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**COMMUNICATING THE ADVENTIST MESSAGE  
IN CONTEXT: A GHANAIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is the purpose of this paper to affirm that it is necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to continually seek and find the appropriate means of communicating its message so that it is readily heard, understood, accepted and applied in diverse cultural and social settings. Right from the era of Western missionary enterprise in Africa, native receptors of the gospel have not been passive, rather, they have consistently contributed to the planting and spreading of Christianity on African soil. This includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Initially, the results of missionary efforts in winning converts were in trickles. However, the additional efforts of local converts and preachers brought tremendous growth into the church. A crucial role in the whole process of interpretation and application of Adventist truth to real-life issues within the Ghanaian socio-cultural context is brought into focus.

This paper begins with a short overview of how religion and culture are perceived in the African context. It looks at an inter-play between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and some aspects of Ghanaian culture in enhancing the spread of the gospel. In this regard, several instances are cited to reflect some aspects of Akan world-view. The work focuses on the efforts the church is making to embrace some aspects of Ghanaian culture and how to adapt them into the evangelistic process. It is to be noted that not all the aspects of

contextualization by the Seventh-day Adventist Church are employed. However, what have been discussed are few examples of the efforts the Seventh-day Adventist Church is making in the enterprise of contextualization in Ghana.

## **OVERVIEW OF RELIGION AND CULTURE**

A close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African culture and is the determining principle of African life. It is no exaggeration that in traditional Africa, religion is life and life is religion. Africans are engaged in religion in whatever they do. Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives both in this world and the next.

Many colonial administrators have perpetrated the destruction of indigenous cultures through their ruthless and relentless practices, from the stripping of forests and theft of land to the wholesale enslavement of populations<sup>1</sup>. This accusation sounds rather biased and harsh, but admittedly in recent decades foreign Missions have frequently had a bad press. While it is often acknowledged that missionaries have done a lot of good, they are increasingly regarded as agents of Western culture who have helped to destroy local traditions and who have had a major part in creating a church that has remained “foreign” to the people they came to serve. Too often, missionaries were said to have indeed simply exported a Western brand of Christianity to their field of labour. Tragically, some have often failed to understand the deep significance of ancient traditions and values. Western intellectual framework, within which Western missionaries worked, assumed the primacy of Western culture. Consequently, Western missionaries’ attitudes to African cultures and

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Lewis, *The Missionaries – God and the Indians*, (Penguin Books, 1988), P.43

traditions were so negative that they ignored the critical features that could serve as springboards for the transmission of the gospel. The missionaries adopted the doctrine of “tabula rasa”. This doctrine of tabula rasa is a doctrine that claims that there is nothing in the pre-Christian (primal) cultures on which the Christian missionaries can build. Every aspect of the non-Christian culture had to be destroyed before Christianity can be introduced. The doctrine assumed that African cultures had no role in the missionary process and had to be radically displaced or suppressed in the pursuance of nurturing deep Christian life. With regards to the approach adopted by Western missionaries in Africa, Kofi Asare Opoku has this to say:

The Church in Africa..... was part of the cultural invasion from Europe which did not have much regard for the dignity of African culture and which therefore adopted a disdainful and condemnatory attitude to things African. This in turn led to the despising and disbasement of the African. The intolerant and rather authoritarian manner in which this enterprise was carried out left a deep wound in the African Spirit. There was a negation of the African experience, in spite of the undeniable contribution of the Church to Africa.<sup>2</sup>

The consequence of the approach by Western missionaries was that the type of Christianity introduced among the Africans was perceived as too Western in its character, and thus, an “imposition” of European version of Christianity, which bore limited African imprint. Christianity was seen more as an imposition of Western values and world-view. Robert Schreiter has this to say:

If contextualization is about getting to the very heart of the culture, and Christianity is taking its place there, will not the Christianity that emerges look very much like a product of that culture? Are we going to continue giving cultures the equivalent of an artificial heart...an organ

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<sup>2</sup> Opoku, K.A; *The Church in Africa and Contemporary Sociological Challenges*, (Ecumenical Review, 40 1988), P.241

that can do the job the culture needs, but one that will remain forever?<sup>3</sup>

It could be recalled that several attempts by the European missionaries to introduce Christianity to Africa were full of difficulties and failures. The Europeans' attempt to plant Christianity in Africa would not have succeeded if not for some Africans who appropriated the gospel to suit their cultural milieu.

