> Polygamy is still one of the poignant issues in an African setting with its far-reaching effects on the professed Adventists in this region. This can be traced as

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<sup>26</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism: (Unpublished work)*, 158.

<sup>27</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. "polygamy" accessed March 2024. <https://www.google.com/search?q=polygamy+meaning+in+oxford+english+dictionary&client>

far as the coming of the first Adventist missionaries, who eventually never knew that an oversight on cultural issues might produce spiritually immature Church members. Picking on one of the major tribes in Western Kenya, the Luos, in whose territory Adventism began before it was propagated to other parts of the country, preferred to marry more than one wife, to them, having more than one wife did not indicate that there was lack of love<sup>28</sup> but seemingly a prestige and status in the society, not only for men but also for women as Ogot asserts.<sup>29</sup>

The loneliness of the widower, especially with the responsibility of taking care of children necessitated the enactment of this requirement in the Luo culture with great concern as Henry Ogot alludes that among the Luo Abasuba it was believed that in the instance of the death of a wife in a monogamous marriage, the husband would not have a helper to take care of the family.<sup>30</sup>

Coming to Logoli, another large tribe in Western Kenya, almost similar to the Luo Abasuba marriage was a fundamental concern to more people than just the potential spouses. Polygamous marriage was the major preference among this tribe and other Abaluhya sub-groups.<sup>31</sup> Polygamy was esteemed and associated with fame and respect in this community because

Having multiple wives was held as a sign of a man's establishment. Established wives approved their husband's taking of additional wives as a mechanism of minimizing their chances of getting venereal diseases because polygynous men tended to confine their sexual activities to the home.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Henry Okello Ogot, *A History of the Luo Abasuba of Western Kenya, From AD 1760 – 1940* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), 177.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>31</sup> Edwins Laban Moogi Gwako, "Polygamy among the Logoli of Western Kenya," *Anthropos Nairobi* (1998): 93: 334.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

**Wife inheritance.** This is an aspect of generational continuity that some Africans uphold so much. In this regard, it is believed that the widow who is still in childbearing age should be remarried or inherited by the late husband's brother and contrary to this would mark the end of that generation. In Luo, when a marriage has been made complete through childbirth, there is no room for the breaking of that marriage and even in the case of the death of the wife, it is imperative to replace her with the sister.<sup>33</sup> The reason is to continue the generation of her sister and at the same time this continuity should be done within the two families, that is, the late wife's family and the widower.

Evans Pritchard, referring to Luos of Western Kenya, adds that on the other side of the sororate practice, is the levirate whereby when the husband dies, one of the brothers takes up his role with the wife.<sup>34</sup> In some instances the widow could be at liberty to choose and live with even a distant relative of the late spouse. In Luo traditional beliefs, more especially about the dead, there is a notion that the dead are capable of causing trouble to the family through their ghost, so as wife inheritance is concerned it is customary to get a jamwa, (Bantu), a jadak, (a person outside the clan), to sleep with the widow before the brother does so, in case the husband's ghost is troublesome. The trouble will then fall on the Bantu or stranger.<sup>35</sup>

Turning to Nandi, another major tribe in the region, G. W. B. Huntingford contends that no Nandi man will marry the widow of a Nandi because death does not dissolve a marriage and a Nandi woman may have only one husband, she is still the

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<sup>33</sup> E. E. Evans Pritchard, "Marriage Customs of the Luo of Kenya, Africa," *International African Institute*, vl. 20 (1950): 132.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

dead man's wife, and any children she may have after his death are counted as his.<sup>36</sup>

According to Nandi, a widow can find a husband only if he is a foreigner – i.e. one who is not a Nandi, such as Masai or Luhya (Kavironondo) will marry her. Strictly speaking, a widow is not inherited.<sup>37</sup> Compared to other tribes in Western Kenya, the Nandi is quite, especially on the freedom given to the widow that

She may choose to live with her husband's brother, or if he had more than one, with both or all of them in turn; these men she calls *pamuru*, (brothers-in-law) and they call her *pamuru* (sister-in-law). They cohabit with her and any children she may have by them are counted as her husband's. No inheritance fee is paid to anyone by her husband's brother or whoever shelters her and sleeps with her. She may go back to her parents if they are alive, or she may live with her children if she has any old enough to support her.<sup>38</sup>

According to the Maragoli, one of the Luhya sub-tribes believes that widow inheritance must be preceded by a series of rituals as Edwins Laban confirms. He asserts that, as a matter of general practice, the choice of the heir to the wife is made during a hair-shaving ceremony. The widow is however, never forced to accept the person chosen.<sup>39</sup>

The widow would be granted some privilege to express her demands and wishes from the inheritor and also room for her to select a different man from another clan necessitating a bridewealth refund by the husband.<sup>40</sup> The other area that required some rituals was sexual intercourse with the widow who is yet to be inherited as follows, whereby sexual continence was required to exist for two to three months

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<sup>36</sup> G. W. B. Huntingford, *Nandi Kinship and Clans*, Nairobi, Kenya, (1972):vol.67. 771-821.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Edwins, *Widow Inheritance*, 180.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

from the death date of the husband.<sup>41</sup> The widow was perceived by the community as unclean and to be avoided by people, for they believed that any interaction with such women could cause some misfortune so the widow would live in seclusion and was not to pay visits to homesteads or enter other people's huts. After several months, a feast called 'kong tho' (beer of death) was organized to mark the end of this state of ritual impurity.<sup>42</sup>

**Spiritualism.** In African Traditional Religion it is believed that death is not the end of life but a transition to another level or status of life. This kind of belief emanates from the oldest lie "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4 NKJV). This was the opposite of God's instruction "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). This old lie has spread its roots and has diversified according to different cultural and traditional beliefs in the African continent. Lester Sumrall claims that if we swallow that lie, we are simply proving how clever he is (the devil) and how unbelievably naïve we human beings can be.<sup>43</sup> Commenting on the state of the dead, Ronald Hamilton Kanjira argues that the devil employs a lot of deceit, craft, and trickery to show that the dead can speak with the living.<sup>44</sup> I uphold a statement by Simbarashe Musvosvi on African funerary rituals when he confirms that while African philosophy may not have specific prepositions that clearly articulate that the soul is immortal,

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<sup>41</sup> Edwins, *Widow Inheritance*, 180.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Lester Sumrall, *Demons, The Answer Book* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1993), 28.

