

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A PROGRAM TO CURB THE EFFECTS OF SYNCRETISM ON QUALITY OF WORSHIP IN ERINMOPE DISTRICT, EKITI CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, NIGERIA

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The quality of worship in Erinmope District, Ekiti Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was impacted by the effects of syncretism on her members.

This work ascertained the presence and effects of syncretism in Erinmope District on the quality of worship and proffered solution to avoid its continuous occurrence through an intervention program. Quantitative method was adopted, using questionnaire to gather data and analysis was done using, hierarchical clusters, cross-tabulation, pierson correlations and percentages. A Focused Group Discussion was also used to ascertain the impact of the intervention program.

The study revealed that syncretism was a practice in Erinmope District, as more than seventy percent of respondents (77.3% male and 70.6% female) agreed that some members were still in one occult group or the other as at the time this survey was carried out. That some members still visit *Babalawo* is assented to by 60.7% of

respondents. That some still communicate with the dead to rest in peace is consented to by 87.5% of respondents. That some members do fear to share their prayer requests before the congregation or to one another to avoid turning it to a misfortune is attested to by 71.5% of the respondents. That there are still adherents of Ogboni fraternity among the members is attested to by 53.6% of the respondents, which is a little more than average of the respondents. That there were confirmed cases of witchcraft in the time past is attested to by 91.1% percent suggests that there is a need for intervention. Conclusively, above eighty-seven percent (87.5%) of the respondents indicated that, some members are still practicing ancestral worship as they participate in *Egungun* Festival. The afore-mentioned facts and members' involvement in them greatly impacted the quality of worship in Erinmope District negatively.

The study further showed that the Church is educated to a point, as 94.6% of the respondents consented that obedience is paramount in worship and a requirement for genuine worship. That Christians' participation in traditional festival is not advisable; it could lead away from God because of the element of idolatry, which is attested to, by 91.1% of the respondents. They are also aware that dual allegiance has a serious negative effect on the return of tithes and offering as 89.1% of the respondents attested to this. They are aware that becoming a Traditional Chief as a Christian could lead to idolatry as 96.4% of the respondents attested to this. Moreover, they are also aware that compromise of Christian faith is possible when a believer accepts traditional Chieftaincy title, as 75% of the respondents attested to this. They also responded, that the practice of partisan politics might affect Sabbath keeping. Conclusively, 96.4% of the respondents revealed that they are aware that Christian worship requires total surrendering to the Almighty God. The intervention program made a positive impact within the District and the work therefore

recommends, regular bible study, prayer meetings, and sanctions for offenders as some of the ways to curb syncretism in Erinmope District.

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A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Oladele Ezekiel Adeoye

February 2023

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Dedicated to the Almighty God

The Sustainer of my life and the Promise Keeper.

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LIST OF TRADITIONAL WORDS AND MEANINGS

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Aaye-Oja | The name of a town |
| 2. Babalawo | Witch Doctor |
| 3. Buba | Upper Dress for either male or female |
| 4. Egungun | Masquerade (this has do with ancestral worship) |
| 5. Erinmope-Ekiti | The name of a town |
| 6. Fila | Traditional cap |
| 7. Gele | Head Gear |
| 8. Iro | Wrapper (clothe used by women for covering) |
| 9. Iloye | A community within Erinmope-Ekiti |
| 10. Orogbo | A festival in Erinmope-Ekiti |
| 11. Oji | The name of a community |
| 12. Otun-Ekiti | The name of a town |
| 13. Ogboni | Occult Group |
| 14. Sokoto | Traditional trouser (pant) for men |

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, Erinmope District consists of three Churches: Iloye, Oji and Aaye-Oja, all established within Moba Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. In fact, the distance is so close that the three churches can be reached on the same Sabbath or at any time of Worship. Iloye and Oji are within Erinmope town, while Aaye-Oja is just 5km away from Iloye: the District Headquarters.

Iloye SDA Church was established in the year 1928, through the effort of one Pastor Adeosun from Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria. However, the first baptism was never conducted until the year 1958 (the Church record book also reveals this fact); after 30 years of existence due to some reasons.¹ One of the reasons is polygamy. A primary source, who had contact with Pastor Adeosun disclosed that the ‘foundational members’ were just Sabbath School members owing to the fact that they married more than one wife. He explained further that the children of these early converts became the baptized members of the Church later on but not until 1958.² History shows also, that some of the early “converts” so to say, never departed from their traditional religious affiliations but merged it with Adventism. This has a serious

¹Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria Ekiti Conference, *100th Anniversary in Ekiti Land*, (1915-2015), 23. The programme booklet contains the History of all the Churches in Ekiti Conference of SDA Church, Nigeria.

²Joseph Olalere, an octogenarian Seventh-day Adventist Church member, Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by the author, Erinmope-Ekiti, 12 September 2017.

effect on worship and the growth of the Church from the onset. The Church was later organised in 1968 and the building dedicated in the year 1984. It is evidently clear here that it took the Church forty good years to grow before organization. One would wonder what could be responsible for the sluggish growth. At this time, the challenge of growth was not in population per se but in finding people who were eligible to serve and lead exemplary life.

Trailing behind Iloye is Aaye-Oja SDA Church. This grew from the mother Church; Iloye, in the year 1988 through the effort of Late J.A Ajisegbede, who introduced Christianity and Adventism to Pa Ojo Olanrewaju his barber friend who was a Sango Worshipper (god of thunder) at that time. An outreach was conducted the following year on 30 July to 6 August 1989, through which many were baptized including Chiefs and the King of Aaye-Oja. With the support of members from Erinmope-Ekiti and Otun-Ekiti (now a nearby District), the Sabbath School membership grew from 1 (Pa Ojo Olanrewaju) to 40 in number and the Church looked promising that the future will be great.³

It is surprising that, the Church has not been organized till today due to a sudden drop in membership as a result of the caliber of the worshippers who could not really serve as leaders in the Church due to their traditional affiliation and some others who were still interested in their former religion they left to accept Adventism. It was later dawned on them that the blending of the two will not be easy and they left. As at 2018 the head count of Aaye-Oja at worship, any Sabbath is less than 13 people, children inclusive. All the converts left except Pa Ojo Olanrewaju's family. It is this family and few members from Otun-Ekiti who left their comfort zone (Mother

³Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria, *100th Anniversary in Ekiti Land*, 23.

Church) to encourage the ‘little flock’ that are presently worshipping at Aaye-Oja so as to ensure that the Church moves on.

The menace of syncretism is still manifesting today in the midst of this Church about her view of the state of the dead. There was a case of incantation (invocation when the unexpected happens) in an emergency situation in the church sometimes ago, when a member was convulsing and an Elder sent to oversee the Church was rendering incantation instead of praying. His words were “*omi ni poro ina...*” meaning, “it is water that quenches fire” and he started asking for water to apply on the man. This saying is common among *Babalawos* (traditional priest) but found in the Church that very day. This troubles those who seek for quality worship and deprives many the joy of worship.

The last Church in this District is Oji SDA Church, which sprang up from Iloye, Erinmope-Ekiti in the year 2000 through the supportive effort of Pastor A.A Elusode and that of Late J.A Ajisegbede.⁴ This Church also has not been organized because there are no people eligible to hold Church offices except the unmarried serious youth but not many. Others, due to polygamy, cultism (*Ogboni fraternity*), traditional chieftaincy, participation in masquerade festival (*Egungun*) become unfitted. The effect of dual allegiance is seen in attendance, giving, and commitment to the things of God during worship.

The membership of Erinmope District on record till date (May 15, 2018) is 295 from 264 I met but the headcount put together children, adults, and visitors has never exceeded 130 since 2015 I arrived here as observed every 2nd and 7th Sabbath of the quarter. The challenge noticed in these Churches is that they all grew from the hand of people with issues-first converts who were not truly converted. As of today,

⁴ Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria, *100th Anniversary in Ekiti Land*, 24.

some of their wives, children and other men who are alive still participate in Egungun Festival, Ogboni Fraternity, ritual and sacrifices to gods as Chiefs in the community, few secretly embrace ancestral veneration, witchcraft and many in politics which has almost turned to another religion.

Due to the presence of this dualism among the members of the Churches, the quality of Worship is jeopardized. Unity, commitment, devotion to the things of God becomes secondary when time, money and presence is required, their first place of affiliation takes preeminence. Those who know them to be Adventists are confused as to who they really are. This has drastically affected the growth of the Church for years. Many children born in the Church are already out in search for a better fulfilling religion. Only few adults can boast of having their children in the Church.

The effect of these syncretic behaviors is noticed in music, returning of tithes and giving of offering, attendance, inactive participation during worship, visitation in moment of challenges. Hence, the need to study the effects of syncretism on the quality of worship in this District.

Statement of the Problem

The prayer of some members whenever the church meets and the status quo of dual allegiance is challenged is that the church would not scatter. Some of the congregants are afraid that the Church may lose some of her members, thinking that living it as it is will keep the church united as one in worship and purpose and possibly foster peace among them. But it was noticed that sitting close together in the Church was not a practice, praying in twos during worship was almost a taboo as they are noticed moving about seeking for a like-minded person to pray with for the fear of revealing their secret to the next person beside them, for they know themselves.

Testimonies are rarely given in worship for the fear of those listening who might turn it to something else that would put the testifier in another grievous problem.

Syncretism seems to be a threat to quality worship in Erinmope District and its effects on the growth of the church appear drastic from inception. It is therefore expedient to proffer a solution to the threat it has imposed on quality worship in Erinmope District as the effects will be studied.

Purpose of the Study

This study is a program to deal with the effects of syncretism in Erinmope District with specific objectives to:

- ascertains the presence of syncretism in Erinmope District,
- identify the effects of syncretism on quality worship within her, and
- develop and implement a contextualized program that would proffer a solution to the problem of syncretism in Erinmope District.

This is pursued in order to ensure that people enjoy quality worship devoid of fear and segregation, but a worship out of a whole-hearted devotion to God alone and a selfless service to humankind in His vineyard which in turn should bring about a healthy growth of the Church in all ramifications.

Delimitation of the Study

The focus of this study is the effects of syncretism on the quality of worship in Seventh-day Adventist Church in Erinmope District.

Methodology and Procedure

Owing to the fact that worship is both a religious and theological issue and syncretism is not a concept strange to the Bible, the study analysed and elucidated the theological meaning of different passages dealing with syncretism and worship in

both the Old Testament and the New Testament using a descriptive pattern. Thus Chapter 2 presents a theological foundation of the subject.

In Chapter 3, the description of the local setting was done. A quantitative method was used to gather data through the use of questionnaire which was analysed using hierarchical cluster, Pearson correlation and other statistical methods to ascertain facts and a week revival was developed and conducted to address the problem.

Chapter four focused on program development, implementation and evaluation, while Chapter 5 gave the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the work.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Biblical Background of Worship

The word ‘worship’ in the Bible connotes a different idea from the way it is popularly understood. Conventionally thinking, worship is to attribute worth to a Supreme Being. That is, worship is described as ascribing to God a Supreme worth. If this is the meaning of worship, then worship will be determined by one’s perception of God and one would need to make his or her own assessment of God’s worth and determine the response that would be adequate in giving glory to Him.¹ In contrast, the Bible defines its own term, for example, in Genesis 4:3-7 Worship is not done based on man’s perception and assessment of God but according to God’s own specification to man. The crux of this specification is obedience borne out of total submission to the will of God.

No wonder, Mahoney defines worship as “an expression of love and adoration to God, which is revealed only with the giving of one’s whole heart and life to Him.”² Another author, Harbison defined worship as “a sacred spiritual exercise that links man with God through the expression of an adoring heart.” He believes that worship proclaims our dependence on God.³ The Biblical survey of the New Testament

¹ David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 15.

² Ralph Mahoney, *Worship Shepherd’s Staff, New Believer’s Training Manual*, 7th ed. (Telanga, India: World Map and Rekka Printers Pvt., 2002), 33.

³ Rob Harbison, “Developing a Theology of Worship for Today,” accessed 12 September 2017, <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/225070942>.

Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reveals that all of the words translated as worship have a different connotation from just attributing worth to a Supreme Being as stated earlier. The Greek word such as *sebomai* (I fear, revere) implies reverence and respect as expressed in Matt 15:9 and Mark 7:7, *latreuo* (I serve) as found in Luke 1:74; 2:37; Matt 4:10 and Luke 4:8; and *proskuneo* (“I bow, come forward to kiss”) as in Matthew 2:2,8; 4:9-10; 20:20; Luke 4:7-8; 24:52; John 4:20-24; 12:20.⁴ *Proskuneo* occurs 59 times in the New Testament and originally carries with it the idea of subjects falling down to kiss the ground before a king or kiss his feet.”⁵ Therefore, to worship appropriately will require emptying ‘self’. The Hebrew word *shachah* explains further, what worship is, in the Bible. “*Shachah* means to depress, prostrate (in homage to royalty or God), bow (self) down, crouch, fall down flat, humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, and make to stoop.”⁶

From the afore-mentioned texts, giving the different meanings of the Greek words for ‘worship’, and the Hebrew word *shachah*, one can deduce that genuine worship requires absolute submission, total surrendering, reverent obedience and service to God. Anything different from this may be questionable. For example in Matthew 15:7-9, it takes one to worship (*sebomai*) by taking heed to the doctrines and keeping the commandment of God. Those who made the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions, whose heart is far away from God but draw near with their lips, who teach for doctrine the commandment of men; their worship is regarded

⁴E. M. Humphrey, “Worship,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2013), 2:1018.

⁵ Grady Scott, “The Meaning of Worship,” accessed 20 February 2019, <http://www.christianlibrary.org/authors/GradyScott/meaningofworship.htm#top>.