### **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION**

A culture is an integrated system that gives its people a sense of dignity, security, identity and continuity. It includes the values, beliefs, customs, institutions and material artifacts of a group. It is stable, but at the same time sufficiently flexible to cope with the contingencies of change that confront it. E.B Tylor defines culture as "the complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a person as a member of society".<sup>4</sup> This gives a clear view that culture is the way of life of a group of people, and the way they cope with all dimensions of the context in which they live.

In order to realize the necessity of appropriate adaptation, Seventh-day Adventists recognize that, each culture is distinct. Ellen White has written that "the apostle Paul varied his manner of labour, shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed." She insisted that workers with God "are not to be ....stereotyped in their manner of working, unable to see that their advocacy of truth must vary with the class of people among whom they are working and the circumstances they have to meet."<sup>5</sup> The model of adaptation is

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<sup>3</sup> Schrieter, J.J., *Constructing Local Theologies*, (Mary Knoll, N.Y Orbis, 1985), P.150.

<sup>4</sup> Tylor E.B., *The Origins of Culture, Part 1*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, (Review and Herald, Washington D.C., 1915) P.118, 119.

prescribed by the first verses of the book of Hebrews which is a guide from God to help understand how God accomplished the task of adaptation. He spoke “through the prophets at many times and in various ways” (Hebrews 1:1) God communicated Himself and His plan of Salvation through the language, symbols, customs and culture of prophets and other people. The content of the communication was given by God, but the means of communication did not disregard the language, setting or even the personality and education of the biblical writer.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes the diversity that characterizes the Church and the world. At the same time it cannot overlook the fact that all cultures have been tainted by sin. The gospel by its nature challenges and calls for the transformation of each culture. To the church, the Holy Spirit is the agent of that transformation, which can take place only if the message is communicated in the context of the receiving culture. By this, the gospel can be heard, understood, accepted and applied. Each human being is nurtured within a cultural context. Individuals and communities interpret the world through this context. They evaluate incoming ideas, beliefs and values through their own pre-existing worldview. The Church believes that if it is unable to share the gospel in terms that are intelligible to the listeners, then it is failing to give the people the opportunity to hear, understand and accept God’s word.

The church realizes that the need to be understood is revealed by the use of language. Language is probably the most pervasive characteristic of a culture. It encapsulates the thought forms, the belief system, and the worldview of the people. It facilitates the expression of all that is vital and necessary in a culture.

If people do not understand the language, conceptual communication is almost impossible. In matters of religion, no language speaks to the heart, mind and innermost feelings as does the mother-tongue. The possession of the Scriptures in mother-tongues or vernacular means that African peoples have access to the original sources of Christian teaching, on the authority of which they could, if need be, establish their own churches. The use of the vernacular Bible in the vernacular is a clear indication that one can hear God speaking to one in one's own language. The African gets meaning in the use of the vernacular Bible.

The importance of this fact is theological. The Christian belief that the Bible in the vernacular remains in every respect the Word of God, has its basis in what took place on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, through the first Christian witnesses, spoke at one and the same time to people 'who had come from every country in the world' (Acts 2:5), each in his own language, causing them to 'hear the great things that God has done' in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:1-12). Hearing the Word of God in one's own language is not to be sneered at and left to 'illiterates'; it is essential if we seriously seek growth in our understanding of Jesus Christ. It is upon this premise that when the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries came to Ghana, they embraced the use of the vernacular. The use of the vernacular Bible was encouraged. A team of translators was set up to translate the New Advent Hymnal to "Ghana Akwanwhefo Nnwom", the Twi version and 'Ghana Advento Lala', the Ga version. With the introduction of formal education by the Seventh-day Adventists, every school was mandated to open a night school to train adult church members who were not privileged to have formal education, to learn how to read and write the vernacular so that they could read and understand the Bible.