<sup>44</sup> Sampson M. Nwaomah, Eriks Galenieks, and Davidson Razafiarivony, *Culture, Adventist Theology and Mission in Africa*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Theological Seminary of Adventist University of Africa,), 411.

rituals consistently convey that message.<sup>45</sup>This has attracted various rites and rituals around death, for instance, the Luo tribe of Western Kenya

Believed in *Nyasaye* (God), the creator of the world. The elders of the tribe prayed to Nyasaye and asked him for his help through the ancestors. Sometimes the souls of the ancestors returned to earth and inhabited the bodies of animals such as lizards and snakes. A house lizard was welcomed as he might be an ancestor taking care of the family, and a snake who entered a house was not killed. He might be an ancestor who thought he was being neglected and wanted to cause trouble. The ancestors liked to be remembered, so the house owner tried to pacify him by killing a chicken for him.<sup>46</sup>

The notion that the dead are not dead but exist somewhere and that they have connections with the living and can provide protection and security to the family is real in an African setting. Simbarashe, on the same premise, asserts that

It should be noted that speaking to the dead in African communities is not just a form of eulogy to vent emotions. There is a definite assumption of the continued existence of the spirit of the dead. This is demonstrated by the fact that speaking to the dead includes aspects of petitioning and imploring them to grant specific requests.<sup>47</sup>

In Luo Abasuba there is a belief that once a person died, it became his duty to those that followed after him to guard them against evil spirits. They believed that they would visit in dreams or in the form of diviners.<sup>48</sup> The Adventists in this region are not immune to this belief and some of them are perpetually trapped in this web, for instance, the Luos conduct several rituals around the dead, more especially when an old man dies the remaining family members make sure the name of the late old man is maintained in the family by naming children after him, and by doing this they believe the presence of the old man is still felt in the family. They believe in

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<sup>45</sup> Sampson M. Nwaomah, Eriks Galenieks, and Davidson Razafiarivony, *Culture, Adventist Theology and Mission in Africa*, (Theological Seminary of Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya), 435.

<sup>46</sup> W. R. Ochieng, *People round the Lake, Kenya's People* (Russell Square, London: Evance Brothers Limited, Montague House, 1979), 13.

<sup>47</sup> Nwaoma, Galenieks, *Culture, Adventist Theology and Mission in Africa*, 435.

<sup>48</sup> Ogot, *A history of the Luo Abasuba of Western Kenya*, 188.

communicating to the dead through sacrifices Henry Ogot contends that when the departed's visit was realized, his descendants offered him a sacrifice. At the time of sacrifice, all the people ate together with the departed.<sup>49</sup> Across African communities, depending on a particular culture, there are diverse ways of ritual performance to honor the dead based on the belief that they are as Simbarashe affirms,

A further expression of this belief of the is the numerous sacrifices and food offerings that are made to the dead. In some African societies the animals slaughtered at the funeral or other subsequent rituals are not just meant to provide a meal for the mourners, they are sacrificed to the deceased or ancestors.<sup>50</sup>

Embarking to the Luo Abasuba, there is high regard for the dead because the family members of the late are to maintain their union with the departed, and therefore,

Sacrifices and offerings were taken by the Luo Abasuba to commune and reunite with the dead. They also used dreams as a medium through which they communicated with the dead using diviners known as as *ajuoga* (witch doctor) and through *juogi* (the deceased spirits), who had such powers to communicate with the departed spirits.<sup>51</sup>

### **Interpretation and Place of Ellen White's Writings**

When the Missionaries introduced Adventism in Western Kenya they did not emphasize the writings of Ellen White at the initial stages of their mission even though they had full knowledge of her divine calling to the prophetic ministry as confirmed by Alberto R. Timm underscoring the acceptance of such teachings by the Seventh Day Adventists.<sup>52</sup> Their tact in performing the mission never created any room for questioning anything to do with Ellen White for they knew that they were

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<sup>49</sup> Ogot, *A history of the Luo Abasuba of Western Kenya*, 188.

<sup>50</sup> Nwaoma, Galeniaks, *Culture, Adventist Theology and Mission in Africa*, 435.

<sup>51</sup> Ogot, *A History of the Luo Abasuba of Western Kenya*, 188.

<sup>52</sup> Merlin D. Burt, *Understanding Ellen White, The life and work of the most influential voice in Adventist history* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 95.

ministering to spiritual amateurs. It is true that many people are unfamiliar with the experience of Ellen White in the prophetic ministry as well as the leading of God.<sup>53</sup> Any staunch Adventist will attribute the strong foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to Ellen White's inspired contributions through her writings. As Adventism grew both numerically and spiritually, the interest in knowing more about the history and development of the Adventist Church also emerged. With the available internet and technology, there is broad liberty to search for anything at the click of a mouse, and through this opponents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church tirelessly propagate their own teachings on the global web.<sup>54</sup>

The issue pertaining to the interpretation and place of Ellen White's writings as raised by several Adventists is as old as the cradle stages of the Church, and this demonstrates a lack of keen readership and understanding of her writings. George R. Knight ventilates on the same by affirming that the reading and understanding of the prophetic messages of White, are two different things as people often read but fail to understand, thereby misinterpreting and misusing the messages.<sup>55</sup> J. Paxton Geoffrey alludes that they fail to read Ellen White's writings in their original historical and literary contexts and thus give her a 'wax nose' that can be turned any way.<sup>56</sup> It is imperative to consider the rightful interpretation of Ellen White's writings as principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) requires, these principles are meant for

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<sup>53</sup> *Understanding Ellen White*, 95.

<sup>54</sup> Jud Lake, *Ellen White under Fire, Identifying the Mistakes of Her Critics* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010), 21.

<sup>55</sup> Burt, *Understanding Ellen White*, 66.

<sup>56</sup> J. Paxton Geoffrey, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1978), 156.

obtaining the meaning of a written document.<sup>57</sup> I concur with the allusion by Jud Lake when he says that an author has the right to be understood, and it is unfair when an interpreter deliberately gives a meaning to a document foreign to the author's intention<sup>58</sup> and this is what happens to the writings of Ellen White especially members who are not keen readers of her works.

It has been confirmed that in recent years, Adventist scholars have pulled together methods and principles of correct interpretation from the discipline of hermeneutics and applied them to the study of Ellen White's writings.<sup>59</sup> Most opponents of Ellen White's writings misinterpret her due to lack of full contextual understanding of any phrase from her writings and this misunderstanding occurs when people read only part of what was written and base their understanding on that partial reading.<sup>60</sup> There is a rampant tendency within the Adventist Church to haphazardly misuse and abuse Ellen White's writings, some use them defensively and some use them supportively, and this has to some extent caused divisions within the church and splinter groups. On some occasions, Ellen White herself took note of this and expressed her fear of even speaking to her own friend to avoid misquotation by them.<sup>61</sup> She further contends that,

Many people take and apply the messages given by God as they prefer it to be applied, handpicking different parts, interpreting out of context and using it according to their own ideas. As such, even that which is said to be from

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<sup>57</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of The New Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1975-85), 4:243.

<sup>58</sup> Lake, *Ellen White under Fire*, 180.

<sup>59</sup> Roger Coon, "Hermeneutics: Interpreting a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prophet in the Space Age," *Journal of Adventist Education*, Summer (1988): 16-31.

<sup>60</sup> Lake, *Ellen White under Fire*, 181.

<sup>61</sup> E. G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 1:44.