⁶ James Strong, *The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 21st Century ed., s.v. “Shachah.”

as vain by Jesus. Therefore, Biblical worship goes far beyond an outward expression or display of religious practices to obeying absolutely the dictates of God the Creator.

Rowley opines, “The real meaning of worship derives in the first place from the God to whom it is directed”⁷ In other words, God is the determinant of how and what worship of Him should be. Worship finds its meaning in God. Another author: Marva J. Dawn espouses that “In genuine worship God is the subject-and we are not.”⁸

Worship, should therefore be seen henceforth in this work as reverencing God for Who He is according to His own dictates, which goes far beyond feeling, to being obedient to “every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4). This follows the line of thought of Paul when he opines, “Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1Cor 10:31). The principle to imbibe in this text is giving glory to God in all things. Therefore, the centrality of worship should be, giving glory to God.

Concept of Worship in the Old Testament

The concept of worship in the Old Testament does not have an isolated meaning different from the ones stated above. It is important to establish the correlation, the how and why it is expressed the way it is in the Old Testament of the Bible. The book of Genesis describes and reveals God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, which arrogates to Him the supreme authority over all that is in the heavens and the earth. Being the Creator, He is worthy of worship and that was established in the relationship of our first parents Adam and Eve before the fall (Gen

⁷ H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1967), 251.

⁸ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 76.

1:1-3-3:8; Rev 4:11). He owns the supreme authority as to whom and how we should worship. Therefore, worship cannot be done anyhow, in its expression must be embedded the will of God to confirm our reverence, loyalty and obedience to Him. Worship that is short of this is something else rather than worship.

“The truth that God is the Creator of heaven and earth is not merely something to believe but something to which we must respond to.”⁹ It is in our response to God that we worship. Therefore, the worship of God requires submission in fear and obedience, to the Almighty God (Ps 19:1-2; 33:6-9; 104:1-9).¹⁰ Another passage in the OT that addresses this well is Isa 6:1-6, which shows that the worship of God requires awe, reverence, awareness of man’s helplessness, the uselessness of self-righteousness and the sense of urgent need to be transformed by God.

Trailing behind this is the fact that God is the source of man’s provisions and sustenance (Ps 104:14-23). A thought of this calls for in-depth worship in this Psalms, for without Him man cannot sustain Himself. Moreover, the revelation of the wisdom of God to man makes him bow before His awesomeness (Job 38:1-7). The answer of God to Job when he questioned God in His adversity reveals the infinity of God’s wisdom which shows the All-Mightiness of God and His worthiness to receive worship (Ps 104:31-35; 148:1-6; 95:6). All these attributes if well understood will foster a genuine worship of God.

Deffinbaugh explains well why God the creator is alone worthy to be worshiped. He claims worship requires submission to God as the Lord of one’s life.¹¹

⁹Robert Deffinbaugh, “The Fruits of the Fall (Genesis 4:1-26),” accessed 20 September 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/5-fruits-fall-genesis-41-26>.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

This is clear from the sacrifice of Abel and Cain to God (Gen 4:3-7), where it shows that Cain's problem is not necessarily found in the offering offered but in himself. The exact instruction given to the two brothers may not be expressly stated but one can be sure they knew what they were to do.¹²

The word of God to Cain when he became furious for non-acceptance of his offering as a means to worship God, suggests this (Gen 4:6-7). "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why are thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door" (Gen 4:6-7). God's declaration reveals that Cain did not do well, if he had done well, his offering would have been accepted. This shows that 'man' is God's target in worship, not necessarily the offering. He first accepts a man before his offering. Arrogance, rebellion, un-submissiveness and defiance are not allowed in worship. In fact, there can be no true worship with them. The heart condition matters a lot.

Furthermore, God wouldn't have said 'if thou doest well' if Cain had not received sufficient information to act upon. "Therefore, his anger was ill-founded for his problem was not that of lack of instruction, but of insurrection and rebellion against God. Cain wanted to come to God but wanted to do it his way. He did not want to approach God through shed blood but preferred to offer God the fruit of his labors."¹³ This buttresses the fact that God dictates how worship is to be done.

Moreover, Moses also identifies what the actual problem was "And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard" (verses 4b, 5a). The source of the problem was Cain, and the symptom was the

¹² Deffinbaugh, "The Fruits of the Fall (Genesis 4:1-26)."

¹³ Ibid.

sacrifice.¹⁴ Worship in the OT is a matter of the heart and is done in God's own way, according to His own instruction and will. Worship is total submission to the will of God.

Traces of Individual, family and corporate worship run through the OT Scripture. This was an important part of Israel's life. "In Israel's worship, ritual form, orthodox belief, awed reverence, and joyful hope appear together as essential features of Israel's relationship with God, without tension (e.g., Ps 22; 147:11; 1 Chr 15:25-28; 2Chr 30:13-27; Ezra 3)."¹⁵ However, they do receive rebuke or warning whenever their worship becomes formalistic: a display of outward ritual without inner spirit, a religious performance without corresponding works of righteousness (Isa 1:12-17; Amos 5:21).¹⁶ True worship defines the identity of God's people in a very visible way, divorcing worship from its ethical, moral and social significance would result in apostasy and the corruption of the system itself.¹⁷

Looking at Abraham scenario (Gen 22:1-22), what true worship entails can be understood. Genesis 22:1 reads, "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham." "The phrase 'after these things' is found only four times in the *torah* and all the four in Genesis (15:1, 22:1, 22:20,48:1). Evidently two of the four are within the Abrahamic narratives. This calls for questions such as "after what things" and why is this pericope being singled out? With the many narratives in

¹⁴Deffinbaugh, "The Fruits of the Fall (Genesis 4:1-26)."

¹⁵ Gerhard Pfandl, "The People of God in the Old Testament," in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Genesis, what was the author's intent in tagging so few narratives in this particular manner?"¹⁸

In Gen 22:1, "after these things" introduces God speaking again to Abraham. Perhaps this is to remind us of Abraham's long, complex life, as recorded in the nine preceding chapters. Abraham now is well over 100 years old, an old man even for his generation.¹⁹ Yet, God tested him and he yielded to the commands of the Lord. He did not rationalize by taking the voice of God for Satan or wondering whether he has lost his mind. He understood the message clearly that it was from the Lord and acted by faith;³ this is an example of worship.

Davidson, espoused that "the verb 'tested' is not uncommon in the OT but found thirty-six times in the *piel*. These often point to other divinely appointed 'tests' which generally include explanations of why the test is permitted. The reader is often informed of its reasonableness (Ex 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 8:2, 6; 13:3, 4). However, in the case of Abraham, there is no hint of why God was testing him. He himself seems not to be told at all."²⁰ God has been calling Abraham in several occasions in the preceding narratives (12:13; 13:14-17; 18:21). Nevertheless, it was only in Gen 22 that God addressed Abraham by name may be to single out the solemnity of this moment.

The response of Abraham was 'Here I am' which occurs in Gen 22 verse 1 and 11. Davidson opined that only two additional times in the entire Pentateuch was an address by God given this response and this suggests that Abraham recognized the

¹⁸ JoAnn Davidson, "Eschatology and Genesis 22," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 11 (2000): 233.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

portent of this occasion and also his posture indicates obedience.²¹ It also removes any possibility of confusion about the person God required Abraham to sacrifice. The commands in verse 2 are: “Take thy son, get thee out ... and offer him as a burnt offering.”

Verse 3 shows no verbal communication from Abraham in response to God but prompt action. He rose early, got prepared for the sacrifice by providing wood, fire and knife, saddled his ass, (22:3, 7), took two of his young men and Isaac and set out for Mount Moriah. A three-day’s journey, for on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off (22:4). This would have definitely prolonged the agony of Abraham. He had three days to re-consider his position in response to God’s command yet he pressed on. He must have experienced a lot of pain as he journeyed to Moriah perhaps, the reason he was not really looking up before. Finally, he saw where he would part forever with Isaac and spoke: “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you” (vs. 5).

Perhaps, Abraham was trying to avoid restrain from his servants or he did not want them to see what would happen, he left them behind with the ass. The father and son went alone to worship; the first time the word worship will be mentioned in the Pentateuch. While, ‘We will return to you’ is a statement of faith in the face of a tempting trial. And this faith hinged on the resurrection according to Hebrew 11:17-19. But, Davidson espoused that “the nature of Abraham’s faith on the mountain of sacrifice is astounding when one recalls that he had no precedent of any resurrection on which to base his faith.” This is very true, Abraham’s faith can be described as death to self and an absolute trust in the capability of God’s ability.

²¹Davidson, “Eschatology and Genesis 22,” 235.

However, this does not remove the horror suffered by Abraham. In verse 6, Isaac carried the wood as Jesus carried the Cross and the father took the knife and went ahead. In Verse 7 and 8 Isaac asked... “My father and he said, here am I, my son; and he said, behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering my son; and they went two of them together.” The response: *hineni* to Isaac was the same given to God previously. This shows the intensity of the moment.²²

The familiarity and the emotional bond between the father and the son revealed. This test that calls for perpetual separation would have been a serious burden in the heart of Abraham. Yet, at the Lord’s command he was fully ready to sacrifice Isaac. What a faith! What a heart of worship!

A scholar espoused that all the previous tests that Abraham went through were vague in comparison with Abraham’s divinely appointed separation from his favorite son Isaac. He stated further that Abraham was called to break the deepest of genetic and psychological bonds, that of the father and son, father and future. The barrier being erected between them is not, as in the other cases, one of altered marital status or geography—it is the wall of death.²³

On getting to where Abraham has been instructed (verses 9-10) he built an altar and laid orderly the wood and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, put forth his hand and took the knife to slay him. Abraham carefully carried out God’s instruction. This is indicated in the statement “and they came to the place of which God had told them.” The article ‘the’ makes it definite. We never know whether Abraham later told Isaac the Lord’s injunction, all we see is that Isaac also

²² Davidson, “Eschatology and Genesis 22,” 238.

²³Robert D. Bergen, “The Role of Genesis 22:1-19 in the Abraham Cycle: A Computer-Assisted Textual Interpretation,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4.2 (1990): 324.

surrendered to the will of God to be sacrificed on the altar. Both the father and son surrendered: an act of worship. But the angel of God restrained Abraham by calling his name twice not to lay his hand on the lad “for now I know that you fear God; you have not withheld your son, your only son from me” (verses 11-12).²⁴ The fear of the Lord is an act of worship.

The true fear of God is in complete subjection to His Sovereign Will. God Himself recognizes the nature of His command to Abraham. It is a serious one, a great challenge to man’s faith. Yet, Abraham sought to do the will of God. This is worship at its peak. C. Raymond Holmes summarizes it this way: “Here is the true sacrifice. Here is what is to be destroyed if revealed religion is to have any validity and meaning at all. Our will to do our own thing is what is to be slain. The witness of the Garden again! Moriah and Gethsemane are not so far apart.”²⁵ These are places where perfect obedience is displayed, where willingness to surrender is expressed, and a demonstration of real worship is exemplified. In true worship we are stuck between Moriah and Gethsemane.²⁶

Concept of Worship in the New Testament

The OT style of worship involves adherence to calendars and places but the picture is a bit different in the NT. The encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman in John 4, reveals the most important principles to live by in the worship of God. The time, place and style are not as important as the heart of worship. The external

²⁴ Bergen, “The Role of Genesis 22:1-19 in the Abraham Cycle,” 324.

²⁵ C. Raymond Holmes, “Worship: Radical Ritual,” accessed 24 March 2020, <https://www.adventistsaffirm.org>.

²⁶ Holmes, “Worship: Radical Ritual.”

expression in worship is not as important as the internal. If the heart is not right with God, all outward expressions will amount to nothing.

No wonder, Jesus concluded by saying “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24. Rick Warren expresses it in the following statements: “When we worship, God looks past our words to see the attitude of our hearts.²⁷ Where you worship is not as important as why you worship and how much of yourself you offer to God when you worship.²⁸ To ‘worship in truth’ means to worship God as he is truly revealed in the Bible.²⁹”

Incidentally, the worship in the NT requires the reading and studying of the scripture. This is fundamental because, positive response to the word itself is the heart of worship. This is found in the Gospel where Jesus confronted the devil and professed to him whom we should worship (Matthew 4:10, Luke 4:8). This shows that every act of adoration, wholehearted devotion, loyalty and service rendered to God as either commanded or implied in the scripture is an act of worship.

There is a connection between how worship was done in the OT and the NT. Beginning from the Temple Services Acts 3:1, the giving of offerings, rendering of hymns (Acts 2:42; 46-47, Rom. 15:9, Eph. 5:19 Col 3:16), prayers, scripture reading 2 Tim 3:17, communion service 1 Cor. 11:23-26, Matt. 26:17, 26-28).

There are several scenes and Bible passages where the Israelites sang and praised God, the connection between the blood on the altar for expiation for lives as

²⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 115.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

stated in Leviticus 17:11 and the use of hymns in congregational worship is clearly noted in 2 Chronicles 29:22-23; 27-29. Linking this to the New Testament, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn at the end of the last supper (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26) which established the doctrine of the partaking of the Holy Communion. Considering the afore-mentioned references, singing of hymns is part of worship and can be used privately and corporately in reverence and total commitment to God.³⁰

Worship, considering the concept in both the OT and the NT could be considered as a means to acknowledge the authority and supremacy of God as the creator of the universe and the savior of our souls. This calls for positive response in gratitude and wholehearted appreciation.