To make their worship look more Ghanaian and to be meaningful, local songs in the form of anthems, choruses and 'abibidwom', a local vocal musical form normally performed by women groups in the church, are used at Sabbath Services. Sometimes the Choir and the Singing Band sing songs of local composers either in the tempo of highlife (a popular Ghanaian guitar band music), adowa (a traditional Ashanti court and recreational music) or agbadza (a traditional Ewe recreational music) to the admiration of the entire congregation. The simplicity of the lyrics and the language is a motivating factor to urge the worshippers participate more meaningfully. The use of some traditional musical instruments is a clear evidence of how the church embraces contextualization. Though the church makes use of some Western musical instruments such as the keyboard, trumpet and guitar, more often than not, some instruments usually regarded as traditional are integrated in worship. These traditional instruments are idiophones which include instruments like bells, rattles, stick clappers, and castanets.

Membranophones which are made up of drums with parchment heads like the 'donno', the hourglass drum, are used. The rattle which is a gourd wrapped in strings of seeds, popularly called 'maracas' is frequently used to accompany singing. These traditional musical instruments, whenever they are used to accompany any type of music bring meaning to the worshippers. Emotions are aroused, worship becomes lively and ecstatic and worshippers are fully integrated into the worship as they move the body rhythmically to accompany the music being played. On the mode of worship, some choose to make a "joyful noise unto the Lord" (Psalms 98:4, KJV). Others seek to solemnize worship by opting to "be still before the Lord" (Zech. 2:13). Texts such as Psalms 46:10 and



47:6,7 and Ezra 3:11 indicate that there is a place and time for the modes of worship, depending on the circumstances.

Interestingly, a group of enthusiastic Adventists engaged in speaking in tongues, loud laughter and shouting. By the dawn of the past century, Ellen G. White, an early prophetess of the church, began to call the church to order, warning against any worship characterized by a “bedlam of noise” involving “shouting, with drums, music, and dancing.”<sup>6</sup> During a Week of Prayer in 1901 Ellen cautioned:

Careful management on all points is needed, so that we shall neither run into the fire of fanaticism nor drift into formalism, which will freeze our own souls and the souls of others.<sup>7</sup>

Quite apart from the use of language and other modes of worship, the church has other means of adapting to the culture. Various labels have been placed on the process of adapting the message to culture. While I use the term adaptation for the purpose of this paper, others use the terms such as critical contextualization, indigenization or incarnational mission. The point is that there is a God-given responsibility to ensure that the authentic message is hearable. The Church believes that while it is always assured that the Holy Spirit brings conviction and conversion, God has placed on it the responsibility to communicate the message and power of the gospel in the best possible ways and with as much clarity as possible.

This responsibility involves two aspects. One aspect is the church’s responsibility to adapt the message and the other is the need for the messenger

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<sup>6</sup> White, E.G.; *Selected Messages, Book 2*, P.36

<sup>7</sup> White, E.G., *Manuscript Releases, Vol 17*, P.48

to be adaptable. In the process of communication, neither stands alone. However, for purposes of this discussion there is the need to consider them separately.

### **ADAPTATION OF THE MESSAGE**

Contextualization of the message is more concerned with manner and emphasis than with content. In an attempt to contextualize the message, certain things are put under consideration.

First, the church tries to find the most effective way to communicate the truth of its fundamental beliefs for each context. In a given situation, some beliefs may prove to be more effective as entering wedges, and others will not be so effective for this purpose. (The church encourages indigenous members to find the most effective language, symbols and values that shape the communication of the message). In finding these appropriate means, they will challenge their respective societies with the claims of the gospel in a much more powerful way than if language, symbolism and values were imported from somewhere else.

Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventism has not only made efforts to redefine religion in general, and Christianity in particular, in African terms but it has also played a role in the reconstruction of the state and the transformation of some of the Ghanaian cultures in general.

### **GOD AND SATURDAY IN AKANLAND**

This section of the work seeks to explain how traditional Akan beliefs of “the Supreme Being (God)” is applied in the spread of the SDA doctrine of the

Sabbath. It also demonstrates how the Akan concept of God resonates with the Sabbath doctrine.

Before the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries came to Ghana, there had been several beliefs and practices pointing to the fact that God is the Creator of the universe and He was thought of as different from all other Spirits and divinities. His powers transcend theirs and He has a unique attribute of immanence. The Akan of Ghana generally holds the belief that God is the Creator and a special name given to Him is 'Kwame', the name of a Saturday-born male. The name 'Onyankopon Kwame' literally God of Saturday, is quite a force to reckon with and a reference point to one of the cardinal doctrines of the Church with regards to its Sabbath truth.