White, propagates a misrepresentation of the message she brings, not from her own mind or judgment.<sup>62</sup>

Jud Lake elaborates on the appropriate way of avoiding any misunderstanding of the writings by Ellen White asserting that,

A sentence must be understood in the context of the paragraph that contains it, and then in the context of the surrounding paragraphs, which must be understood in the context of the page or pages in the chapter, which must be understood in the context of the entire book, letter, or article, which must be understood in the context of the conflict of ages series, and ultimately, must be understood in the context of everything Ellen White wrote.<sup>63</sup>

It is imperative to consider the history of the context or the writing when reading Ellen White's writings. This will help the reader to avoid any irrelevance, misapplication, and misunderstanding in the usage of her writings as supported by Arthur who characterizes the keys to understanding these writings to include understanding of the historical context.<sup>64</sup> Ellen White envisioned the possibility of her readers' lack of historical context and background knowledge and cautioned, that nothing that regards the testimonies is to be ignored or left out, each factor must be considered.<sup>65</sup> By doing this she wanted her readers to keep the historical context in their mind as ignorance of such leads to inevitable ignorance of these writings in their literary context.<sup>66</sup>

Concerning the place of Ellen White's writings in the church, the Seventh-day Adventists believe in the bestowment of spitual gifts by God on all His people that are to be used in the work of the church for the good of the church and humanity and for

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<sup>62</sup> E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:82.

<sup>63</sup> Lake, *Ellen White under Fire*, 182.

<sup>64</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, The Early Years, 1827-1862* vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 154.

<sup>65</sup> E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:57.

<sup>66</sup> Lake, *Ellen White under Fire*, 185.

the fulfillment of divinely ordained mission and functions.<sup>67</sup> Victor F. Figueroa, on the value of Ellen White's ministry for the work of the church, alludes that Ellen White, a pioneer of the Adventist movement, was very pivotal in the emergence of the SDA Church, and the way God used her to help in the doctrinal development and in the organization of His Church to fulfill its mission.<sup>68</sup> The church organization as can be witnessed today emanated from the Millerite movement spearheaded by Ellen White as narrated by Anna Galeniece who states that Ellen White played a very important role in the organization of the SDA Church. From the beginning, the Millerite movement had been reluctant to form an organization, because the imminence of the second coming made it unnecessary.<sup>69</sup>

In addition, having been expelled from their respective churches by embracing the Millerite message, many were led to think that church organization would be an inherent evil. These feelings made it impossible for the emergence of a religious structure.<sup>70</sup> The main factor that necessitated this need for structural organization was the rapid growth of the Seventh-day Adventists, so Ellen White saw the need to maintain what she called 'the gospel order',<sup>71</sup> in this way, she linked the organization of the church to the mission entrusted to the Adventists. That is to say, the organization was not an end in itself but a means to an end.<sup>72</sup> The Adventists do

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<sup>67</sup> Burt, *Understanding Ellen White*, 107.

<sup>68</sup> Anna Galeniece, *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Church* (Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya: Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office, 2017), 134.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>70</sup> George Knight, *Meeting Ellen White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), 46.

<sup>71</sup> Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1945), 97.

<sup>72</sup> Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 46.

not value her writings above the bible in concurrence with her statement that she never attempted to place her writings on equal ground with the Bible. On the contrary, she always put them under the Bible; because for her, the Scriptures were the only source of truth and of spiritual instruction.<sup>73</sup> The Seventh-day Adventists are convinced that her ministry and written works are genuinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Denis Fortin contends that her ministry is believed to serve as a spiritual gift to the church in the last days to guide Adventists in the fulfilment of their mission and prepare God's people for the second advent.<sup>74</sup>

The writings of Ellen White have shaped Adventists' understanding on some biblical teachings that were forgotten especially at the initial stages of Adventist formation, such as the imminent second advent of Christ, the Seventh-day Sabbath, the conditional state of immortality of the soul, the heavenly ministry of Christ and pre-Advent judgment, the health message and among others.<sup>75</sup> As believers in the Spirit of prophecy, Adventists embraces Ellen White's writings as instructions as confirmed that she has given inspired instruction for God's people living during the end times.<sup>76</sup> After thorough scrutiny of Ellen Whites' writings by the Adventist theologians, in unison, her writings have been approved to form part of the fundamental beliefs of the Adventists as follows:

The Bible provide for prophecy as a gift of the Holy Spirit and as such, an identifying mark of the remnant church of God as manifested in White's

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<sup>73</sup> Galeniece, *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Church*, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Burt, *Understanding Ellen White*, 108.

<sup>75</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013 (SDA Yearbook 2013)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013), 7.

<sup>76</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 3rd ed, A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018), 261.

ministry. She writes with authority granted through the gift, offering instruction, guidance, correction and comfort to the church.<sup>77</sup>

Considering the humble beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the disappointment that followed, God picked on her even though she was sickly and unable, to be a source of hope to the disappointed minority at that time as rightly remarked:

Even on the road to Emmaus, Jesus came very close to earnest but puzzled believers in the months following the ‘magnificent disappointment’.<sup>78</sup>

The writings of Ellen White have a huge impact on the Adventist Church and many members have been converted to the faith as a result of her writings as Herbert E. Douglas asserts, she has acted as a guide for her fellow Adventists and thousands who have met Christ through her writings<sup>79</sup> and her contributions are indispensable. The organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the ministry of Ellen White go hand in hand as Hartzell Spence confirms that the ministry of White and the subsequent emergence of the SDA church go hand in hand. It is highly unlikely to be able to understand one without a proper understanding of the other.<sup>80</sup>

Another pivotal role of Ellen White’s works in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is about dealing with wily counterfeits that have the potential to rock the Church today. This has happened and happens with a anevery reformatory movement known to men. Even in the days of Paul the Apostle, he battled counterfeits. Herbert

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<sup>77</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022), 174.

<sup>78</sup> C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994).

<sup>79</sup> Herbert E. Douglas, *Messenger of The Lord, The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), 531.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

claims that it was not any different during the times of Martin Luther with the Protestant Reformation and John Wesley later on.<sup>81</sup>

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Ellen White's writings, without correct understanding and interpretation, might cause divisions in the SDA Church. Whenever the church encounters such erroneous teachings and counterfeits, Herbert advises that it is imperative, as regards the nature of counterfeit, to check and respond immediately to such error to safeguard the truth.<sup>82</sup> Since the beginning of her ministry until the present, her role has been revealing the errors through her publications and God's people will face similar errors until the end of time.