Survey of Syncretic Behaviour in the Old Testament

Syncretism is the merger of different, and at times, contradictory religious practices, faith, and beliefs in order to reconcile different religious traditions found within a community and in order to find unity between competitive views. Syncretism in the Old Testament involves Israel's absorption of Canaanite religious practices into the religion of Yahweh. Syncretism arose in Israel because Israel did not practice its religion in isolation, detached from its Canaanite neighbors.³¹

Although there is no evidence that the patriarchs worshiped the gods of Canaan, the Old Testament reveals that the people of Israel eventually became involved. When Israel conquered the land of Canaan, the books of Joshua and Judges say that the Canaanite cities were not destroyed. Rather, many Canaanite cities were

³⁰ Peter White, "Developing a Theology of Worship for Today: A Case Study of Leviticus 17:1" Kumasi Ghana, Christian Service University College, 2012, accessed 10 February 2020, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225070942>.

³¹ Claude Mariottini, "Syncretism in the Old Testament," accessed 16 February 2020, <https://claudemariottini.com/2014/04/08syncretism-in-the-old-testament/>.

left unconquered and, as a result, the Canaanites lived among the people of Israel.³²

This mingling results in syncretism by learning the ways of the Canaanites.

Abraham and his family came from a culture where syncretism was a fact of life: “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods” (Joshua 24:2). In fact, Abraham’s ancestors, Peleg, Serug, Nahor, and Terah (Genesis 11:18, 22-23, 26) were named after the names of gods mentioned in documents from Mesopotamia. When Abraham left Haran to come to Canaan, he and his descendants came into contact with Canaanite religion and their gods. These gods were worshiped in sanctuaries located at Shechem, Bethel, Mamre, and Beersheba in the worship place of the gods of the land.³³

When Israel went to Egypt and lived there for more than four centuries, the people of Israel were exposed to Egyptian religion. Although the Israelites were forced to build cities for Pharaoh and were not impressed by their many gods, some people in Israel accepted Egyptian religion. When Joshua renewed the covenant with a new generation of Israelites at Shechem, Joshua urged the people to abandon their Egyptian gods: “Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:14).³⁴

After the people of Israel entered the land of Canaan, the people of Israel worshiped Yahweh while the Canaanites worshiped their local gods. Gradually, the people of Israel took over the worship places that once belonged to the people of the

³² Mariottini, “Syncretism in the Old Testament.”

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

land and eventually the religious practices at these cultic centers became thoroughly Israelite, focused on the worship of Yahweh.

The reason syncretistic practices became prevalent in Israel was because the covenant that God established with the people at Sinai did not require Israel to deny the existence of other gods. Rather, the covenant required Israel to worship Yahweh alone as the only God of Israel: “You must not have any other god but me” (Exodus 20:3 NLT). This law even suggests that other gods were in existence. However, when Israel chose to worship other gods, the prophets criticized Israel for violating the demands of the covenant.

The worship of other gods intensified after Israel conquered the land of Canaan. For many years Israel had sojourned in the wilderness, preparing to enter the Promised Land. The new generation of Israelites who entered the land with Joshua was not familiar with agricultural life and had never learned how to cultivate an arid land in order to produce crops. Yahweh was not an agricultural god like Baal as they conceived. The land from which the Israelites now had to grow crops and produce pasture for their flock was believed to belong to Baal. It was Baal who produced crops and increased the flock and the herd of his worshipers.

It was this belief that tempted many Israelites to abandon the God who guided them through the wilderness to follow the gods and goddesses who promised them grain, oil, and wine in abundance. It took many years before Israel understood that it was not Baal, but Yahweh who had been giving them their grain, their oil, and their wine. Israel said: “I’ll run after other lovers and sell myself to them for food and water, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil and drinks” (Hosea 2:5 NLT). But Hosea told the people that the giver of these blessings was Yahweh and not Baal. Yahweh said: “[Israel] did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine,

and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for Baal” (Hosea 2:8). Therefore, the glory due to God for provision and sustenance was given to Baal, their perceived God of provision. They were shuttling their allegiance between Yahweh and Baal.

The action of King Saul in 1Sam 28:3-25 was another good example of syncretism in the OT. There, Saul visited the Witch of Endor to bring Samuel up from the grave that he might inquire of him. When Saul’s supposed Samuel came up, the Bible says “he (Saul) stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself” (1 Sam 28:14). In other words, he worshipped (*Shachah*) the perceived spirit of Samuel. Consulting a Witch is enough a spiritual syncretism not to talk of communicating with the dead which in actual sense was a communication with demonic spirit. This action of visiting the occult and belief in communicating with the dead is still in vogue even in Christendom today. Eriks Galeniaks calls it a “deadly form of syncretism”³⁵

Survey of Syncretic Behaviour in the New Testament

Examples of syncretistic acts can be found in the pages of the New Testament Scripture without much struggle. In Corinth, on a mountain top near the city there was the temple of Aphrodite (the goddess of love). Sacred prostitutes were on duty in this temple, and pilgrims thought that by sleeping with them they were in contact with the goddess herself. There were Christians among these pilgrims. Paul states that, this is like joining the body of Christ to the body of a prostitute (1 Corinthians (6:15-16);

³⁵ Eriks Galeniaks, “When the King Himself Goes to a Witch: The Deadly Dangers of Syncretism” in *Culture Adventist Theology and Mission in Africa* ed. Sampson M. Nwaomah, Eriks Galeniaks, and Davidson Razafiarivony (Nairobi, Kenya: Nexen Solutions East Africa Limited, 2016), 379.

the Christians who went up to the mountain were syncretistic, because they were joining their Christian faith with idol worship, which were incompatible.³⁶

Sceva, a Jew who cast out evil spirits with magical powers is reported in Acts 19:14-16, to have decided to add the name of Jesus to his collection of magical powers. In this process, the evil spirit overpowered his seven sons. This made the people of Ephesus to understand the superiority of the name of Jesus and the incompatibility of magical arts and the power of God. It is not surprising that they brought their magic books and instruments and burnt them before everyone (Acts 19:19).³⁷

Another example presents itself in the NT (Acts 8:4-25), when Philip went to the city of Samaria to preach to them (v. 5). The unclean spirits crying and getting out of people, several healing miracles happened and many believed and were baptized. Simon who had been bewitching people with sorcery also claimed to have believed until he offered money to the Apostles to possess the power of the Holy Spirit that through his laying of hands people might receive the Holy Spirit. It seems he wants to make merchandise of God's gift (vs. 19). This is not far-fetched in Traditional Religion, gift or money is offered for power. But the gift of God (the Holy Spirit) cannot be bought or sold. Despite his acclaimed acceptance of faith and baptism, Peter declared that he has neither part nor lot in this matter (the Holy Ghost) for his heart was not right in the sight of God (vs. 21). It appears here that 'in the heart' this man was still oscillating between his formal practice and the new found faith.

³⁶Elizabeth Ezenweke and Ikechukwu Kanu, "Perspective of Syncretism and Its Modern Trend: A Case Study of Christian and African Tradition," *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 13 (2012): 76.

³⁷ Ezenweke and Kanu, "Perspective of Syncretism and Its Modern Trend," 76.

Instruction against Syncretic Practice in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the writers condemned false prophets who led people astray. In the case of God's judgment against Israel through the prophet Hosea, God judged the nation for "Ephraim's harlotry" (Hosea 6:10). Although, the prophet denigrated literal sexual immorality along with other sins, these were merely external signs of what happened internally because of a prostituted heart. "My people consult their wooden idols, and their diviners wand informs them; for a spirit of harlotry has led them astray . . . they offer sacrifices on the tops of mountains and burn incense on the hills." (Hosea 4:11, 13). "Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim has become a cake not turned . . . so Ephraim has become like a silly dove without sense" (Hosea 7:8, 11). This compromise refers to the gullibility of Israel, with reference to their political ties to Assyria versus Egypt. Their gullibility was not only political, but their compromise and spiritual prostitution removed God's hand of protection, common sense, morality, and order from the nation. Douglas Stuart wrote, [The priest's] uncritical support of the upper classes and indulgence in syncretism and materialism earned them (and probably the cult prophets) wealth and prestige, though compromising the true faith . . . Abundance produces an accrued wealth, which in turn results in false security and the temptation to abandon God for some competing divinity. The resulting religion is degenerate.³⁸

Scripture shouts out the most obvious cause for the spiritual harlotry or syncretism in Israel during the time of Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge; I also will reject you from being my priest" (Hosea 4:6). Because of the compromise and laxness of the priests or

³⁸ Douglas Stewart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary 31 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 79.

spiritual leaders, this condition was multiplied to the people of the land. "Lack of knowledge" of the Lord refers to a relationship with God as well as understanding God's covenant with the people of Israel. In this case, clear teaching of God's Word was not convenient to the leaders as it would first judge them. Honeycutt stated, "One wonders whether or not alienation is ever so deliberate as this implies. Men reject knowledge of God not only as the result of deliberate, premeditated actions, but through quieter but equally dangerous means as well." For whatever the reason, laziness or sin on the leader's part, no teaching and no knowledge of the Lord created the vacuum where people prostituted themselves with local religions and imagined divinities.

Instruction against Syncretic Practices in the New Testament

The Church right from her early days has rejected syncretistic approaches to religion. One of the earliest expressions of the rejection of the amalgamation of incompatible beliefs is in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians. Paul makes it clear that the Christian belief is based on the risen Lord, and not from the synthesis of religious beliefs or practices from one religion or the other. He therefore warns Christians not to be captivated by "an empty, seductive philosophy according to human tradition, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ." (Col 2:8).³⁹

Moreover, in the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, it was decided that converted Gentiles should be allowed into the church without circumcision and other Jewish dietary laws except to abstain from pollution of idols, fornication, strangled meat and from blood (Acts 15:20,29) which were the practices of the heathen. The

³⁹ Stewart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 76.

freedom given to these people appeared syncretic but actually was not.⁴⁰ Hence, the serious counsel of total abstinence from the things that the Gentiles do, this to me is a warning against syncretic practice.

Ellen G. White Counsel on the Quality of Worship

Ellen G. White, when she wrote about worship described true worship as that which should be marked by simplicity of following some basic biblical principles about worship. The first biblical principle that she highlighted is that God alone should be the object of worship. She expressed, “Let men worship and serve the Lord God, and Him only. Let not money be made a god. If sensuality is not kept under the control of the higher powers of the mind, base passion will rule the being. Anything that is made the subject of undue thought and admiration, absorbing the mind, is a god chosen before the Lord.”⁴¹ She expressed further, “Worship of the Creator God will manifest itself in reverence, joy and thanksgiving.”⁴²

A second biblical principle in Ellen White’s understanding of true worship underlines the futility of exterior forms of worship deprived of biblical meaning and foundation (cf. Ex 20:4-6, 23). Commenting on the circumstances that led to Israel’s Babylonian captivity, she said “Their religion had centered in the ceremonies of the sacrificial system. They had made the outward form all-important, while they had lost the spirit of true worship. Their services were corrupted with traditions and practices of heathenism, and in the performance of the sacrificial rites they did not look beyond

⁴⁰ Stewart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 76.

⁴¹ Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995), 56.

⁴² Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publication Association, 1950), 437.

the shadow of the substance. They did not discern Christ, the True Offering for the sins of man.”⁴³

Today, the same concerns still exist and many are tempted to look upon “outward forms” and ceremonies as sufficient indicators of true worship. True worship is thus the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit upon a person’s life; it is the result of conversion. But true worship is also inspired by a “true knowledge of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴

A fourth biblical principle highlights the close relationship between worship and obedience to God’s will. Genuine worship cannot be separated from a genuine Christian life. “True worship consists in working together with Christ. Prayers, exhortation, and talk are cheap fruits, which are frequently tied on; but fruits that are manifested in good works, in caring for the needy.”⁴⁵ This statement of hers finds its root in Matt 25:31-46. Where Jesus taught concerning the future judgment as if it will all be based on our attitude to the welfares of others. He declared, “in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt 25:40).

In her writings, Ellen G. White highlights the need for the worshiper to have the proper attitude of reverence as one approaches God in worship. She also warns that feelings of excitement in worship are misleading indicators of genuine spirituality. Since true worship of God is first a spiritual activity, Ellen G. White repeatedly stressed that reverence for God and sacred things should mark Christian

⁴³ Ellen G. White, *Upward Look* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1896), 161.

⁴⁴ Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1932), 12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

worship. True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence.”⁴⁶

This act of reverence she counseled should hallmark the atmosphere of our sermon, prayer and music. She claimed that “the hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there; and as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened. ‘Holy and reverend is His name,’ (Ps. 111:9) the psalmist declares. Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips!” For Ellen G. White, the most important part of a worship service is the sermon. “When the word of life is spoken, you should remember that you are listening to the voice of God through His delegated servant.”⁴⁷

Ellen G White espoused further that, Music and singing also form an important part of a worship service. As “music forms a part of God’s worship in the courts above,” She further stated that, “we should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs....Singing as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer.”⁴⁸

The ordinances of the church form another important element of worship. Ellen G. White understood that Jesus instituted three ordinances for the church: baptism, the Lord’s Supper and the foot washing service, and that each “should be so conducted as to be uplifting in its influence.”⁴⁹ In consideration of the afore-counsel

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 242.

⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *Messages to the Young People* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1930), 226.

⁴⁸ White, *Education*, 164.

⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1881) 4:71.

of Ellen G. White, one can conclude that worship requires strict obedience to the word of God and reverence should mark our approach to Him.

Cultural/Traditional Concept of Worship

In the Traditional worldview, Africans claim to believe in God. They believe in Supreme Being, and Divinities. For example in Yoruba Tribe of Nigeria, there are many places of cults of worship. Divinities have their temples, shrines, emblems, symbols, priest and priestesses and so it is in many West African Countries. They are worshipped from time to time and sacrifices are offered to them daily. But this is not the case in the situation of the Supreme Being. Dopamu and Awolalu opine that “there are no African people who have images of God.”⁵⁰

In other words, they seem to say, the Africans understood the concept of the Supreme God to the point that they could not represent Him with images. The images are just medium to reaching Him. In fact in their worship speaking from Yoruba Tribe of Nigeria’s perspective, *Olodumare* (God) is too mighty and transcendent to be localized, he covers the whole heaven and spread across the earth.

