



24 ❧ A small man of giant wisdom

In 1926, a boy named Wayindama was born in the territory of Kahemba. At that time, many areas were not yet evangelized. The villagers still lived under the weight of their customs and traditions. The missionaries were still in the phase of exploration and initial contact for the planting of Christianity.

The young Wayindama began his primary education at age nine, was baptized in 1940, and took the name Emmanuel. He finished his basic education in 1941 at Kamayala. Very gifted, this man of small stature, slim but wise, was appointed teacher in Mutalawanga, then in Kamayala. He had participated in a competition to select the best candidates, and was selected as one of them. Married to Eunice Kamena, he continued his studies at the Kalonda Bible Institute, where he later became a professor.

In 1962, unrest rocked the country. Xenophobia was everywhere. No one wanted to be under the supervision of foreigners. The various tribal wars in the region of the Kasai created a gulf between the Baluba, Pende, Lulua, and Chokwe. In this context, Wayindama left the Kasai for Kandala, where the Bible institute was transferred. But things deteriorated quickly because of the fighting that broke out in the region.¹ Rev. Emmanuel Wayindama was forced to go back to his native Kamayala.

Emmanuel Wayindama with his wife Eunice Kamena

1 For more about Wayindama's role at this time, see "That's all you can do to me" (chapter 26).

The first thing to remember is that this man was the first pastor in the territory of Kahemba with extensive biblical training. Many had become pastors with limited biblical training, on the basis of the missionaries' esteem and recommendation. His solid training contributed greatly to the growth of his strong and peaceful personality.

The second thing to remember was his contribution to translating the Bible into local languages. He was part of the team for translating the Chokwe Bible. He believed that preaching in the local trade language was not enough; Christians needed to be given opportunity to read the Bible in their native tribal tongue, so they could meditate on the word of God. A translation in their own language would constitute an important factor in the strengthening and deepening of Christianity. According to him, Christianity had to become something that belonged to each community. It should not be a foreign object. On the contrary, it had to take root in the culture, morals, and ideas of the people who received it.

Responding to the call of the Lord in going anywhere the church needed him, he was a man open to others. His open-mindedness permitted him to put himself completely at the service of his fellows. Testimonies from the local church portray him as the pioneer of the orientation course at the missionary station in Kandala. He was also the source of inspiration for many young leaders.

But the church, though it preached the gospel, the truth, did not pay much attention to the material needs of its servants, at least not to those of its black servants who put themselves at its disposal. These men and woman who responded to the call of Christ did so at the peril of their health, because they lacked transportation. Covering large distances on bicycle or on foot, Rev. Wayindama was employed over and over to settle and arbitrate conflicts, belonging as he did to the class of the wise.

In spite of these difficulties, he did not become discouraged. In all his prayers he repeated, in song, "Lord, it's you whom I ask for strength." Those who were beside him in the last moments of his life, including the Rev. Athanase Musende,² affirm that they witnessed in 1991 the death of a pious man.

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² See "Athanase Musende's last pastoral visit" (chapter 88).