### **Politics and Bullying**

The definition of the word Politics is derived from Greek πολιτικά (politiká 'affairs of the cities') the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affects a country or society<sup>83</sup> while bullying is the use of strength or power to frighten or hurt weaker people.<sup>84</sup>

These two terms bear negative connotations whenever they are mentioned especially in church matters. Church politics is a painful reality facing the church not only in the Western Kenya region but a menace in the wider spectrum. In our context "Politics in this sense simply means the usurpation of religious ideas for the satisfaction of personal interest or the interest of a group of people bound by common

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<sup>81</sup> Douglas, *Messenger of The Lord*, 194.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. "politics" accessed March 2024. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/bullying?q=politics>

<sup>84</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. "bullying" accessed March 2024. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/bullying?q=bullying>

desires to suppress, dominate, or control a religious system.”<sup>85</sup> This kind of leadership demonstrate lack of goodwill from the people being led so “they do all they know to do to wield influence upon others but in vain. They grow increasingly frustrated because no one listens to them or values their insights and opinions.”<sup>86</sup> The chances are, this kind of a leader has lost grip of people and what remains, as James MacGregor Burns observes is just a meaningless façade, manipulation with no purpose, authoritarianism, is more like leadership behavior of small boys marching in front of parade than leadership.<sup>87</sup> When the spirit of politics gets into leadership from whichever level, it drains the concerned members of simplicity and humility which is expected of any Christian leader as opposed to ‘loading it to them’ mentality as Jesus cautioned his disciples in Matthew. Gabriel Masfa contends that

This kind of government is monarchy, a system of which takes the ruler (leader) as an absolute dictator, and this ruler usually seeks in practice to be above the prescribed norms and regulations of the system which he leads, and the governed individuals have seemingly no say in the function or organization of the system.<sup>88</sup>

## **Responses to Crises**

### **Ancestor Veneration**

The belief on the premise that the dead have a role to play towards the living is opposed to the teachings of the SDA Church and has never been defended by its adherents. Because such beliefs and teachings have intruded into the church through the intimate inclination of its members, who still believe and even perform such

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<sup>85</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism*, 167.

<sup>86</sup> Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 182.

<sup>87</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper Torch books, 1978), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism*, 167.

practices, Adventist scholars and theologians have delved into serious study over this existential issue. Kwabena Donko responds to this issue and contends that:

As a community whose beliefs and practices are thoroughly Bible-based, the response to the phenomenon of ancestor (veneration) should be based not only of the biblical perspective of humans but also on comprehension of a biblically informed ‘sociology of ancestors’.<sup>89</sup>

The sociology of ancestors is more like structures of existence that deals with the state, financial systems, and social norms that frame people’s existence. Grenz argues that placing the subject of the ancestors in the study of structures of existence means that ancestor cult should be approached as one of those dimensions of reality that condition the individual and the corporate existence of many African peoples.<sup>90</sup> This structure of existence has become part and parcel of the African’s identity and for this reason, there is a need for appropriate response for the believer in dealing with such issues. There are three schools of thought in regards to the structure of existence that should be adopted by the believer, they are as follows, withdrawal, defense, and offense. To appreciate these three responses to ancestor veneration, further explanation of the concept of structures of existence in the Bible will be helpful.<sup>91</sup>

**The Response of Withdrawal.** This is when a believer refuses to allow his/her life to be:

Defined by the cult. One withdraws from the ideas propagated as to shape one’s life in a manner that denies that function of shaping, the death of Christ...it is a shift from being under the ancestor cult to the kingdom of the Lord Christ.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Donko, *The Church, Culture, and Spirits*, 85.

<sup>90</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 140.

<sup>91</sup> Donko, *The Church, Culture, and Spirits*, 86.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

In this response the believer does two things, first, he or she demonstrates through practical life of commitment either to the cult or God's kingdom as a structure of existence. This is known as 'particular practical expression of response'.<sup>93</sup> Secondly, the response of withdrawal will only make sense and have meaning if the believer makes the kingdom of God a reality by believing in the atonement by the death of Jesus Christ, which in turn, becomes a personal experience of the believer, this is known as appropriating the kingdom of God as a structure of existence.<sup>94</sup>

**The Response of Defense.** This is when the believer takes cognizance of the declared antagonistic war in Eph.6:10-18, and both offensive and defensive weapons are provided so that the Christian may stand firm against the foe. In this warfare, they are imbued by the supernatural power of 'His might' to conquer the 'powers' of the devil as Berkhof comments, "Ours is to hold the powers, their seduction, and enslavement. The figurative allusion to weapons points to this defensive role. Girdle, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword (machaira, the short sword) are all defensive arms."<sup>95</sup>

**The Response of Offense.** This is a response whereby the believer has the foresight of any forthcoming eventuality that might be occasioned by the enemy, and does not necessarily provoke the enemy in any way but can bring to a halt any obstructive and destructive powers in his or her service to the Lord. This response of offense was much operative during Paul's ministry about Acts. 13:8-11; 16:16-18. Seventh-day Adventist members, in case confronted by demands of ancestor cult, offensive response is appropriate for them in such a situation.

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<sup>93</sup> Donko, *The Church, Culture, and Spirits*, 87.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 52.

## **Witchcraft, Magic, Sorcery, Diviners, Mediums, and Seers**

There are various responses toward witchcraft and many other related practices like; magic, sorcery, diviners, mediums, and seers. There is an element of symbiotic relationship between these vices, with almost common characteristics. This bunch of vices can be defined as the possession, exercise, and/or invocation of any supernatural power other than of divine origin to control and/or manipulate people, things, or events, often to harm, obstruct, or to take advantage of the victims (cf. Deut. 18:10; Gal. 5:19, 20; Rev. 21: 8; 22:15).<sup>96</sup> The practice of witchcraft seemingly has encroached into the church as Ellen White alludes that it happens around us in that no one knows they are under the influence of one that may lead them into doing things never imagined.<sup>97</sup> To members who might have engaged in sorcery practices, Ellen White responds by saying that such a member;

Will then give up his body and soul and spirit to God and abandon all relations with Satan by the grace of God. He will denounce all evil, abandon Satan and embrace Christ.<sup>98</sup>

God has never approved any slight attempt by a believer to pay visit to a sorcerer or a witch doctor whatsoever. The blatant mistake that Saul made by seeking help from an ungodly source is enough evidence of God's displeasure with such practices by His people, the Christians and White comments that it was this act of Saul that led to his abandonment by God as well as his rejection and destruction.<sup>99</sup> To keep from falling prey to such a snare, the Adventists are admonished, to abide in

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<sup>96</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism*, 201.

<sup>97</sup> Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 2002), 278.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 683.

faith and shun that which is profane and vain, trusting in God instead of witchcraft.<sup>100</sup>

Another perplexing experience is about King Ahaziah, who, despite his knowledge of the ability of God to heal him, made his route to a diviner in Ekron as narrated in the Bible,

“Ahaziah fell through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.”<sup>101</sup>

It is disdainful for a whole King of Israel to exhibit contempt against God and His authority over our misfortunes and eventualities of life. His experience and the aftermath remain a remarkable warning to all believers as well asserted that this narrative clearly displays the divine displeasure against those who turn from God to satanic agencies.<sup>102</sup> In addition,

“King Ahaziah’s sin and punishment has a lesson of warning which none can disregard with impunity. Though we do not pay homage to heathen gods, thousands are worshipping at Satan’s shrine as verily as did the king of Israel. The very spirit of heathen idolatry is rife today, though under the influence of science and education, it has assumed a more refined and attractive form.”<sup>103</sup>

### **Traditional Healing and Rites of Passage**

Traditional healing emanates from African traditional medicine which can be defined as

The total combination of knowledge and practices- whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing, or eliminating a physical, mental, or social

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<sup>100</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol 5 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 197.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 192.