These authors (Dopamu and Awolalu) espouse further that, in the West African thought, the Supreme Being is unique and incomparable, so majestic and lifted up that people cannot liken him to anything. His glory they say is beyond comparison and a King of superlative attributes.⁵¹ Having this concept of God and His holiness the people conduct their worship in awe, reverence, fear, respect and honour towards him.⁵² One may conclude with this thought that the indigenous

⁵⁰ J. Awolalu and P. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers, 2005), 118.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 52.

religions from African perspective have the right concept of God but the means to approach Him in worship is what conflicts with biblical principles.

A group of scholars after a Bible Project Conference agrees that, “the African worldview is inculcated in the African child so well that it takes a strong ideological shift to stem its influence in adulthood. This worldview somehow has a lingering influence on a Christian who is not well indoctrinated.”⁵³ This could be one major reason, elements of syncretism are evident in Christian worship. For in their practice, they seek for cause of events (that is, they believe nothing happens ordinarily), they seek for vengeance, protection and good fortunes, thereby visit the diviners. The solution to their plights may attract sacrifice of different kinds as prescribed by the priest. This they do in search of solution.

Christian Authors on Syncretism and Its Effect on Worship

Tippet defined ‘syncretism’ as “the union of two opposite forces, beliefs, systems or tenets so that the united form is a new thing neither one nor the other.” That this process, say in Christianity, brings “confusions in the essential content, the metaphysical, the theological, for the fusion of belief systems; so the supra-cultural gospel is contaminated, leaving us with new kind of animism.”⁵⁴

Hoft espouses that, “real syncretism is always based on the presupposition that all positive religions are only reflections of a universal origin (Irreligion) and show

⁵³ *Spiritualism and the Adventist Church in Africa: Guidelines and Recommendations*. A lecture communicated to the Churches after a series of Special Bible Conferences sponsored by the Biblical Research Committee on Dec. 7-8, 2004 at Valley View University, Accra, Ghana, and two others at Heidelberg College, South Africa, and the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya to curb the problem of spiritualism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa.

⁵⁴ Alan R. Tippett, “Indigenous Principles in Mission Today,” in *Dynamic Indigeneity*, ed. Charles H. Kraft and Tom N. Wisley (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 52, 70.

therefore only gradual differences. It is the intermingling and combination of diverse religions. The “synthesis of the beliefs which are radically divergent.”⁵⁵

Hiebert opines that syncretism is “uncritical acceptance of the Old way of life or practice.” Droogers defined the term as “combination of various forms of religions.”⁵⁶ He and Kraemer regard all religions including Christianity as syncretistic.⁵⁷ Another definition of syncretism is given as “any mixture of two or more religions,” suggesting “that elements from several religions are merged and influence each other mutually.”⁵⁸

It was further defined as “the coexistence of elements originating in other religions or for example in social structures.” Brown, identified two types of syncretism: “the extreme” and “the intermediate.” The former refers to what he called ‘conscious syncretism which involved “amalgamation” and “identification” by the two or more religions; while the latter is “unconscious” syncretism which involves the process of “assimilations”⁵⁹

Brown defined syncretism as “the temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from divers religious and other contexts within a coherent religious pattern.” First, by eliminating the old meaning through “assimilation”, secondly, by creating “a new coherent pattern of meaning” as a result of assimilation (a new religion), thirdly, by dissolution of both meanings. But R. D. Baird defined syncretism as “cases where

⁵⁵ Vissert W. A. Hoft, *No Other Name* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1963), 11.

⁵⁶ Andre Droogers, “Syncretism: The Problem of Definition, the Definition of the Problem,” in *Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Hendrik M. Vroom, Rein Fernhout, and A. Wessels (Grand Rapids, MI: B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁸ John Brown O., *Christianity vs. Syncretism: Guideline for Making a Decision*, PDF file, n.d., <https://www.academia.edu/5423571/>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

two conflicting ideas or practices are brought together and are retained without the benefit of consistency.” Colpe sees as “as initially critical concept, which is being transformed into a category of ‘historic genetic explanation’ for the antecedents of a religious situation.” Berner, defined it as “a process.”⁶⁰

There is one common concept that these authors share in their definitions; they all suggest that syncretism has to do with the mixing of elements by either one or more religions or other contexts. What divides them is the issue of interpretation or evaluation of syncretism. One group regards syncretism as a positive thought; believing that it results in bringing unity among various religions and ideologies.

The other group regards it as a threat to their religious beliefs or tenets. The proponents of the latter group are mostly, if not exclusively, Christians. The former constitute non-Christians and some “liberal Christians,” This former group, which I will term pro-syncretic accused the Christians who are against syncretism of religious exclusivism. The writer is on the side of the Christians who believe that syncretism is a threat to the Christian beliefs and therefore must be evaluated correctly.

Argument in Favour of Syncretism in the name of Contextualization

Syncretism is found among African Independent Churches, as a consequence of the resentment over missionary and colonial control. These churches try to reclaim some of their traditional beliefs and practices that had been rejected by missionaries. These beliefs and practices are inserted into Christianity without any criticism and they are expressed in songs, dance and rituals. Sometimes, these elements are placed side by side with the gospel and sometimes exalted above the Christian tradition.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Christianity vs. Syncretism*, PDF file.

When traditional beliefs and practices which are not compatible with the Christian belief are included in the Christian faith, the result is syncretism.⁶¹

A Seventh-day Adventist Scholar gives another reason why syncretism seems prevailing in Christian worship. His argument suggests that Christianity seems not to be giving answers to the many questions and challenges confronting the people that grew up with the traditional worldview. He puts it this way,

The issue of syncretism seems particularly pertinent for churches in Africa where significant growth has occurred. As a result, in many parts of Africa, two kinds of religious faith are practiced: a formal religious worship of God and a folk religion that embraces the spirit world. This emerging situation, according to mission scholars, is because the worldview concerns of the people have not been thoroughly engaged. In other words, the churches are not responding to the most important questions confronting the people.⁶²

The implication of this is that the traditional worldview will pose a threat to the quality of religious worship of God. And the result may be syncretistic.

Seventh-day Adventist Church's Position on Worship and Syncretism

On syncretism the Church has this to say: "As the Church enters more non-Christian areas, the question of syncretism—the blending of religious truth and error—is a constant challenge and threat. It affects all parts of the world and must be taken seriously as we explore the practice of contextualization."⁶³ The Church sensed danger and potential distortion of truth as a result of syncretism and thereby endorsed critical contextualization as an indispensable tool to curb its menace.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ezenweke and Kanu, "Perspective of Syncretism and Its Modern Trend," 79.

⁶² Kelvin Onongha, "Signs, Wonders, and the Adventist Church (Part 1 of 2)," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors*, October 2014, 24, accessed 23 February 2020, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archives/2014/10/signs-wonders-and-the-adventist-church>.

⁶³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Engaging in Global Mission," accessed 23 February 2020, <https://www.adventist.org/articles/engaging-in-global-mission/>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Moreover, the Seventh-day Adventist Church calls people to worship the only true God, this plays a significant role in the message and mission of the Church. The Church advocates for carefulness and prudence in contextualizing Adventist worship around the world.⁶⁵ The Church encourages and invites people to wholehearted and highly participatory worship where the Word of God is central, prayer is fervent, music is heartfelt, and fellowship in faith is palpable. These elements of worship are indispensable in Adventist worship services around the world and should be part of any attempt to contextualize Adventist worship.⁶⁶

The Church speaking more on worship advocates that, “Music should be used to praise God and not as a means to over-stimulate emotions that will simply make individuals “feel good” about themselves. Through it, worshippers should express their deepest feelings of gratitude and joy to the Lord in a spirit of holiness and reverence. Adventist worship is to celebrate God’s creative and redemptive power.”⁶⁷

Summary

A keen observation of this section of the project reveals the fact that worship is essential and God is the determinant of how He should be worshiped by paying attention to His word. Worship in its styles and expression must be done with highest level of reverence. Care must be taken, when contextualizing in order to witness, so that our faith in God will not be jeopardized. Uncritical contextualization leads to syncretism. Hence, there are traditions and practices that should not be brought into Christianity otherwise, that will be tantamount to syncretism.

⁶⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Engaging in Global Mission.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

The Location of Erinmope District

As said earlier in Chapter 1 of this work, Erinmope District is located within Moba Local Government Area of the now Ekiti State which is formally Ondo State of Nigeria before restructuring the State in 1996. Hence, the three Churches that make up the District are found within Moba LGA of Ekiti State.

The geographical coordinates in decimal degrees are (WGS84) Latitude: 8.033, and Longitude: 5:150.¹ Other towns or places near Erinmope District are: Otun-Ekiti, Ekan-Meje, Ilofa, Odoowa, Aran-Orin, all in Kwara State except Otun-Ekiti. Although all these towns have been part of Ekiti until the restructuring of states by the government, they are now called Ekiti-Kwara. The language these neighboring towns speak till today is Ekiti. Erinmope now becomes a border town between Ekiti and Kwara State.

Climatic Condition of the Area

Erinmope District enjoys tropical climate just like other parts of the State, with two distinct seasons. These are the rainy season between (April-October) and the dry season between (November-March). The temperature ranges between 21 degrees and

¹ Maplandia.com, “Erinmope Ekiti Map—Satellite Images of Erinmope Ekiti,” accessed 20 March 2020, <http://www.maplandia.com/nigeria/ondo/moba/erinmope-ekiti/>.

28 degrees centigrade with high humidity. In other words, Erinmope has about six months of effective rainfall from mid-April to mid-October.²

Since Climate has profound effects on vegetation and animal life, including humans, the common crops grown are arable crops such as cassava, maize, beans, and guinea corn. Few cash crops such as cocoa, kola-nut and cashew are also grown in some areas of the District.³

Economic Activities of the Area

Erinmope District is an agrarian community. Although, recent development shows that some of her youth are becoming highly educated. Formerly, and even till now this community suffers due to the effect of migration of her people, which is necessitated because of lack of modern infrastructure, late development of market economies, and lack of other basic economic development. This causes the movement of many indigenes to other newly created communities or expanding urban centres in need of labour and entrepreneurs at the expense of their own communities.

The fact is that the indigenes of this community outside are likely more than those residing home. The evidence shows when they come home for yearly Christmas and New Year Celebration. This has had a lot of effect on the economic development of Erinmope. Today, Erinmope people are found in numbers in Ikorodu, ogijo, Ita-oluwo, in Lagos State. They are also found in Ijebu Land in Ogun State, Osun, Ondo and Kwara State. The productive age (working class) are very few at home because of the economic condition of the area.

² Joshua4life, "Erinmope at a Glance," accessed 20 March 2020, <http://www.scribd.com/document/210772754/>.

³ Ibid.

Having lived in their midst for five years, the researcher has discovered that almost all the aged women from house to house know about weaving of traditional cloth, while the major activities for men are farming and hunting. Jadesola Babatope, describes Erinmope as “a town of great warriors and hunters who hunt in tropics and Savannah terrain of Ekiti and neighboring regions.”⁴

No wonder the name ‘Erinmope’ emerged from the statement made by a hunter who attempted to shoot a rock thinking it was an Elephant. He then exclaimed ‘*erin ni mo pe*’ which means I thought it was an Elephant. Till today, the major population of people at home are majorly youth of secondary school age and adult from 65 years above. People between ages 30-60 are very few in the town. This shows clearly in the Church (Seventh-day Adventist Church) as well. One can make a reasonable conclusion that the economic situation of Erinmope is not buoyant even up until now.

Religious Environment of the Area

The concern here is not about the ecology of the area or the relationship between Religion and the natural environment but the conducive enabling environment for the practice of religion. There are three major religious practices in this District as it is common in other parts of the state. These are Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion. The adherents of these religions still see themselves as brothers and sisters in the community. In matters that have to do with family relations, community development, politics, and minimally culture, hardly can you differentiate between their religions.

⁴Jadesola Babatope, “Erinmope – A Historical, Cultural and Socio-Economic Study of an Ekiti City,” accessed 1 April 2020, <https://www.academia.edu/20146858/>.

In a single extended home, the adherents of the three religions can be present. Although, there may not be agreement on religious matters but hardly do they allow this to separate their communal living. Therefore, in moment of crisis or when looking for desperate solution to a particular challenge (it may be political position, health challenge, poverty or barrenness), they sympathize and empathize with one another, which may lead to invitation to where solution can be found irrespective of the religion of the one in crisis.

It is seen as a betrayal of the family togetherness and denial of the peace of the family to reject help on religious ground. One must be highly determined and known for what he/she believes in order for him/her to be able to stand firm in situation like this. This family ties makes it easy even for Christians to easily stoop to the interest of other religions.

In Erinmope District, there are different Christian Churches such as Roman Catholic Church, Christ Apostolic Church, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness; He lives (Pentecostal) and Seventh-day Adventist Church. There are mosques, and shrines of deities. Despite the proliferation of Churches in the town, this has in no way lessened the activities of the traditional religious practice even among those who attend the churches.

Both Muslims and Christians celebrate traditional festivals together when they come, whether it is Yam Festival, Egungun Festival (masquerade) which deals with ancestral worship and some others. In an environment like this there is room for syncretism. In reality, this league makes evangelism difficult in this area. No one pursues the Christians from organizing evangelism; after all, it is just seen as a Church program without purpose among the indigenes.