The traditional Akan Seventh-day Adventist has no problem recognizing 'Onyame Kwame' for His day, worshiping or paying Him homage in accordance with the wisdom of the elders and customs, as well as loving and obeying the will and ways of his Creator. According to an elder, Opanin J.K Amoah, if there is anything he is positive and categorically sure of, it is the knowledge that, God, the Supreme Being, is called Kwame in his language, and that the elders say His special day "birthday" or day of worship is Saturday. Anyone trying to deny this fact of Akan tradition would be considered dishonest.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionally, the Akuapem regard the weekly cycle as beginning from Sunday (first day of the week), and ending with Saturday (seventh day of the week). This is true of the Asante as well and of all Akan people. Rattray, writing in the early 1920s affirms that the Asante call God 'Onyame' or 'Onyankopon Kwame' "whose day of service is a Saturday", adding that this Asante God is the

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<sup>9</sup> Interview granted to Opanin J.K Amoah of Agona Ashanti SDA Church (Age 85)

same as Jehovah of the Israelites whom they worshipped on the Sabbath or Saturday.<sup>10</sup> Two decades later, Dr J.B Danquah produced a work on the Akan and made some remarks on the Akan God of Saturday. Danquah noted that the Akan recognized that “all men are issues of the first progenitor, the ultimate ancestor and creative Nana whose day is Saturday: Nana Nyankopon Kwame.....the divinity whom the Akan call Nyankopon Kwame, the “Creator” God of Saturday.<sup>11</sup> This God of the Akan is also “The Supreme Being, the Saturday Sky-God.”<sup>12</sup>

The sacredness of Saturday to the Akan Supreme God, is again underscored by Danquah as follows:

The God of religion is therefore called “He of Saturday”, either because He is supposed to have been born on Saturday or that Saturday is the appropriate day for His worship. On every fortieth Saturday, called Dapaa or Dapaada, Open or Free Day, special ceremonies are performed in respect of Saturday’s God.<sup>13</sup>

Subsequent researchers who followed the trail of Danquah discovered the same essential truth about the Akan God, namely, His sacred day of Saturday. Dr. K.A Busia, enumerating the various titles which the Ashantis ascribe to God observed that “he is also personalized as Onyankopon Kwame the Great One who appeared on Saturday”.<sup>14</sup> Williamson did not contradict his predecessors on this point. “Onyankopon”, he wrote, “also receives the day name Kwame, the

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<sup>10</sup> Rattray, Sutherland; *The Ashanti*, (The Clarendon Press, 1923) pp 141, 144

<sup>11</sup> Danquah, J.B; *The Akan Doctrine of God: A fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion, Second Editio*, (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968), pp 29 & 30

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p7

<sup>13</sup> Op cit p.43

<sup>14</sup> Busia, K.A; *The Ashanti of the Gold Coast. African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African People*, (Ed. Daryll Forde Oxford, Oxford Universities Press, 1976), p 192.

name of a male born on Saturday, which is reckoned to be the Supreme Being's day of worship. This day name also indicates that the Supreme Being is thought of as personal".<sup>15</sup>

The spread of the Akan people throughout the greater section of Southern Ghana is apparently one reason for the universality of the 'Onyame Kwame' concept among societies in this part of the country. It is against the background of some of the cultural contexts that the Seventh-day Adventist Message has gained prominence in most of the Southern parts of Ghana especially in the Akan speaking areas. The Akan doctrine or concept of God resonates with the Sabbath doctrine. The understanding is that some of the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventists which find their interpretations in some of the traditional or cultural practices are easily employed to ensure effective communication and adaptability. If one is asked why the Seventh-day Adventist Church is quite predominant in most of the southern parts of the country, particularly Ashanti, it is partly explained that the already existing cultural and traditional practices are the effective tools which are adopted to serve as a bait to attract the would be converts. The Church recognizes that its perception of truth develops in a linear historical progression and as such it applies it and communicates it in the richness and diversity of the Church and the world around it.