disease. This knowledge and these practices may be based on past experiences and observations that have been handed from one generation to another either verbally or in writing. The practices are further based on materials from nature, the sociological environment, and the metaphysical forces of the universe.<sup>104</sup>

To some extent Traditional healing is always performed by African medicine persons, these are,

Men or women who trained either through apprenticeship or by deep mystical experiences, to diagnose, treat, cure and ward off anything that might harm one's life. They use diverse types of medicine made from roots, leaves, minerals, and dried parts of animals along with special rituals for healing and warding off evils.<sup>105</sup>

Going with the above definition of a traditional healer who turns to be a mystic healer using mystical forces is proof that the powers are not divine powers but evil powers. Masfa contends that they perform rituals and require ritualistic materials (e.g. chickens, eggs, cola nuts, cloths). They also diagnose through consulting the spirits and perform ritualistic actions with beads, sticks, water, etc.<sup>106</sup> Concerning Mystic voices, clairvoyants, mediums and fortune-tellers, Ellen White confirms that, The voices that spoke at Ekron and Endor still mislead the sons of men by the lying pronouncements. The devil appears disguised differently through such entities.<sup>107</sup>

Believers, including Adventists, are prone to engaging with these satanic powers because in most African communities usually people attribute sicknesses and ill health to various social and cultural causes such as the evil eye, breaking taboos, or

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<sup>104</sup> Anthony A. Elujoba, *Pharmacognosis for Health and Culture, The PHC Jungle connection Inaugural Lecture Series* (Ile-Ife, Negeria: OAU Press Limited, 1999), 6.

<sup>105</sup> Michael C. Kirwen, *African Cultural Knowledge, Themes and Embedded Beliefs* (Nairobi, Kenya: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, 2011), 168.

<sup>106</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism* 202.

<sup>107</sup> White, *Evangelism* 608.

as a result of a curse from a senior member of the community.<sup>108</sup> As mentioned before, some members are still affiliated with African traditional beliefs, so the aspect of causation comes into play in regard to ill health. Kirwan argues that this ill health

May be caused by evil or restless spirits. This may be due to an effort by the spirits to communicate a message to the living, such as installing a person as a diviner, or to seek attention from the living by causing illness in a member of the community. This calls for the performance of rituals which may include sacrifices to appease the spirits, while at the same time restoring the health of the affected person.<sup>109</sup>

It is crucial for members to jealously safeguard their Adventist faith and be cautious in regards to these satanic delusions as stated that these Satanic agents claim to heal, attributing their capabilities to so-called ‘sympathetic remedies’ while in truth they are media through which the devil binds the souls and bodies of men under his spell.<sup>110</sup>

On rites of passage, Africans claim that there are different stages of life. Rites of passage are rituals and ceremonies performed to mark and empower these stages of growth and development. These rites begin at birth and continue even after death.<sup>111</sup> John Mbiti confirms that during that period a person goes through physical, emotional, and psychological changes, transitioning from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. This is a radical change for the individual concerned.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, the final stage of this process is the living-dead existence. The traditional stages of life

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<sup>108</sup> Michael C. Kirwen, *African Cultural Domain, Life Circle of an Individual Book 1* (Nairobi, Kenya: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, 2008), 50.

<sup>109</sup> Kirwen, *African Cultural Domain*, 50.

<sup>110</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 609.

<sup>111</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism* 203.

<sup>112</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 96.

are birth, puberty, marriage, death, and the afterlife.<sup>113</sup> The entire process of rites of passage is always saturated with mundane acts of ritual performance that which is against the Biblical teachings. In such practices the individuals involved pledge their loyalty to the spirits which are used in such functions and pay their allegiance to the ruling host, that is, the devil himself. Similar to the case of Solomon and his wives they were idol-worshippers, and had been made to practice archaic rites. Captured by the beauty of his wives, the king abandoned his kingly responsibilities to God and to his kingdom. His wives exerted heavily influenced him into gradually uniting with them in their worship.<sup>114</sup> Such practices have the potential of causing spiritual erosion in the life of the believer which is detrimental to spiritual growth. When members engage in such archaic practices and heathen customs, they will eventually lose their interest in God as well explained in the following assertion;

The Israelites fell victim to the ways of the kingdoms around them. they no longer shunned idolatry, instead, they gave in to the practices of idol worship and heathen customs introduced by other idolatrous people. The Hebrew faith rapidly grew into a mixture of confused ideas. Their economic relationships with other nations intimated them with those who did not love God, thereby lessening their own love for God. This killed their sense of the true and holy character of God, becoming disobedience and switching allegiance to Satan.<sup>115</sup>

By subscribing to these traditional rites the members are prone to compromise and the possibility of being veered between Biblical teachings and cultural teachings. Ellen White rightly upholds that:

As the condition of the people began to open to His mind, He saw that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision. Men were departing from the word of God, and exalting theories of

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<sup>113</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism* 203.

<sup>114</sup> Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1990-2012).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

their invention. They were observing traditional rites that possessed no virtue. Their service was a mere round of ceremonies.<sup>116</sup>

In response, the Adventists appreciate different stages of individual development, and the celebration of these various stages should be performed by Biblical teachings and the Adventists' faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>117</sup> The celebration of each stage of life should be void of any spiritualistic elements including afterlife celebration. As Adventists we believe that children are gifts within marriage from God, their dedication to church is the most appropriate, and their naming should be without ancestral connections. Parents whose male children have attained puberty stage and want to circumcise them should preferably do it in a hospital following the recommended health regulations. Concerning marriage, Adventists understand the sacredness of marriage as taught in the Bible and the stipulated church fundamental beliefs. Finally, Adventists understand the genesis of death, its effects on humanity, the satanic teachings about it, and the infallible Biblical teachings about it. Adventists, therefore, are advised "to avoid any spiritualistic elements of the funeral, that is, during burial and after burial programs."<sup>118</sup>

### **Polygamy**

The Adventist teachings approve monogamy as opposed to polygamy as marriage is concerned and as confirmed by the bible which happens to be the most preferred textbook, The Adventists uphold that:

Marriage was a divine institution established by God in the garden of Eden. Jesus affirmed this institution as a lifetime lasting union between a man and a

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<sup>116</sup> Ellen G. White, *A call to Stand A part* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Associatio, 2002), 8.

<sup>117</sup> Masfa, *African Adventism*, 203.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

woman in loving companionship. This union serves as a commitment by a Christian to both God and the spouse on the grounds of a common faith.<sup>119</sup>

The example of David is one of the most tantalizing stories on the danger of polygamy. David was spiritually upright, honest, and perfect.