Cultural Setting

“Culture is the totality of ways and manners people live their lives and make sense of their existences. These existences refer to total being to include spiritual, material, intellectual, emotional, environmental and even response to natural occurrences.”⁵

Jadesola Babatope opines that “Erinmope is an authentic Yoruba community whose rich traditional heritage and cultural values are tied to the aboriginal Yoruba culture that is second to none even in Ekiti modern day. The richness of Erinmope’s history and culture is an influence of a well-protected and preserved cultural heritage that is full of yorubanism, just as black-africans are proudly promoting pan-africanism from the early colonial period till date.”⁶

Oral tradition has it that Erinmope people had their origin at Ile-Ife just as other ancient Yoruba towns and Cities. There is no doubt that the culture of the people is similar to that of other ancient towns in Yorubaland. Jadesola explains that “the role of Ifa oracle in guiding the people from Ife to her current day location suffice just as Yoruba traditional aspiration and cultural values have survived till date in Erinmope Kingdom beyond what we encounter in average urban centres across Yorubaland.”⁷

Erinmope is a notable home of undying Yoruba traditions and culture, from the tribal marks commonly shared by the people, to their dialectical and linguistic intonation and ancestral worship of Yoruba gods and goddesses, which in fact

⁵ Olayinka Akanle, “The Ligaments of Culture and Development in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Applied Sociology* 2 (2012): 16-21.

⁶ Babatope, “Erinmope – A Historical, Cultural and Socio-Economic Study of an Ekiti City.”

⁷ Ibid.

pronounces that Erinmope is definitely from Ile-Ife, if it has no connection with old Oyo.⁸

In terms of dressing and appearance, the traditional dress of the people of Erinmope District is *Gele, Iro and Buba* for women, *Fila, Sokoto, Buba, and Agbada* for men. Mostly, the elderly ones in the community and the traditional chiefs are usually dressed in this almost every time. Almost all people appear in traditional attire of these nature when there is a ceremony like wedding or burial.

Trailing behind Dress is worship. Erinmope District people involve several festivals that are traceable to the worship of deities. They celebrate *Orogbo* during new yam advent, and *Egungun* (masquerade) Festival yearly. Both *orogbo* and *Egungun* involves the whole community. There are other local deities being worshipped, *Ogun* (god of iron), *Sango* (god of thunder) especially in Aaye-Oja, *Osanyin, ifa, and bibo ori baba tabi iya* (ancestral worship).

The wonder of it all is that when these festivals are celebrated, huge number of youth from different religious affiliation participate, an indication that traditional religion still has a future. Traditionally, there is a belief that these festivals determine the peace, prosperity and the progress of the town. Whoever discourages them from doing that will be termed an enemy of progress and peace of the community. For this reason, some do come to Church without believing the possibility of abstaining totally from culture that has the potential of luring them into idolatry, occultism and the like. The people of Erinmope District speak purely Ekiti type of Yoruba language which is understood by other Ekiti people anywhere.

⁸ Babatope, "Erinmope – A Historical, Cultural and Socio-Economic Study of an Ekiti City."

Demographic Information

In October 2019, the Church membership of Erinmope District is 295 on record. But the head count till today is still far from that reality. As at 1st April, 2020, including the newly baptized during the pulpit exchange the total head count was 144. This is coupled with the fact that the students and some apprentices have returned home during this Covid-19 pandemic.

The structure of the Sabbath School Membership is as follows: from ages 1-10 (19 members), 11-20 (38 members), 21-30 (18 members), 31-50 (17 members), 51-70 (11 members), and from 71-100 (41 members). The headcount of Iloye Church is 85, Oji is 44 and Aaye-Oja is 15. The teaming youth between 11-20 years of age are Secondary School Students living with their grandparents. Mostly, they all leave after their Secondary School and most of their parents are non-Adventist. The Sabbath School Membership that should be more than the baptized members of the Church is far less than it.

Data Collection

In this section, questionnaire was used for data collection. Because of the sensitivity of the project, Sabbath School members from ages 16 above were taken into consideration while administering the questionnaire. A total number of 60 questionnaires were administered to 60 people bearing in mind a fair representation of the Church: 25 Youth (10 males and 15 females), 10 Adventist Men's Organization Members and 25 Adventist Women's Ministries members.

The reason for the wide difference in the numbers of men and women is because we have larger population of women than men in Erinmope District. Some of the men are lost to death and some married more than a wife. Hardly can we have a head count of 15 men in the whole District in a combined service.

A random sampling method was used by considering every fifth person among these groups: AYM (Adventist Youth Ministries), AMO (Adventist Men's Organisation), and AWM (Adventist Women Ministries) of the Church to avoid biases and to get adequate information from fair representation of the Church membership.

Moreover, due to the literacy level of the respondents, a research assistant was supplied with necessary information about the collection of research data and to assist in explaining the questionnaire to the people and guide them to give their desired answers to the questions. The literate ones were simply served with the questionnaire.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected. Selected descriptive statistics (frequencies and cross-tabulations) are used to present the data, while the analysis is carried out through hierarchical clustering and bivariate correlation. Below is a brief report of the findings:

Data Presentation

Frequencies. The outputs of the variables from the frequency table correspond directly with the output of the Cross-tabulation of research variables with age as shown below. Hence, there is no need for repetition.

Cross-tabulation of research variables with age.

Awareness of Syncretism among Members in the form of table:

Table 1 shows the relationship between total obedience and genuine worship. It ascertains the level of awareness of the respondents on the importance of unreserved obedience to God when it comes to worship. It reveals further the

intention of the respondents on, no occasion for willful disobedience in the name of forgiveness when worship is being considered.

Table 1. Total Obedience Has Little to Do with Genuine Worship

		q1			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	46	82.1	82.1	82.1
	Disagree	7	12.5	12.5	94.6
Valid	Strongly Agree	2	3.6	3.6	98.2
	Agree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

A little more than ninety-four percent (94.6%) across the age groups agree that total obedience has much to do with genuine worship.

Table 2 shows the level of awareness of the respondents on whether some pioneers merged their formal religious affiliation with their Christian faith or not in terms of practice.

Table 2. Merging of Former Religious Practice with the New Faith

		q2			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Agree	22	39.3	39.3	39.3
	Agree	18	32.1	32.1	71.4
	Not Sure	14	25.0	25.0	96.4
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	98.2
	Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

The table reveals that more than seventy-one percent (71.4%) agree that some of the pioneers of the Church merged from the onset, their formal religious affiliation with their newly-found faith in terms of practice. This is an evidence of syncretic practice in the Church.

Table 3 below shows whether some members are still in certain occult group or the other.

Table 3. Some Church Members Still in Occult Group

q3					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Agree	25	44.6	44.6	44.6
	Strongly Agree	16	28.6	28.6	73.2
Valid	Not Sure	14	25.0	25.0	98.2
	Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

The table reveals that little above seventy-three percent (73.2%) of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the fact that some members are still in certain occult group or the other till today.

Table 4 below shows whether some members do still visit *Babalawos* (witch doctors) or not, and at least every three out of five respondents agree to the fact that some members do.

Table 4. Some Members Still Visit *Babalawos* (Witch Doctors)

		q4			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Not Sure	21	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Agree	21	37.5	37.5	75.0
Valid	Strongly Agree	13	23.2	23.2	98.2
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

The table therefore reveals that more than sixty percent (60.5%) of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that some members do visit *Babalawos* (witch doctors) for help in times of crisis such as health challenge or a threat of life to someone very close.

Table 5 shows the awareness of the respondents on communication with the dead, which is a syncretic act if one claims to be a believer in Christ. It further ascertains its practice among some members.

Table 5. Some Members Still Communicate with the Dead

		q5			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Agree	25	44.6	44.6	44.6
	Strongly Agree	24	42.9	42.9	87.5
Valid	Not Sure	4	7.1	7.1	94.6
	Disagree	2	3.6	3.6	98.2
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

The above table reveals that over eighty-seven percent (87.5%) agree and strongly agree that some members still communicate with the dead.

Table 6 shows whether some members still venerate the dead for the purpose of attaining good fortune or prosper in business or not. Approximately three out of every ten persons agreed to the fact that people venerate the dead. This being a religious and spiritual matter is still significant.

Table 6. Some Members Still Venerate the Dead for Good Fortune

q6					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Not Sure	35	62.5	62.5	62.5
	Agree	18	32.1	32.1	94.6
Valid	Disagree	2	3.6	3.6	98.2
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

The response as evident in the table above shows that just a little above thirty-two percent (32.1%) agree that some members still venerate the dead for the purpose of good fortune or prosperity in their business.

Table 7 shows whether there are members who are afraid of giving testimony to avoid being attacked with misfortune.

Table 7. A Decline in Giving Testimony for Fear of Misfortune.

		q7			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Not Sure	21	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Agree	17	30.4	30.4	67.9
Valid	Strongly Agree	15	26.8	26.8	94.6
	Strongly Disagree	3	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

More than fifty-seven percent (57.2%) either agree or strongly agree with the notion that some members find it difficult to give testimony in the Church for fear of being turned to misfortune.

Table 8 shows the attitude of the church members on sharing their prayer requests publicly in the church for fear of being harassed spiritually thereafter.

Table 8. Reluctance in Making Prayer Requests Publicly

		q8			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Agree	31	55.4	55.4	55.4
	Not Sure	12	21.4	21.4	76.8
Valid	Strongly Agree	9	16.1	16.1	92.9
	Strongly Disagree	3	5.4	5.4	98.2
	Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Over seventy-one percent (71.5%) of the total respondents agree or strongly agree to the assertion that some of the members do feel reluctant to share their prayers publicly for fear of being harassed spiritually thereafter.

Table 9 reveals the understanding of the respondents on whether Christians can participate in traditional festivals or not. Only less than 9% of the respondents agree or strongly agree to the fact that Christianity does not mean that people cannot participate in our traditional festivals. In other words, they claim Christians can participate.

Table 9. Christians Can Participate in Traditional Festivals

		q9			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	43	76.8	76.8	76.8
	Disagree	8	14.3	14.3	91.1
Valid	Agree	3	5.4	5.4	96.4
	Strongly Agree	2	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

But a little above ninety-one percent (91.1%) of the respondents either strongly disagree or disagree that Christianity does not mean that people cannot participate in our traditional festivals. This shows that the idea of participation is strongly opposed by many because of the known danger associated with it.

Table 10 shows the level of awareness of the respondents on the effect of dual allegiance on tithes and offerings in the church.

Table 10. Dual Allegiance Can Affect Tithes and Offerings in the Church

		q10			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	25	44.6	45.5	45.5
	Agree	24	42.9	43.6	89.1
	Strongly Disagree	3	5.4	5.5	94.5
	Not Sure	2	3.6	3.6	98.2
	Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	55	98.2	100.0	
Missing	No Response	1	1.8		
Total		56	100.0		

Almost ninety percent (89.1%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that dual allegiance can affect tithes and offerings in the church.

Table 11 also shows the level of awareness of the respondents on whether becoming a traditional chief in the community could lead to idolatry.

Table 11. Becoming a Traditional Chief versus Idolatry

		q11			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	39	69.6	69.6	69.6
	Agree	15	26.8	26.8	96.4
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	98.2
	Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

A little above ninety-six percent (96.1%) strongly agree and agree that becoming a traditional chief in the community could lead a Christian to idolatry.

Table 12 reveals the level of awareness of the respondents on whether it is possible to become a traditional chief without compromising ones faith in the Lord. The table shows that the level of awareness is high as only 7.2% agree and strongly agree that becoming a traditional chief may not lead to a compromise of faith while 17.9% are not sure.

Table 12. Traditional Chieftaincy versus Compromise of Faith

		q12			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	27	48.2	48.2	48.2
	Strongly Disagree	15	26.8	26.8	75.0
	Not Sure	10	17.9	17.9	92.9
	Agree	3	5.4	5.4	98.2
	Strongly Agree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

But the three-quarter of the total respondents, which is seventy-five percent (75%) disagree and strongly disagree that one can become a traditional chief without compromising his faith in the Lord.

Table 13 also shows the level of awareness of the respondents on the sanctity of the Sabbath and the effects of partisan politics in this very location on the keeping of the Sabbath. The table reveals that only less than 17% are either not sure, agree and strongly agree. In other words, the level of awareness of the respondents on the effects of partisan politics on Sabbath keeping is very high.

Table 13. Sabbath Keeping Is Not Affected by Engaging in Partisan Politics

q13				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	35	62.5	62.5	62.5
Disagree	12	21.4	21.4	83.9
Agree	4	7.1	7.1	91.1
Strongly Agree	3	5.4	5.4	96.4
Not Sure	2	3.6	3.6	100.0
Total	56	100.0	100.0	

More than eighty percent (83.9%) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree that Sabbath keeping is not affected by engaging in partisan politics.

Table 14 shows whether the respondents have the understanding of what worship entails: the submission of oneself as a living sacrifice to God and not seeking one's own interest.

Table 14. Worship Is Giving Oneself over to God Wholeheartedly

q14				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	47	83.9	83.9
	Agree	7	12.5	96.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	3.6	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0

More than ninety-six percent (96.4%) strongly agree and agree that worship is giving oneself over to God as a living sacrifice rather than seeking one's own interest.

Table 15 below reveals the impact of the identity and reputation of the members in the community on the gospel they share. The intention is to show whether the church members have truly separated themselves from every form of ungodly practices that could impact the gospel negatively.

Table 15. The Impact of the Identity and Reputation of Members on the Gospel

		q15			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	21	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Agree	16	28.6	28.6	66.1
	Not Sure	12	21.4	21.4	87.5
	Strongly Disagree	6	10.7	10.7	98.2
	Strongly Agree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Just little above forty-eight percent (48.2%) of the respondents strongly disagree and while more than thirty percent (30.4%) strongly agree and agree respectively that identity and reputation of Adventists in the community by separating themselves from every form of ungodliness has positively impacted the spreading of the gospel in the community over the years.