### **ADAPTATION OF THE MESSENGER**

The Church holds the view that the task of its messengers is to identify with a people and their culture without losing their own identity. Integrity in

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<sup>15</sup> Williamson, Sydney George; *Akan Religion and Christian faith: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions*, (Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 1965), p.87

Mission demands both identification and identity. The Church contends that incarnational Mission approaches the world with a willingness to take risks for the sake of the gospel, while at the same time maintaining integrity of the gospel and the Mission itself. In other words, it takes the Mission and ministry of Jesus seriously. Jesus is not only an example in personal piety but an example for all those who have been discipled and are willing to take the gospel commission as their mandate. The principle of identification without losing identity means that every aspect of the Church's interface with the world will be critically examined to ensure that they are facilitating rather than inhibiting the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Church, in using the incarnational approach to mission has several implications to follow. Briefly stated are the following:

1. The incarnational method ensures that the message will make sense for each group of people.
2. An incarnational approach by the cross-cultural worker communicates to the recipients of the message that although sin has tainted everyone and everything, all that is good and consistent with Christian faith in their culture is to be respected and affirmed.
3. Incarnational mission establishes a participatory dialogue for seeking truth.
4. Incarnational ministry and mission focus confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and awaken people in each cultural setting to the need of God's gracious provision in Jesus Christ.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church started expanding in Ghana when African workers joined their missionary counterparts. The role of some Ghanaian ministers and workers in the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ghana has been discussed in chapter two. Tracing a brief history of the church in Agona Ashanti, it could be seen that the European missionaries had the task of identifying with the people and their culture without losing their own identity. This process helped the fast spread of the message to all parts of the Agona traditional area. The move to get Adventism started in the Ashanti Region of Ghana was initiated at a General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held in Sierra Leone in the late 1913. It was at this conference that Pastor William H. Lewis and his group of men were instructed to build a base for Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the heart of Ghana, which obviously pointed to Ashanti.

In October 1914 Lewis and his party arrived in Kumasi and some days later set out in search of a new station. On November 6, 1914, the paramount chief of Agona, Nana Kwame Boakye I and his elders offered Pastor Lewis a large tract of land and a residential building in his palace for his immediate use until permanent headquarters were built. Pastor Lewis started the establishment of a church and school in the chief's palace. The chief sent a word to all his subjects to send boys to the whiteman's school at Agona. In the middle of 1915, thirty four (34) pupils were enrolled for formal education and five (5) converts for the beginning of Agona Church. Both the school pupils and the new converts used a room in the chief's palace as classroom and a place of worship. Lewis had the sense of belongingness throughout the period that he was housed at the chief's palace because of how he adapted himself to the very situation in which

he found himself. He could speak a little Twi and he had direct interaction with the chief and his elders and even with his converts. This, the people say was one of the attributes to the growth of the church. Instead of isolating himself and planting his converts at a secluded place, they all socialized together to meet each other's spiritual and social needs.

When the missionaries realized the immense contribution of the African pastors and converts to the growth of the church, there was a shift in leadership roles. More Ghanaian pastors were permitted to lead the church from its headquarters to the local and district levels. Today, the Church is quite independent in its leadership roles. From the headquarters of the church in Accra to the various Conferences and Mission fields all over the country, there are Ghanaian leaders shepherding the church to its present status.

### **THE DANGERS OF INAPPROPRIATE ADAPTATION**

In making their message to be heard, the church needs to be alert to some very real dangers. The Church contends that just as they lose the effectiveness of communication of the message when they fail to contextualize appropriately and critically, so they lose its effectiveness when they value the cultural context to such an extent that it dominates the content of the message. In these situations, the Church will be in danger of losing the message itself. The Church deems it most important that it grants to each other the right to express its message in context, while at the same time recognizing that it has the responsibility to listen to others and by comparing various issues pertaining at a particular time. The best is taken to ensure favourable and healthy co-existence. At times, it will be very difficult to find the balance between what appears to be



opposite ends of the pole. If the church fails to do that and drifts in the direction of either an uncritical syncretism or an absolutist ethnocentrism, it does a great disservice to the universal mission of the Church. Seventh-day Adventists will best fulfill the mandate they believe has been given them by God as they honour and maintain beliefs and structures that unite them while continuing to work toward finding appropriate ways to critically contextualize their ministry and message. To the church, appropriate contextualization of ministry and message, adopting the incarnational model of Jesus Christ is the means of bringing unity to the church.