It was while David was thus true to God, and He possessed all the traits in character that set him apart as the man after God's own heart. As a king, he stood out from the other kings of his time as one who shunned idolatry and guarded the Israelites from such. He was highly honored and loved by the people.<sup>120</sup>

David was always conquering and overpowering his opponents and prospered in all his endeavors. Gradually, the man of God gained strong influence and puffed up with pride and this marked the beginning of his fall from God's principles. He consequently fell victim to the worldly practices of the kings that surrounded him, even being polygamous, rendering his life full of evil consequences.<sup>121</sup> This act betrayed the sacred principles that God had put in place to guard the holy matrimony, and thus he deviated from the divine arrangements of God. Ellen White confirms that the departure from the path of God, unlocked the door for even greater errors.<sup>122</sup>

The history of polygamy goes back to the antediluvian times and it has always manifested discomfort and divisions in families. It was Satan's studied effort to interfere with the institution of marriage, wrecking havoc in families and subsequently disrupting and weakening its sacredness or sanctity as there would be no better way to deface God's image than opening a way to misery and vice.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>119</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 20<sup>th</sup> ed*, 176.

<sup>120</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* (Berreïn Springs, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 93.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Ellen G. White, *Conflict and courage* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1970), 36.

infiltration of polygamy into world societies, no longer remained viewed as a sin but rather a gross violation of God's law and a danger detrimental to the family unit.<sup>124</sup> It is confirmed with numerous evidences that such evil, inevitably causes the springs of love to dry up, weakening sacred bonds.<sup>125</sup> Adventists uphold so dearly the holy precepts in this regard and by tracing the genesis of this institution, it is irrevocably true as indicated that the introduction of polygamy was not in line with the divine will of God at the very beginning where Adam was given just one wife, indicating a certain order.<sup>126</sup> It is highly contended that God, knowing how the happiness of man would be hampered by polygamy, does not even in an instance, sanction it as it goes contrary to His own will for man.<sup>127</sup> Coming to the most regarded stalwart of faith in connection to this unsanctioned relationship it is true that Abraham's peace and happiness was negatively affected by his unhappy marriage with Hagar.<sup>128</sup> God's disapproval of polygamy is well displayed in the case of Abraham concerning the original monogamous marriage as was designed in the beginning. This was because, had it been sanctioned by God, sending away Hagar and her son would amount to a violation of God's directives. This would act as a lesson for all to respect and preserve the marriage relations and all it entails. In Abraham's case, Sarah was the first and only wife of his and this made her a legitimate right holder which no one could have.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub., 1999), 82.

<sup>125</sup> Ellen G. White, *Conflict and courage*, 72.

<sup>126</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 91.

<sup>127</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol.1 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Library, 1870-78), 94.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

## Spiritualism

Spiritualism originated with the first lie from Satan when he deceived Eve that she would not die for eating the fruit, contrary to God's instruction (Gen.3:4). This was the inception of the idea that the soul is immortal and till date, the does not recognize the divine provision on the death of the soul (Ezekiel. 18:20). It is no longer in use but has been changed to say that the soul, even if he sins, shall live forever. This deceptive doctrine of natural immortality has convinced several people to believe in the state of consciousness in death, which, of course, contradicts the biblical teaching. This kind of teaching has been widespread among members and this has led to a leeway for Satan in their lives to perpetually believe that their departed loved ones are existing somewhere.

The doctrine that upholds the immortal nature of the soul is one that is erroneous as the world's belief that those that die, go to heaven immediately, roots Spiritualism in people. It is by believing this, that men are rendered unable to defend or protect themselves from the misguidance of the doctrine of spiritualism. They are misled to believe that they can communicate with their departed loved ones which is in truth, evil spirits.<sup>130</sup>

This delusion has lured a multitude of believers into Satan's trap especially those who are not biblically grounded. Emphasis is laid that even the road to hell is made attractive by agents of darkness disguised as teachers of the word of God, who mislead those that have no Biblical grounding of the truth.<sup>131</sup> Being crafty in his dealings, the devil, pretending to be an angel of light, has the full knowledge of the deceased as Ellen White rightly affirms that the devil wields the power to make appearance before people, their dead friends in their perfect, familiar images, their

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<sup>130</sup> Ellen G. White, "*Try the spirits*" Ellen G. White Estate (1894): 6.

<sup>131</sup> Ellen G. White, "*Spiritualism*" Ellen White Estate (1875): 6.

acceptance of which, opens up doors for the seduction spirits and devilish doctrines.<sup>132</sup>

Seventh-day Adventist takes a stand on the premise that spiritualism is a deception from Satan and there is no existence of the soul that happens consciously outside the body soul has no conscious existence apart from the body and as such, the soul dies together with body at death.<sup>133</sup> Nobody should be deceived by this delusion and the scriptures openly nullify such teachings as false and unacceptable. The Bible confirms that those that are dead, have no ability to know anything. Any attempt to communicate to the dead or the of spiritual world is forbidden by the word of God, and any participant in such abominable practices was to be stoned to death (Deut.18:10, 11; Lev. 19:31; 20:27). This cruel punishment is a sufficient evidence of God's abhorrence toward spiritualism.

### **Interpretation and Place of Ellen G. White's Writings**

First and foremost, it is worth noting the significance of Ellen White's contribution to the formation and organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her writings are irrefutable and remarkable in the life of the SDA Church, in other words, the ministry of Ellen White is of great value in the church and even beyond. With all her excellent and numerous contributions especially her written work, she could foresee and predict the cruelty of her future critics as they will be used by the enemy and declared that Satan would ultimately aim to threaten and destroe her

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<sup>132</sup> Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1939), 552.

<sup>133</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. An exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Springs, MD: Review and Herald. 2018), 395.

credibility and propagate hatred for these teachings.<sup>134</sup> Her critics misinterpreted her writings with malicious schemes to insinuate that she was a false prophet as opposed to her proponents who were always ready to defend her writings. For instance, Jud Luke contends that focusing on one small part of these writings and treating them as if they are all Mrs. White said while ignoring the rest of her writings is misleading.<sup>135</sup> As I mentioned before on interpretation of her writings, reading her works out of context leads to misinterpretation as affirmed that the critics read a sentence and receive no meaning from it-he may, and often does, even take it out of context. But by reading the message as a whole, one learns the intentions of the author. But disregarding the message renders even the Bible unworthy of reading in every sense of the word.<sup>136</sup>

For one to understand and interpret Ellen White's writings, it is in order to consider she didn't write like a systematic theologian, that is, she didn't organize her writings into theological categories and she wrote for the common person rather than the theologian.<sup>137</sup> Without making any hasty interpretation of her works, the reader should appreciate that Ellen White, like any other prophet, experienced growth in her understanding of divine truth over a period of sixty years in communion with heavenly messenger and divine things.<sup>138</sup>

## **Politics and Bullying**

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<sup>134</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1958-1980), 48.

<sup>135</sup> Lake, *Ellen White under Fire*, 221.

<sup>136</sup> Roger W. Coon, "There Simply Is No Case: Interview With Attorney Vincent I., Ramik," *Review and Herald*, September 17, 1981, 3.

<sup>137</sup> Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 16.