Table 16 shows the awareness of the respondents on whether some church members are still followers or members of Ogboni fraternity.

Table 16. Members of the Church Still in Ogboni Group

q16				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Sure	25	44.6	44.6	44.6
Agree	21	37.5	37.5	82.1
Strongly Agree	9	16.1	16.1	98.2
Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
Total	56	100.0	100.0	

More than fifty-three percent (53.6%) of the respondents collectively agree and strongly agree that there are members who are still adherents of *Ogboni* group in the District.

Table 17 shows whether there have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the church in the past. It reveals the level of awareness of the respondents.

Table 17. Confirmed Cases of Witchcraft in the Church in Recent Years

q17				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	26	46.4	46.4	46.4
Agree	25	44.6	44.6	91.1
Valid Not Sure	3	5.4	5.4	96.4
Disagree	2	3.6	3.6	100.0
Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Ninety-one percent (91%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that there have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the church in recent years. The level of awareness of the respondents on the presence of witchcraft in the church is very high.

Table 18 reveals the level of awareness and the certainty of the practice of ancestral worship by some members of the church.

Table 18. Current Members of the Church Who Practice Ancestral Worship

		q18			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Agree	27	48.2	48.2	48.2
	Agree	22	39.3	39.3	87.5
Valid	Not Sure	6	10.7	10.7	98.2
	Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

More than eighty-seven percent (87.5%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that some current members still practice ancestral worship.

Table 19 shows the effect of dual allegiance on worship in the church. It reveals the level of awareness of the respondents on this fact.

Table 19. Dual Allegiance Has Negatively Affected Worship in the Church.

		q19			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Agree	26	46.4	46.4	46.4
	Strongly Agree	25	44.6	44.6	91.1
Valid	Disagree	2	3.6	3.6	94.6
	Not Sure	2	3.6	3.6	98.2
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Ninety-one percent (91%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that dual allegiance has negatively affected worship in the church.

Cross-tabulation of research variables with Gender.

A cross-tabulation of Gender with the research variables reveal the following:

Table 20 shows the response of both male and female genders on the importance of total obedience in worship. The table reveals that the female gender is more aware than the male, that total obedience has a whole lot to do with worship.

Table 20. Total Obedience Is a Requirement for Genuine Worship

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	14	5	1	2	22
	% within sex of the respondents	63.6%	22.7%	4.5%	9.1%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	32	2	0	0	34
	% within sex of the respondents	94.1%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	46	7	1	2	56
	% within sex of the respondents	82.1%	12.5%	1.8%	3.6%	100.0%

The totality of the female gender (100%) and 86.3% of the male strongly disagree or disagree that total obedience has little to do with genuine worship, if we err, God will always forgive.

Table 21 indicates the responses of male and female genders on the awareness of their pioneers merging their former religion with the new faith. Here, the level of awareness, although very close, the male gender is a little bit more aware of this fact.

Table 21. Merging of Former Religious Practice with the New Faith

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	1	5	6	10	22
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	4.5%	22.7%	27.3%	45.5%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	0	9	12	12	34
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	0.0%	26.5%	35.3%	35.3%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	1	14	18	22	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	1.8%	25.0%	32.1%	39.3%	100.0%

Very close to seventy-three percent (72.8%) of the male respondents and more than seventy percent (70.6%) of the female respondents strongly agree and agree, that some of the pioneers of the church merged from the onset, their formal religious affiliation with their newly-found faith in terms of practice.

Table 22 also shows the awareness of both genders on the involvement of some members in the occult. The table reveals that the male gender is more aware.

Table 22. Some Church Members Still in Occult Group

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	5	11	6	22
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	22.7%	50.0%	27.3%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	9	14	10	34
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	26.5%	41.2%	29.4%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	14	25	16	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	25.0%	44.6%	28.6%	100.0%

More than seventy-seven percent (77.3%) of the male and more than seventy-percent (70.6%) of the female, strongly agree and agree that some of the Church members are still in certain occult group or the other till today.

Table 23 indicates the awareness of male and female gender on visiting Babalows (witch doctors) for help in times of needs and troubles. The female gender takes the lead here and that is not far-fetched as they are more prone to things like this than male. More than half of the respondents in both genders attests to this statement.

Table 23. Some Members Still Visit Babalawos (Witch Doctors)

		Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	9	7	6	22
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	40.9%	31.8%	27.3%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	12	14	7	34
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	35.3%	41.2%	20.6%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	21	21	13	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	37.5%	37.5%	23.2%	100.0%

Close to sixty percent of the male gender (59.1%), and more than sixty percent (61.8%) of the female gender strongly agree and agree that Some members still do visit *Babalawos* (witch doctors) for help in times of crisis such as health challenge or a threat of life to someone very close.

Table 24 shows the level of awareness of both genders: the respondents that some members still communicate with the dead.

Table 24. Some Members Still Communicate with the Dead

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	1	4	12	5	22
	% within sex of the respondent:	0.0%	4.5%	18.2%	54.5%	22.7%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	1	0	13	19	34
	% within sex of the respondent:	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	38.2%	55.9%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	2	4	25	24	56
	% within sex of the respondent:	1.8%	3.6%	7.1%	44.6%	42.9%	100.0%

Over seventy-seven percent (77.2%) of the male gender and more than ninety-four percent (94.1%) of the female gender strongly agree and agree that some members still communicate with the dead to “rest in peace” and to never forget their children or people left behind.

Table 25 shows the level of awareness of the respondents on the veneration of the dead for good fortune. Less than 37% in both genders attest to this statement as a fact.

Table 25. Some Members Venerate the Dead for Good Fortune

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	1	0	13	8	22
	% within sex of the respondents	4.5%	0.0%	59.1%	36.4%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	0	2	22	10	34
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	5.9%	64.7%	29.4%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	2	35	18	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	3.6%	62.5%	32.1%	100.0%

Close to thirty-seven percent (36.4%) of the male respondents and less than thirty percent (29.4%) of the female agree that some members still venerate the dead for the purpose of good fortune or prosperity in their business. Close to sixty percent (59.1%) male respondents and almost sixty-five percent (64.7%) female respondents are not sure whether some members still venerate the dead for the purpose of good fortune or prosperity in their business or not.

Table 26 shows the attitude of the respondents towards giving testimony in the church. It shows that a little more than average of the total respondents in both genders attests to the fact that people are afraid to give testimony for fear of being turned to a misfortune.

Table 26. A Decline in Giving Testimony for Fear of Misfortune

		Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	2	8	7	5	22
	% within sex of the respondents	9.1%	36.4%	31.8%	22.7%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	13	10	10	34
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	38.2%	29.4%	29.4%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	3	21	17	15	56
	% within sex of the respondents	5.4%	37.5%	30.4%	26.8%	100.0%

More than fifty-four percent (54.5%) male respondents strongly agree and agree that, some members find it difficult to give testimony in the Church for fear of being turned to misfortune while above fifty-seven percent (57.2%) of the female respondents do the same.

Table 27 also indicates the respondents thought over sharing prayer request publicly. It shows that the attitude of the female gender towards this is not that different from that of the male.

Table 27. Reluctance in Making Prayer Request Publicly

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	1	0	5	14	2	22
	% within sex of the respondent	4.5%	0.0%	22.7%	63.6%	9.1%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	2	1	7	17	7	34
	% within sex of the respondent	5.9%	2.9%	20.6%	50.0%	20.6%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	3	1	12	31	9	56
	% within sex of the respondent	5.4%	1.8%	21.4%	55.4%	16.1%	100.0%

More than seventy percent of both genders: male (72.7%) and female (70.6%) strongly agree and agree that some of the members do feel reluctant to share their prayers publicly for fear of being harassed spiritually thereafter.

Table 28 shows the inclination of the respondents towards Christian participation in Traditional festival. Not less than 88% in both genders disagree that Christians can participate in our traditional festivals as shown below:

Table 28. Christians and Traditional Festival Practice

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	13	5	2	2	22
	% within sex of the respondents	59.1%	22.7%	9.1%	9.1%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	30	3	1	0	34
	% within sex of the respondents	88.2%	8.8%	2.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	43	8	3	2	56
	% within sex of the respondents	76.8%	14.3%	5.4%	3.6%	100.0%

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the female respondents and a little less than ninety percent (88.8%) of the male gender strongly disagree and disagree that Christianity does not mean that people cannot participate in our traditional festivals.

Table 29 reveals the perception of the respondents on the effect of dual allegiance on the returning of tithes and giving of offerings in worship.

Table 29. Dual Allegiance Can Affect Tithes and Offerings

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	2	1	0	5	14	22
	% within sex of the respondents	9.1%	4.5%	0.0%	22.7%	63.6%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	0	2	19	11	33
	% within sex of the respondents	3.0%	0.0%	6.1%	57.6%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	3	1	2	24	25	55
	% within sex of the respondents	5.5%	1.8%	3.6%	43.6%	45.5%	100.0%

Almost ninety-one percent (90.9%) of the female respondents and more than eighty-six percent (86.3%) of the male folks strongly agree and agree that dual allegiance can affect tithes and offerings in the Church.

Table 30 shows the perception of the respondents and their level of awareness on the fact that becoming a traditional chief can lead to idolatry. Both male and female genders strongly attest to this. It shows that the level of awareness is very high.

Table 30. Becoming a Traditional Chief versus Idolatry

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	1	6	15	22
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	4.5%	27.3%	68.2%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	0	9	24	34
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	0.0%	26.5%	70.6%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	1	15	39	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	1.8%	26.8%	69.6%	100.0%

More than ninety-seven percent (97.1%) of the female and above ninety-five percent (95.5%) of the male respondents strongly agree and agree that becoming a traditional chief in the community could lead a Christian to idolatry.

Table 31 shows the perception of both genders on whether one can become a traditional chief without compromising his/her Christian faith. And not less than 72% disagree in both genders.

Table 31. Traditional Chieftaincy versus Compromise of Faith

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	7	9	4	1	1	22
	% within sex of the respondents	31.8%	40.9%	18.2%	4.5%	4.5%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	8	18	6	2	0	34
	% within sex of the respondents	23.5%	52.9%	17.6%	5.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	15	27	10	3	1	56
	% within sex of the respondents	26.8%	48.2%	17.9%	5.4%	1.8%	100.0%

More than seventy-six percent (76.4%) of the female and almost seventy-three percent (72.7%) of the male respondents strongly disagree and disagree that one can become a traditional chief without compromising his faith in the Lord.

Table 32 also reveals the perception of both genders on the effect of practicing politics on Sabbath keeping.

Table 32. Sabbath Keeping Is Not Affected by Engaging in Partisan Politics

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	12	5	1	3	1	22
	% within sex of the respondents	54.5%	22.7%	4.5%	13.6%	4.5%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	23	7	1	1	2	34
	% within sex of the respondents	67.6%	20.6%	2.9%	2.9%	5.9%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	35	12	2	4	3	56
	% within sex of the respondents	62.5%	21.4%	3.6%	7.1%	5.4%	100.0%

More than eighty-eight percent female (88.2%) and over seventy-seven percent (77.3%) male respondents strongly disagree and disagree that Sabbath keeping is not affected by engaging in partisan politics.

Table 33 reveals the understanding of the respondents on what it means to worship. The relationship between yielding selflessly to God and the term worship.

Table 33. Worship Is Giving Oneself over to God Whole-heartedly

		Strongly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	1	4	17	22
	% within sex of the respondents	4.5%	18.2%	77.3%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	1	3	30	34
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	8.8%	88.2%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	2	7	47	56
	% within sex of the respondents	3.6%	12.5%	83.9%	100.0%

A little more than ninety-seven percent (97.1%) of the female and more than ninety-five percent (95.5%) of the male respondents strongly agree and agree that worship is giving oneself over to God as a living sacrifice rather than seeking one's own interest.

Table 34 shows the perception of the respondents on the effect of the identity and reputation portrayed by the church members in the community on the gospel.

Table 34. The Impact of the Identity and Reputation of Members on the Gospel

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	3	6	3	10	0	22
	% within sex of the respondents	13.6%	27.3%	13.6%	45.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	3	15	9	6	1	34
	% within sex of the respondents	8.8%	44.1%	26.5%	17.6%	2.9%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	6	21	12	16	1	56
	% within sex of the respondents	10.7%	37.5%	21.4%	28.6%	1.8%	100.0%

Close to fifty-three percent (52.9%) of the female respondents and close to forty-one percent (40.9%) of the male folks strongly disagree and disagree that the identity and reputation of Adventists in the community by separating themselves from every form of ungodliness has positively impacted the spreading of the gospel in the community over the years. While above twenty percent (20.5%) of the female respondents strongly agree or agree over forty percent of the male (45.5%) respondents agree with this notion.

Table 35 shows the perception of the respondents on whether there are still members of the church in Ogboni fraternity.

Table 35. Members of the Church Still in Ogboni Group

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	1	9	8	4	22
	% within sex of the respondents	4.5%	40.9%	36.4%	18.2%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	0	16	13	5	34
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	47.1%	38.2%	14.7%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	25	21	9	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	44.6%	37.5%	16.1%	100.0%

Close to fifty-five percent (54.6%) of the male respondents and close to fifty-three percent (52.9%) of the female respondents strongly agree and agree that there are members of the Adventist Church who are still adherents of *Ogboni* group.

Table 36 shows whether there have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the church before or not. And both genders strongly agree to the fact that there have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the church.