### **CHALLENGES**

In communicating the adventist message in Ghana, there had been several challenges as far as some traditional Ghanaian practices are concerned. Notable among these challenges are polygamy, funerals, chieftaincy and work on the Sabbath.

Marriage in the traditional Ghanaian sense is so unique and prestigious. It is honourable, it makes one responsible and serves as a source of labour. Polygamy, a form of marriage is permitted in some Ghanaian societies. Since the institution of marriage and family life is a means of perpetuating the lineage, prolific child bearing is a great honour and achievement. For this reason, marrying more than one wife is common in the Ghanaian society and sometimes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some people marry more wives because they want more children to serve as a source of labour. Barrenness is another factor to polygamy because the inability to produce children after marrying is considered one of the greatest misfortunes. Barrenness and sterility are threats

to human existence and are therefore condemned by many West African societies. So serious is this calamity that in some African societies including Ghana, childless people cannot become ancestors after death. The Bible does not encourage polygamy because it is one of the cultural beliefs and practices which makes the African Christian vulnerable to "schemes" of the devil. Anyone who breaks up marriage because of one's inability to produce a child or children is to be disciplined. On the other hand if a man marries more than one wife, the said man and the second wife, if she is a Seventh-day Adventist church member, are to be disciplined.

Another problem which poses a challenge to the church is funeral celebrations. In Ghana, funerals are great social occasions. They generally involve whole communities who gather together at these events to perform appropriate rites which help to strengthen the bond between the living and the dead. Anyone who persistently fails to attend funerals in the Ghanaian society is not taken serious. To attend funerals is a reciprocal duty because it is a good turn which deserves another. In Ghana most funerals are held on Saturdays and because of this some Seventh-day Adventists who want to satisfy their social and cultural obligations as far as funerals are concerned violate the principles of true Sabbath observance. However, very serious minded Seventh-day Adventists would not compromise their faith. The church has several ways of curbing this situation when a big funeral falls on a Saturday. Some churches appeal to their members to refrain from breaking the Sabbath. All day prayer and fasting sessions are sometimes organized to sustain church members till sunset. On the next day which is Sunday, Adventist church members show their sympathy by trooping to the bereaved family to console them. This, more or less, has

contributed greatly to the reduction of the incidence of breaking the Sabbath as far as Sabbath funerals are concerned. Any violation to the church's teachings with regards to the true observance of the Sabbath would not be countenanced by the church. Such culprits would face disciplinary action by the church.

On chieftaincy, the church does not have much problem. The reason being that the chieftaincy institution is associated with polytheism which any serious minded christian would not like to be involved. It is however not very common to hear that a Seventh-day Adventist is a chief.

It is however important to note that the above-mentioned problems and some petty ones which confront the Seventh-day Adventist church have, by the mercies of, God reduced drastically except a few cases which come in trickles.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Seventh-day Adventist church of today will be effective as it finds ways to the message in terms of the culture of the recipients. This is what the Church refers to as Jesus' method. Relevant and authentic theology is the one that provides answers to the pressing needs of adherents and meet their vital needs and satisfy their hopes and aspirations by taking both the Bible and their entire cultural and historical milieu seriously. People need to experience and express their faith in a way that gives them identity as children of God. In spite of its Western origin and connections, the Seventh-day Adventist church does not dismiss African concerns as irrelevant.

It is however observed that much as the Seventh-day Adventist church adopts some modes of traditional elements to spread its message and evangelize the people, much caution is exercised. Many people question why

the church does not use drums, either traditional or Western, why there is no clapping of hands and why the mode of worship is not like some other churches. These questions throw a big challenge to the Seventh-day Adventist church today because it seems it does not employ new trends in the style of worship. The explanation the Seventh-day Adventist church gives is that it does not want to be too 'worldly' since the application of excessive drumming and dancing may drift worshippers' attention to secular things rather than sacred things. Much as the Seventh-day Adventist church has been criticized for being quite selective and discriminatory in the application of some African modes in its worship, much effort is made to ensure its smooth running to face the challenges of the day.

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