<sup>138</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 71.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not advocate for monarchy, where one person has an overall say over the rest. When this type of leadership is allowed to creep into church leadership it will paralyze the original governance style. The governance that is well stipulated in the Church manual as a representative governance that places authority in the hands of the members of the church and delegated to representatives at different levels of the organizational structure, each having a duty in the government of the church.<sup>139</sup>

Considering the Church organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the top, that is, General Conference, the Church adopted the Jethro style of leadership, which is a delegation style of leadership, whereby there is no room for monarchy. In as much as there are politics and bullying in the church, a spirit that emanates from egocentrism and selfishness, it is still against the initial spirit of SDA Church as Kolawole O. Ayodele observes that “monocracy does not involve the distribution of power between the pastor and his/her congregation and thus reduce direct participation in decision making by laity or congregation.”<sup>140</sup>

### **Prospects of Seventh-day Adventism in Western Kenya**

This section will briefly deal with ways and means of how Adventism can be successfully enhanced in Western Kenya. Tracing the coming of missionaries to British East Africa (Kenya), they managed to sell their product (Adventism) by first doing a feasibility study around Lake Victoria, where they later settled in Gendia in

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<sup>139</sup> The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Washington, DC: The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2010), 29.

<sup>140</sup> Kolawole O. Ayodele, “Monocracy and Church Governance,” *A Survey of Church Politics in the Twenty-First Century: Re-Examining Religion-State Governance, Leadership and Laities*, ed., Emmanuel O. Eregare (Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria: Babcock University Press, 2018), 106.

1906. As we have seen the propagation of Adventism in Western Kenya through different institutions and several activities in chapter four of this work, it is imperative to note that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is still “an alien” to other parts of this region with so many places un-entered with the Adventist message. Commenting on reaching smaller communities and rural areas Ellen White advises that in planning for the work of the Church, we must envisage the mission farther than the cities only.<sup>141</sup> The Adventist Church in Western Kenya has avenues through which its message can reach these unreached areas as per the admonition not to neglect any soul in the preaching of the message of Christ and His truth.<sup>142</sup> These are pertinent questions that must be answered as we venture into such places with the objective that those in the highways and byways are to be reached.<sup>143</sup> The potential prospects of Adventism in this region are our learning institutions, Medical institutions, ADRA, and ASI, just to mention a few. It is incumbent upon the Church to utilize these available means to reach out to these potential members.

### **Learning Institutions**

Our learning institutions in this region have proved to be better positioned in spreading the Adventist message, for instance, UEAB, considering how it began, its pioneers made an adventurous decision after a survey that took some time, which was a step with a foresight in the future student population, envisioning many students getting enrolled, with chief goal of evangelism in mind as was foreseen by Ellen White regarding youth training in our institutions, she affirmed that they ought to be

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<sup>141</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 45.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 46.

encouraged to attend the schools established by the church and the Lord Himself and engage in training for the purpose of the works of the church.<sup>144</sup>

In the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, besides other Adventist Schools and Colleges performing baptisms during Camp meetings and other occasions, there is an Annual Grand Baptism Rally that takes place every year with thousands of High school students from all over the region coming for baptism. The university had made significant contributions to the country as a whole when the late President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi came to donate a parcel of land where the University is situated today as I mentioned before. In his presentation, he appreciated the Seventh-day Adventist members for their remarkable contributions to the country at large in the education sector, on spiritual issues, and generally, they have exhibited a great concern for all Kenyans.

### **Health Institutions**

The tremendous services rendered by our several health facilities in Western Kenya have enhanced Adventism in this part of the country. The Adventist Health Institutions and their mode of rendering health services are based on the orientation of the pioneers, whereby in every Church building that they erected there was a health facility next to it. This was the missionary foundation that was laid and was to be maintained in Adventist posterity with a single focus, that is, the salvation of souls through health ministry as we are reminded that Christ's ministry was not only to the soul but to the body as well, passing messages of spiritual growth and physical

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<sup>144</sup> Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 489.

wellness.<sup>145</sup> Some of these institutions, for instance, Kendu Adventist Hospital have reached out to non-Adventist communities via free outdoor Medical Services that are done occasionally. Because health is so dear to everyone and whoever touches it touches the soul, for that reason, there is a dire need for our Health Institutions to be evangelistically organized, then they would be very instrumental in advancing Adventism in the Western part of this country.

**Adventist Development and Relief Agency/  
Adventist Lay Persons Services  
and Industries**

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency and The Adventist Lay Persons Services and Industries are part of evangelism in the Adventist Church. ADRA Kenya for instance, is so proactive in the region with insurmountable charity services to thousands of households not only in Western Kenya but in the entire country and beyond. The testimonies behind their ministry are tangible evidence of their contribution to Adventism propagation in Western Kenya. Their financial and material donations have touched many lives in hospitals, local churches, and communities. ADRA Kenya, being charity services based, can be more practical in touching the lives of people dwelling in this part of the country since the majority are impoverished and so needy, and through this avenue, the Adventist mission can be fulfilled and many can join the Church.

Adventist Development and Relief Agency Kenya has influenced some of our local conferences for example Greater Rift Valley Conference (where I serve currently), in November 2022, sent a team of 23 members to Lodwar town, which is always ravaged by famine. The team went with a fleet of loaded vehicles with sacks

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<sup>145</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), 111.

of maize, beans, rice, and cooking oil together with clothes and laundry items. This made a significant impact in this Muslim-dominated place. ASI on the other side have played a big role in spreading Adventism as it was reported at the initial stages of this movement. As closely connected to pastoral ministry as it can be seen, the ASI movement, given a chance in this region, will not only hold evangelistic campaigns but will adversely support the pastoral ministry and produce more mature church members through their thorough training and seminars.

### **Conclusion**

The introduction of Adventism in Western Kenya encountered multiple identity crises that emanated from the pioneers' period. The Missionaries could not tactfully counteract the African cultures, traditions, and their way of life. The attitude with which the Missionaries approached and handled African Traditional Religion made it difficult for their ministry to produce unwavering and uncompromising converts in this region because of the weak foundation they laid.

Amid diverse identity crises, The Seventh-day Adventist Church in this territory has managed to evangelize the region through its various institutions such as learning institutions, health institutions, ADRA, and ASI, among many others. Through these avenues, Adventism has made remarkable impacts with tangible evidence of its presence in the region. The Seventh-day Adventists are Biblically based adherents, who use the Bible as the ultimate yardstick in all its undertakings, which include response to African Traditional Religion, emerging cultural issues, and handling Ellen G. White's critics in a logical and non-controversial approach.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary**

Chapter one of this study introduced the reader to the coming of Adventism in Western Kenya, a geographical territory that covers twenty county governments. A brief general history of Christianity in Kenya with different missionary pioneers is highlighted in this section. This chapter also sets out the statement of the problem, the purpose, significance, delimitation, methodology of the study, and a review of key materials.

Chapter two discussed Christianity in Western Kenya, having a broader look at Christianity, not only in Kenya but in Africa as a whole. The shape of Christianity in Kenya was a product of both charismatic and non-religious activities, a foundation laid by both foreign and local missionaries. This chapter also confirmed that Christianity got its entry point into the country via the Coastal region. The efforts to abolish the slave trade in the country by the coming of various Christian Missionary entities yielded much fruit as mentioned in this section.