Table 36. Confirmed Cases of Witchcraft in the Church in Recent Years

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	3	12	7	22
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	13.6%	54.5%	31.8%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	2	0	13	19	34
	% within sex of the respondents	5.9%	0.0%	38.2%	55.9%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	2	3	25	26	56
	% within sex of the respondents	3.6%	5.4%	44.6%	46.4%	100.0%

More than eighty-six percent (86.3%) of the male respondents and a little more than ninety-four percent (94.1%) of the female respondents strongly agree and agree that there have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the church in recent years.

Table 37 shows the perception of the respondents on whether there are current members who practice ancestral worship. Both genders reveal that as shown in the table below:

Table 37. Current Members of the Church Who Practice Ancestral Worship

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	1	2	12	7	22
	% within sex of the respondents	4.5%	9.1%	54.5%	31.8%	100.0%
Female	Frequency	0	4	10	20	34
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	11.8%	29.4%	58.8%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	6	22	27	56
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	10.7%	39.3%	48.2%	100.0%

More than eighty-eight percent (88.2%) of the female respondents and above eighty-six percent (86.3%) of the male respondents either agree or strongly agree that there are current members of the church who still practice ancestral worship.

Table 38 reveals the perception of the respondents in both genders whether dual allegiance has negatively affected worship in the church or not.

Table 38. Dual Allegiance Has Negatively Affected Worship in the Church

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	Frequency	0	1	0	10	11
	% within sex of the respondents	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	45.5%	50.0%
Female	Frequency	1	1	2	16	14
	% within sex of the respondents	2.9%	2.9%	5.9%	47.1%	41.2%
Total	Frequency	1	2	2	26	25
	% within sex of the respondents	1.8%	3.6%	3.6%	46.4%	44.6%

Over ninety-five percent (95.5%) of the male respondents and more than eighty-eight percent (88.2%) of the female counterpart strongly agree or agree that dual allegiance has negatively affected worship in the Church.

Analysis of Findings: Hierarchical Cluster

The hierarchical cluster analysis resulted in classifying the variables into three distinct clusters as shown in the dendrogram (Appendix C) and referred to below as cluster 1, cluster 2, and cluster 3. The responses to the variables Q1, Q9, Q12, Q13, and Q15 in the first cluster were very close. The same applies to the responses for the second cluster made up of variables Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q16. The variables

Q5, Q10, Q11, Q14, Q17, Q18, and Q19 in the last cluster were not as closely related as is the case in the first two clusters.

The possible reason why the respondents reacted in the same way to the variables in cluster 1 is that those variables bother on the central idea of loyalty or allegiance of the worshippers. It seems they understood the variables very well as they relate to them and the subject of worship.

Moreover, the possible reason for a close response from the respondents to the variables in cluster 2 may be because the variables are concerned with the concept of dual allegiance and they understood the questions in relation to their practices as a religious group.

Lastly, in cluster 3 the variables were not closely related as in 1 and 2. This may be because, they probe into the respondents' personalities, involvements in syncretic behavior and their level of understanding of what worship is all about.

Summary of the Findings

The cross-tabulation with age and gender as well as the frequency table shows that the respondents have understanding of the following and are aware of its implications on the Christian worship of God:

1. That obedience is paramount in worship and a requirement for genuine worship as 94.6% agree to this fact.
2. That Christians' participation in traditional festival is not advisable, it could lead away from God because of the element of idolatry as attested to by 91.1% of the respondents.
3. They are also aware that dual allegiance has a serious negative effect on the return of tithes and offering as 89.1% of the respondents agree to this fact.

4. They are aware that becoming a Traditional Chief as a Christian could lead to idolatry as 96.4% of the respondents agree to this fact.
5. And they are also aware that compromise of Christian faith is imminent when a believer accepts traditional Chieftaincy title with 75% respondents
6. They also attested to the fact that the practice of partisan politics will surely affect Sabbath keeping.
7. Conclusively, 96.4% respondents reveal that they are aware that genuine worship requires total surrendering to the Almighty God.

Nevertheless, the following will need an intervention program:

1. The fact that some members are still in certain occult group or the other that more than seventy percent (70) respondents attested to (77.3% male and 70.6% female) with a combined average of 73.95% respondents will need an intervention program. This could be a lingering effect of the merger of the traditional faith with Christianity by their pioneers as attested to by 71.4% of the respondents. This needs an intervention.
2. That some members still visit *Babalawo* is given a support of 60.7% respondents. This is still very significant and needs an intervention.
3. That some still communicate with the dead to rest in peace and not to forget their children and other relatives is attested to by 87.5% respondents.
4. That some members do fear to share their prayer request before the congregation or to one another to avoid being turned to a misfortune is still an issue. At least 71.5% agree that people are afraid to do so.

5. That there are still adherents of Ogboni fraternity among the members as attested to by 53.6% of the respondents needs an intervention. It think this percentage is still significant.
6. That there were confirmed cases of witchcraft in the time past as agreed to by 91.1% percent suggests that there is a need for intervention.
7. Conclusively, above eighty-seven percent (87.5%) indicated that ancestral worship is still being practiced by some members as they participate in *Egungun* Festival.

One can deduce from these points that the Church is not without the knowledge of the presence of blending of beliefs in her midst. This shows that, they have a certain level of understanding of what is happening among them. All that is needed for a change may be to re-educate the members of Erinmope District through Bible Study, Revival programs, Prayer Meetings and Regular encouragement to put their faith in God wholeheartedly.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This chapter focuses on the intervention program designed to curb the effects of syncretism in Erinmope District. The data collected in chapter 3 and its analysis guide the choice of the kind of program developed in this work. The chapter includes the intervention program, its implementation and evaluation.

The Program Development

Owing to the fact that, the major challenges identified through several means of data analysis revolve round dual allegiance, such as some Church Members still visit *Babalowos*, some still in occult group, many still communicate with the dead ‘to rest in peace,’ some are still members of *Ogboni* fraternity, some still celebrate *Egungun* festival and thereby participate in ancestral worship, and some confirmed cases of witchcraft in the church which have made many to be reluctant to share their prayer requests in the church for fear of the unknown. Therefore, this program is developed to curb the challenges of syncretism in Erinmope District. For it is already evident from the above that syncretic behavior exists within this District.

The Schedule of the Revival Program

Aim: The aim of this revival is to redirect all the parishioners in Erinmope District back to worshipping the God Almighty alone, putting their trust solely in Him, obeying, inquiring and serving Him only so as to experience a victorious life in Jesus. The intention is not to discredit or condemn the language of the people, their style of

worship, mode of dressing, and other cultural ways of life they hold on to which are not contrary to Christian faith but to contextualize them as they behold Christ as “the Author and Finisher of their faith” to fully concentrate their allegiance to Him when life seems good and when seems difficult and avoid conflicting practices with Christian faith with a view to experiencing victory in the name of Jesus.

Theme Experiencing Victory in Jesus

Theme Song: SDAH 294, “Power in the Blood”

Sermon Topics for the Revival

1. His Word is Power and Light: Abide in it (John 15:1-7)
2. His Power of Creation (His Supremacy at Creation). (Genesis 1, Col. 1:15-17)
3. His Power of Redemption (2 Corinth. 5:17, Rom. 8:1)
4. Worshipping the Creator and Coming out of Confusion (Rev. 14:6-12).
5. His Victory over Familiar Spirit and Forces of Evil (Gen. 3:15, Eph. 1:17-23, 6:10-18)
6. Are the Dead still living? (Eccl. 9:5-6).
7. Power of Prayer (Mark 11:24, 2 chronicle 7:14).
8. The Victory of the Saints (Rev. 14:12, 22:12-14).

Program Implementation

This program was scheduled and implemented within a week. It began on Saturday 14th August, 2021 and ended on Saturday, 21st August, 2021. It was scheduled and implemented as follows:

Day 1, Sat. 21 Aug, 2021. His Word is Power and Light (Jn. 15:1-7, Psalms 119:105).

Day 2, Sun. 22 Aug, 2021 His Supremacy at Creation (Gen 1:1-3, Col. 1:15-17)

Day 3, Mon. 23 Aug, 2021 His Power of Redemption (Matt 1:21, Acts 4:12, Rom. 8:1)

Day 4, Tues. 24 Aug, 2021 Worshipping the Creator (Rev. 14:6-7)
Day 5, Wed. 25 Aug, 2021 Victory over Forces of Evil Eph. 6:10-18
Day 6, Thur. 26 Aug, 2021 Are the Dead still living? (Eccl. 9:5-6)
Day 7, Fri. 27 Aug, 2021 Power of Prayer (Mark 11:24)
Day 8, Sat. 28 Aug, 2021 Victory of the Saints (Rev. 14:12, 21:1-7, 22:12-14)

The above program was implemented as stated above to encourage the people to devote their lives entirely to God. This was just a reminder with intense plea in the name of the Lord. The content starting from the injunction to abide in the word, stating the importance of obedience as an evidence of faith in Christ was not unfamiliar to them, it was what the researcher had been doing and educating them on for almost 5years before he left the District.

It was observed that the attendance was consistent every day; it was just plus or minus 1 each day of at least sixty-five people in attendance who are members of the Church. Their responses when asked for decision for Christ and the desire to desist from the practices that are not in conformity with Christian faith were splendid, not less than 99% by the raising of hands.

Program Evaluation

A focused group discussion was done at the end of the program to get the feedback from the teaching and channel a new course of living for the people by the grace of God. This was done aside giving opportunity for decision making and prayers to fully abide in the word, accept Jesus, live in victory and abstain from syncretic practices by elevating Jesus as both the Saviour and Creator of mankind.

Eight questions were put across to the respondent who are representative of departments of the Church, the Pastor, Elder, the AWM member, the Youth Leader, the Choir Leader who is also a Youth Department representative, AMO Leader, and

two adults who have been part of the Church for year who are now in their eighties. There was no disagreement whatsoever in the response of these respondents to the impact of the revival conducted and the questions asked for evaluation.

The following questions were responded to by the respondents to know the impact of the program:

1. When we absolutely adhere to God's word as our standard of faith and guide to worship, could this prevent syncretism? What is your attitude to the word of God now?
2. Do you still need external power apart from the power behind creation and redemption to secure you a better tomorrow or as a defense from enemies?
3. Can the dead hear us and attend to our needs?
4. Do we need to help ourselves by consulting mediums for helps instead of inquiring and praying to God alone?
5. Has the attitude of our members changed in visiting Babalawos?
6. Do you share your testimony and prayer requests now freely in the Church?
7. Can the Christian God be trusted absolutely without meddling with earthly powers?
8. What impact has the revival program made on the members on the issues of Ogboni fraternity, visiting Babalawos, participating in Egungun and witchcraft?

The following answers were given by the respondents to the questions asked above accordingly:

1. They unanimously agree that when we uphold the word of God as our standard of faith, it will influence our worship and keep us away from syncretic behavior. And this has been their experience at least to a reasonable extent to the point that the behavior is not so evident anymore within the Church.
2. They agree further to the fact that the power that saves and creates the universe is dependable enough to secure a future and defend their case, hence joining the occult for protection, prosperity or for defense is needless. They espoused that more trouble can ensue from this practice.
3. Having had the understanding of the state of the dead, they concluded that it will be an effort in futility to communicate to the dead and that this is tantamount to consulting demonic spirit for the dead know nothing (Eccl. 9:5). This knowledge has undoubtedly assisted many to refrain from the act.
4. The respondent also agree to the fact that only God should be consulted and not any familiar spirit. This knowledge has influenced the Church greatly in focusing on God and God alone.
5. Such actions as visiting Babalawos, participating in Egungun festival, or any one manifesting witchcraft behavior is no longer evident among the Church members. It is worthy of note that the teaching on this matter started since 2015, what was carried out recently in 2021 was like a reminder of all they have learnt.

6. The respondents agree that now people are sharing testimonies and giving their prayer requests now in the Church, without fear and with confidence that God is supreme over all.
7. They also attested to the fact that God can be absolutely trusted without meddling with any earthly power.
8. It was jointly agreed that, the revival program conducted was of great impact to the Church in curbing the identified problem of syncretism. This as well has fostered genuine worship among the Church members.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Although, the effect of syncretism on worship in Erinmope District is very evident considering the outcome of the data analysis, nevertheless the Church is not without the pre-knowledge of some facts about syncretism but lacking in the will-power to make the right choice due to the fear of the unknown, in areas of health, well-being (prosperity) of their children, security and so on. They ventured into *ogboni* fraternity for safety, visit *Babalawos* (witch doctors) for healing and solutions to their problems which they later got to know through the intervention program and the pre-knowledge of this matter over the years, that, hardly could this help them.

The intervention program has spurred their faith in God to know that they could do without seeking help from familial spirit or those who consult the dead. They have discovered that serving the Lord God Almighty exclusively is enough to save them from all harms. It could therefore be said that though the evidence of syncretism in Erinmope District and its effects on quality of worship is evident yet the parishioners are rising above this challenge to embracing God wholeheartedly and worship adequately now, to the glory of God.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this study has been able to reveal through the survey that some members were in occult group, some visited Babalawo, some communicated with the dead, some were afraid to share their testimony and prayer requests in fellowship,

some were adherents of Ogboni fraternity, and that some participated in Egungun festival. Looking at the effects of these on quality worship, it is not a gainsay to affirm that, these practices above have impacted Erinmope District negatively in terms of quality worship and even in numerical attendance during worship due to dual loyalty in the time past.

The dual allegiance has deprived them of a whole hearted devotion to God as Christians. It has impacted the giving of the people negatively, it has affected their resources and their total well-being, some look very despondent, ever looking for solution which affect the atmosphere of worship generally. God is not approached because He is God but because something is needed from Him. Theirs become a perverted reason for worship but with the intervention program, hope is restored and a bright future is expected as the respondents see the reason to turn to God wholeheartedly.

It is worthy of note to say there has been evidence of change as well in this District recently. People can now share their prayer request freely trusting in the supreme power of God Almighty. Sitting arrangement has improved drastically as people now sit together freely in the Church. The intervention program has really proved positive.

Recommendations

Considering the areas of challenge within this District, the Researcher therefore recommends that the weekly Bible Study should be strengthened in order to grow the faith of the members in the word of God. This will prevent them from associating with groups like Ogboni fraternity, witchcraft, sorcery and so on. These subject areas should regularly be treated until the members are accustomed to the dangers involved in practicing them.

Regular prayer meetings, and even all-night prayers occasionally is recommended to tackle their existing concerns and the envisaging ones. The assurance that people are praying with them and for them could keep their faith intact.

Fellowshipping together in worship, sharing, eating together, bearing with one another in moments of joy and painful moments should be embraced as this would make the Church a desired place where comfort, help, sociality and spirituality are realities and can be sought for.

Sanctions should be given publicly to public offenders who are found in the act of syncretism so as to serve as deterrent to all the members that the Church has zero tolerance for this act. The negligence of this in the time past has made evil to triumph in the Church.

The work also recommends that a research be carried out on the effects of syncretism on the growth of the Church.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

**Adventist University of Africa,
Theological Seminary**

Questionnaires Prepared to Conduct a Research on the “Effects of Syncretism on the Quality of Worship in Erinmope District, Ekiti Conference of Nigeria”

The Researcher, ADEOYE, Oladele Ezekiel with ID number: **S2014134** is a student in Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology in the Theological Seminary of Adventist University of Africa Nairobi, Kenya. He is working on the topic: **“A Program to Curb the Effects of Syncretism on the Quality of Worship in Erinmope District, Ekiti Conference of Nigeria.”**

Hence, the questionnaire is designed to solicit your knowledge and understanding on the topic. It is only for academic purpose, your response shall be treated with utmost privacy. Please respond to all the questions. Thank You.

Section A: Awareness of Syncretism among Members.

NB: Mark the Correct Numeric Response to each question as you perceive on a scale of one to five in the Representation; SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; N: Not Sure D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree.

	Mark the Correct Numeric Response to each question as you perceive.	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Total obedience has little to do with genuine worship, if we err, God will always forgive.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Some of the pioneers of the Church merged, from the onset, their formal religious affiliation with their newly-found faith in terms of practice.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Some of the Church members are still in certain occult group or the other till today?	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Some members do still visit <i>Babalawos</i> (witch doctors) for help in times of crisis such as health challenge or a threat of life to someone very close.	1	2	3	4	5

5.	Some members still communicate with the dead to “rest in peace” and to never forget their children or people left behind.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Some members still venerate the dead for the purpose of good fortune or prosperity in their business.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Some members find it difficult to give testimony in the Church for fear of being turned to misfortune.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Some members do feel reluctant to share their prayers publicly for fear of being harassed spiritually thereafter.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Christianity does not mean that people cannot participate in our traditional festivals.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Dual allegiance can affect tithes and offerings in the Church	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Becoming a traditional chief in the community could lead to idolatry.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	One can become a traditional Chief without compromising his faith in the Lord.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Sabbath keeping is not affected by engaging in partisan politics.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Worship is giving oneself over to God as a living Sacrifice, rather than seeking one’s own interest.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	The identity and reputation of Adventists in the community by separating themselves from every form of ungodliness has positively impacted the spreading of the gospel in this community over the years.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	There are members of the Adventist Church who are still adherents of the Ogboni group.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	There have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the Church in recent years.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	There are current members of the church who still practice ancestral worship	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Dual allegiance has negatively affected worship in the Church	1	2	3	4	5

Section B: Demographic Information

20. Sex: Male Female

21. Age: (a) 16-25 (b) 26-35 (c) 36-45 (d) 46 and above

22. Marital Status: (a) Single (b) Married (c) Widowed (d) Divorced

23. Educational Qualification: (a) SSCE (b) OND (c)
HND/B.sc/BA

Masters Doctorate

25. Occupation (a) Student (b) Public Servant (c) Farmer

(d) Civil Servant (e) Trader (f) Clergy

26. Religious Affiliation: (a) Christian (b) Muslim (c) African
Traditional Religion (d) Other Specify _____

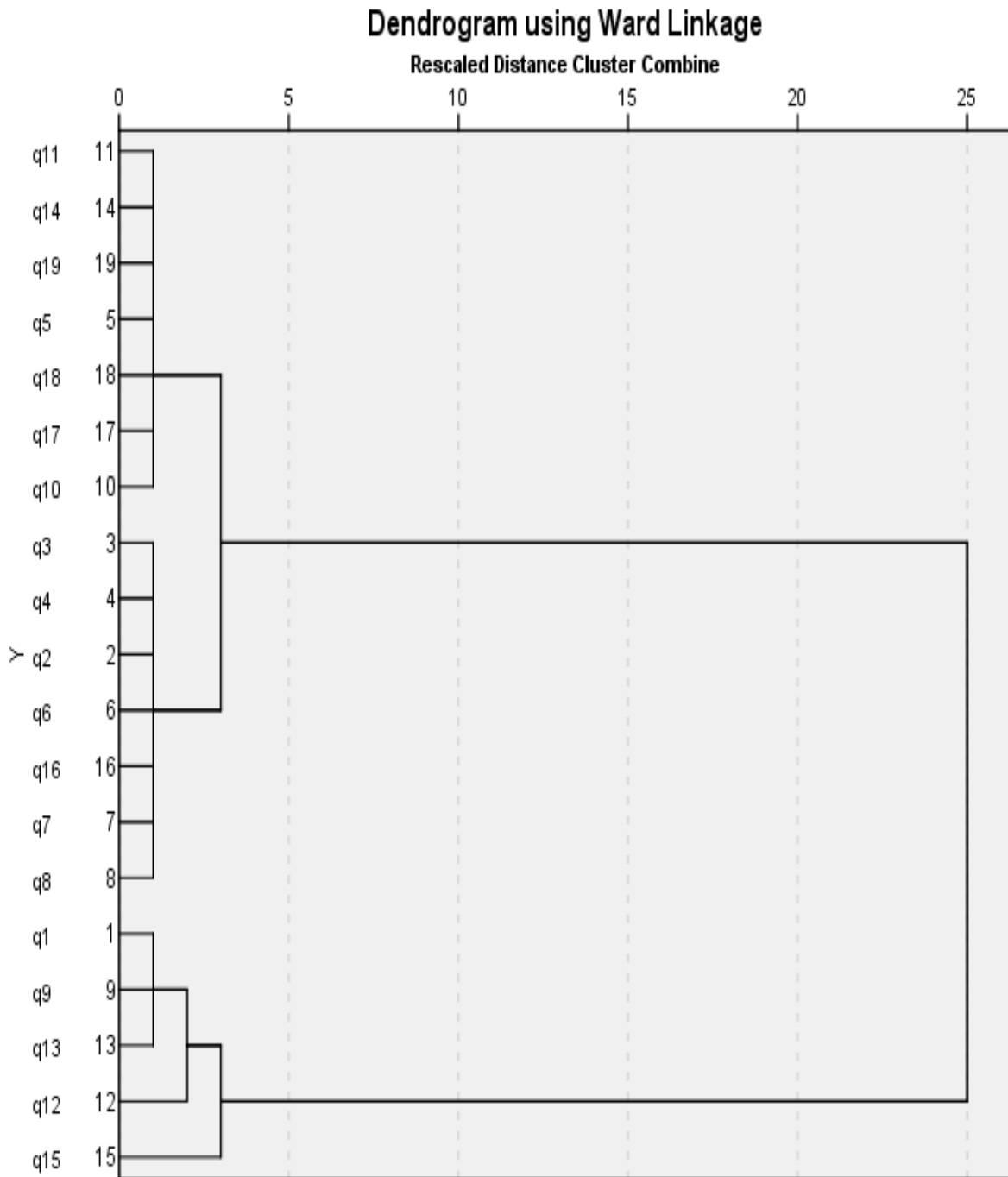
APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. When we absolutely adhere to God's word as our standard of faith and guide to worship, could this prevent syncretism? What is your attitude to the word of God now?
2. Do you still need external power apart from the power behind creation and redemption to secure you a better tomorrow or as a defense from enemies?
3. Can the dead hear us and attend to our needs?
4. Do we need to help ourselves by consulting mediums for helps instead of inquiring and praying to God alone?
5. Has the attitude of our members changed in visiting Babalawos?
6. Do you share your testimony and prayer requests now freely in the Church?
7. Can the Christian God be trusted absolutely without meddling with earthly powers?
8. What impact has the revival program made on the members on the issues of Ogboni fraternity, visiting Babalawos, participating in Egungun and witchcraft?

APPENDIX C

HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING DENDROGRAM



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19
Q1																			
Q2	.023																		
Q3	-	.51																	
Q4	.185	5**																	
Q5	-	.34	.61																
Q6	.083	9**	7*	*															
Q7	-	.38	.45																
Q8	.289	2**	0*	.30															
Q9	*		*	3*															
Q10			.41	.40	.43														
Q11	.051	.29	7*	6**	5**														
Q12		2*	*																
Q13	-	.38	.46	.47	.39	.48													
Q14	.224	8**	9*	0**	2**	2*													
Q15			*			*													
Q16	-		.32		.18		.41												
Q17	.232	.18	0*	.16	3	.01	6*												
Q18		0		3		6	*												
Q19	.494	-	-	-	-	-	-	-											
Q20	**	.00	.25	.19	.43	.00	.24	.18											
Q21		6	2	0	0**	7	9	7											
Q22	-		.30	.28		-	.35		-										
Q23	.247	.19	0*	2*	.21	.00	3*	.25	.513										
Q24		7			1	2	*	2	**										
Q25	-		.36	.29	.38	-	.37	.42	-	.47									
Q26	.190	.08	8*	8*	9**	.02	5*	3*	.554	6**									
Q27		1	*			0	*	*	**										
Q28	.016	-	-	-	-	.19	-	.02	.361	-	-								
Q29		.11	.15	.07	.04	6	.15	1	**	.40	.43								
Q30		0	2	4	4		3			4**	4**								
Q31			-	-	-	-	-		.434	-	-								
Q32	.215	.01	.07	.34	.41	.05	.18	.15	**	.30	.39	.15							
Q33		4	9	5**	4**	1	4	6		6*	7**	6							

Q	-		.34	.42	.61		.48	.39	-	.55	.72	-	-					
14	.369	.21	8*	5**	3**	.21	4*	5*	.663	2**	8**	.27	.59					
	**	3	*			5	*	*	**			3*	0**					
Q	.095	-	.08	.10	-	.13	.26	.02	.200	-	.04	.09	.21	-				
15		.15	8	1	.10	4	6*	3		.12	8	6	7	.04				
		0			9					0				4				
Q	-		.45		.30		.37	.26	-	.32	.31	-	-	.30				
16	.250	.25	3*	.23	4*	.21	1*	6*	.282	7*	2*	.20	.08	3*	.11			
		1	*	3		4	*		*			1	4		7			
Q	-		.27	.13	.43	-		.35	-	.43	.43	-	-	.52	-	.32		
17	.337	.15	9*	4	5**	.03	.23	7*	.472	5**	5**	.03	.32	3**	.06	2*		
	*	5				0	8	*	**			6	4*		7			
Q	-	-	.31		.51			-	-		.33	-	-	.52		.378		
18	.254	.05	0*	.24	9**	.25	.09	.05	.569	.21	8*	.17	.47	3**	.00	.19		
		2		7		0	6	8	**	6		0	0**		2	5		
Q	-	.50	.43	.37	.52	.31	.37	29	-	.48	.43	-	-	.70	-	.31	.276	.30
19	.249	5**	7*	7**	3**	7*	9*	7*	.344	2**	5**	.21	.41	8**	.17	3*	*	5*
			*				*		**			5	1**		8			

Note: **Q1:** Total obedience has little to do with genuine worship, if we err, God will always forgive; **Q2:** Some of the pioneers of the Church merged, from the onset, their formal religious affiliation with their newly-found faith in terms of practice; **Q3:** Some of the Church members are still in certain occult group or the other till today; **Q4:** Some members do still visit Babalawos (witch doctors) for help in times of crisis such as health challenge or a threat of life to someone very close; **Q5:** Some members still communicate with the dead to “rest in peace” and to never forget their children or people left behind; **Q6:** Some members still venerate the dead for the purpose of good fortune or prosperity in their business; **Q7:** Some members find it difficult to give testimony in the Church for fear of being turned to misfortune; **Q8:** Some members do feel reluctant to share their prayers publicly for fear of being harassed spiritually thereafter; **Q9:** Christianity does not mean that people cannot participate in our traditional festivals; **Q10:** Dual allegiance can affect tithes and offerings in the Church; **Q11:** Becoming a traditional chief in the community could lead to idolatry; **Q12:** One can become a traditional Chief without compromising his faith in the Lord; **Q13:** Sabbath keeping is not affected by engaging in partisan politics; **Q14:** Worship is giving oneself over to God as a living Sacrifice, rather than seeking one’s own interest; **Q15:** The identity and reputation of Adventists in the community by separating themselves from every form of ungodliness has positively impacted the spreading of the gospel in this community over the years; **Q16:** There are members of the Adventist Church who are still adherents of the Ogboni group; **Q17:** There have been confirmed cases of witchcraft in the Church in recent years; **Q18:** There are current members of the church who still practice ancestral worship; **Q19:** Dual allegiance has negatively affected worship in the Church.

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District Pastor of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Erinmope-Ekiti, 2015-2019

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