The inroads made by these missionaries into different parts of the country, and their endeavors to put up several structures, especially along the Coast, propelled their missionary activities and attracted indigenous converts. The research looked into the coming of Christianity to the Western region, singling out four main tribes and their worldview of Christianity. It was confirmed in this part the denominations that used to dominate the region before the introduction of Western Christianity, and the coming

of African Instituted churches in Kenya. Lastly, the writer historically traced the arrival, development, expansion, and growth of Adventism in Kenya.

Chapter three enumerated the early stages of Adventism in Western Kenya, commencing with the great Pre-Advent movement in Britain and Europe, spearheaded by Miller, making its way to Africa, then to British East Africa (Kenya). The writer highlighted the first European settlers in Kenya, particularly at Gendia where Adventism was birthed in the country by its pioneers, A. A. Carscallen and Peter Nyambo. Their interactions with non-Adventist Missionaries came into the picture in this section whereby the researcher noted the relentless spirit of these pioneer Adventist Missionaries as they struggled to orient the local natives to Adventism, the Sabbath-keeping symbols, baptism, and naming of the new converts.

The content of this chapter included the successful settlement at Gendia, eruption of world war, vandalism at Kamagambo, and prevailing factors that led to the Adventist movement. The painful experience of Carscallen and his firmness to the Adventist faith that led him to conscription was also covered in this section. The cruelty of the then-government leaders that forced many Missionaries into unwarranted internships at Kaimosi did not stop Missionary activities but rather provided opportunities for the local Missionaries to continue with the work. Towards the end of this chapter, the researcher discovered that in as much as World War I posed negative impacts on Missionary activities in the country, with its aftermath effects, still the Missionaries could perceive it as a blessing in disguise, opening numerous opportunities for the propagation of their missionary objectives. Finally, at the end of this chapter, the writer categorically pointed out the names of some of the enthusiastic and passionate native Missionaries and Evangelists whose contribution in

the expansion of Adventism in Western Kenya never went unrecognized in the history of the Adventist Church in this region.

Chapter four of this research dealt with remarkable developments in Adventism in Western Kenya, from sketchy administrative structure to the current organized and well-structured leadership. The Adventist Church in Western Kenya has experienced numerical growth over the years as clarified in this section. The researcher reflected on the institutions that have been instrumental in the growth and expansion of Adventism in this part of the country, namely, educational, medical, and publishing. The writer also noted other integral entities that have significantly participated in fulfilling the Adventist Mission in this region, such as the Missionary Volunteer Society (MV), Junior Missionary Volunteer Society (JMV), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and Adventist Lay Persons Services and Industries (ASI).

Chapter five of this work presented pertinent issues about the identity struggles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Western Kenya and multiple challenges. In this chapter the researcher pointed out and examined a few of them as follows; crisis linked to African Traditional Religion, crisis linked to some cultural realities and their impact on the Adventist faith such as polygamy, wife inheritance, spiritualism, interpretation and place of Ellen White's written work, and finally politics and bullying within the Church leadership. The researcher laid out biblically-based responses to these crises in harmony with the Adventist teachings. In the concluding segment of this section, the researcher historically traced the coming of Adventism in Kenya, the strategies laid by the pioneer Missionaries in spreading Adventism and suggested that, for the Church to continue engaging in the mission and its expansion, the appropriate prospects of Adventism in this region could be our

learning institutions, health institutions, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and Adventist Lay Persons Services and Industries.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the coming of Adventism to Western Kenya can be traced from the pre-Advent movement that shook the Western world known as the Millerite movement which caused the White Missionaries to traverse various parts of the world with the Adventist message including the African Continent. The coming and expansion of Christianity in Kenya is attributed to the early missionary activities in the coastal region. History records that many African religious groups from Western Kenya emanated from mainstream churches that were brought by the foreign colonizers to maintain African culture and traditions within Christianity. The expansion and spread of Adventism in other areas of the country besides the regions of Nyanza (Western Kenya) grew slowly, however, dedication exhibited by the few converts in the early 1930s, who turned to be evangelists and local missionaries performed remarkably and are ranked as primary contributors of the general significant growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in these regions.

It is worth noticing that the Adventist message came to the African continent through various entry points; Egypt in the North, Sierra Leone in the West, South Africa in Southern Africa, and Tanzania in East Africa. It eventually moved from Central Africa then to West Africa towards the dawn of the nineteenth century. The movement continued to penetrate through two opposite countries, one from the North (Egypt) and the other one from the South (South Africa), and made its way to British East Africa (modern Kenya) via Tanganyika in 1906. The movement encountered diverse challenges including the eruption of World War I, inscription and insubordination by the then government, detention, and vandalism. Evidently, in the

midst of all these, the relentless spirit of the early Adventist missionaries, both foreign and local, allowed them to grab any available opportunity to proclaim the Adventist message. When the number of Western missionaries increased, as a strategy of spreading Adventism, they divided themselves into different groups to various directions in the region, opening more mission stations. They also managed to recruit the first few converts into missionary work. During World War I, when the Western missionaries were detained, the local missionaries engaged in several missionary activities that included opening more mission stations, schools, and training centers. These entities worked so well as avenues of winning more converts to Adventism in Western Kenya including other regions of the country. Numerous changes have been witnessed since the introduction of Adventism in Western Kenya, more especially in leadership structures, numerical growth, church institutions, and other key entities that have profusely contributed toward fulfilling the mission of the Church with tangible shreds of evidence in the Western Kenya region.

The introduction of Adventism in Western Kenya met the challenges of dealing with several crises since the Missionaries could not tactfully counteract the African cultures, traditions, and their way of life. The attitude with which the Missionaries approached and handled African Traditional Religion made it difficult for their ministry to produce unwavering and uncompromising converts in this region because of the weak foundation they laid. Amid diverse identity crises, The Seventh-day Adventist Church in this territory has managed to evangelize the region through its various institutions such as learning institutions, health institutions, ADRA, and ASI, among many others. Through these avenues, Adventism has made remarkable impacts with tangible evidence of its presence in the region. The Seventh-day Adventists are Biblically based adherents, whose ultimate yardstick in all its

undertakings is the Bible. They use this textbook to respond for instance to the crises mentioned above and also in dealing with critics of Ellen White logically and tactfully.

### **Recommendations**

From the studies and discoveries of this research, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. The study of Seventh-day Adventism can be done through its integration into some specific groups of people such as the Luos, the Kisii, and the Luyha.
2. More archival studies should be emphasized in re-evaluating the historical development of Seventh-day Adventism in Kenya.
3. The responsible persons in handling baptismal candidates should be very thorough in their teachings, making sure the candidates are well grounded in Biblical teachings as taught by the Adventist Church to avoid the mistake that was made by the missionaries, who could not address cultural and pertinent issues that ended up producing weak and compromising members.
4. The Church leadership should embrace simplicity and humility in rendering services in their respective positions and shun politics and bullying of all kinds.
5. The Evangelism department of the Church should engage and give full support to different gifted persons and other church-sponsored entities in evangelizing Western Kenya with an Adventist message since there is a lot to be done in this region.

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