A Missiological Study of the Phenomenon of Dual Allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Among the Yoruba People of Nigeria

Paul Adekunle Dosunmu

Recommended Citation
Dosunmu, Paul Adekunle, "A Missiological Study of the Phenomenon of Dual Allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Among the Yoruba People of Nigeria" (2011). Dissertations. 29.
http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/29
Thank you for your interest in the

Andrews University Digital Library
of Dissertations and Theses.

Please honor the copyright of this document by not duplicating or distributing additional copies in any form without the author’s express written permission. Thanks for your cooperation.
ABSTRACT

A MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PHENOMENON OF DUAL ALLEGIANCE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

by

Paul Adekunle Dosunmu

Adviser: Bruce L. Bauer
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PHENOMENON OF DUAL ALLEGIANCE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

Name of researcher: Paul Adekunle Dosunmu

Name and degree of adviser: Bruce L. Bauer, D.Miss.

Date completed: December 2010

Problem

Many Africans and members of other traditional societies of the world who still hold to a supernaturalistic and spiritualistic worldview visit diviners, shamans, spiritualistic herbalists, and the traditional medicine men and women who use enchantments, divination, charms, invocation of the spirit world, etc. They engage in such practices for various reasons which include, to diagnose and treat various ailments, both physical and psychological which plague their clients, a quest to know the future through divination, and also for the preparation of different kinds of charms and medicines. Christians, including some Yoruba Adventists, also engage in such
consultations, a practice which is categorically condemned in the Scriptures, the normative source for the Christian faith and life.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was, first, to study the causes, forms, meanings, and ramifications of dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists, and, second, to propose an Adventist response to dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists.

Method

I used a basic or generic qualitative research approach to gather data for subsequent analysis and study. Data collection was done among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists in Nigeria. Participants were interviewed regarding worldview, culture, causes for the calamities of life, solutions for the problem of life, their ethno-history, encounters with Christianity, and other experiences that generated a rich data supply for the study.

Results

The research showed that dual allegiance exists among the Yoruba Seventh-Adventists and it appears in different forms; it was caused by the discrepancies in the cultural and worldview specificities between the Christian missionaries and those of the Yoruba recipients; the lack of contextualization of the gospel to the Yoruba milieu; slavery in the history of the Yoruba, especially due to the participation in it by some Christian missionaries and bishops; failures in the three essential Christian encounters of allegiance, truth, and power; people movement; and the role of *Ifá*, the Yoruba deity of
wisdom and divination in the missionary expeditions among the *Egba*, a sub-tribe in the nineteenth century.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Dual allegiance is a significant issue in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that needs a concerted effort to both detect and eliminate from within the believers. Critical contextualization is the process that will address the problem. A major emphasis is needed on the power of the gospel. Pastors and lay leaders of the church need to be trained in critical contextualization. The creation of a study center for African Traditional Religions and worldviews will help the denomination to better understand how to contextualize mission to Africans and other people groups with similar worldviews.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PHENOMENON OF DUAL ALLEGIANCE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Paul Adekunle Dosunmu
December 2010
A MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PHENOMENON OF DUAL ALLEGIANCE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Paul Adekunle Dosunmu

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Faculty Adviser,
Bruce L. Bauer
Professor of World Mission

Director of Ph.D/Th.D. Program
J. H. Denis Fortin

Gorden Doss
Associate Professor of World Mission
Member

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
J. H. Denis Fortin

Shirley Freed
Member
Coordinator, Leadership Program

Lester Merklin
Director, Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations
Internal Examiner

External Examiner: Charles H. Kraft
Professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Communication, Fuller Theological Seminary

Date approved
DEDICATION

Glory be to the Almighty God—the Creator, Sustainer, Righteous Judge, Gracious Redeemer and Coming King, Source of all knowledge, all wisdom, mercy, and understanding, and His Christ who died to save us from all our sins.

To my dutiful, faithful wife, Rachael Abosed Olawumi Anike Alege Dosunmu. Jesus has done this for us. Jesus has won the battle. The degree is now acquired. The preparation is accomplished. By His Grace, we are now equipped to affirm the faith, and to change the world.

My children, the four daughters: Shekinah, Shalom, Sharon, Shem, and the only son, Shammah of the Tribe of Adekunle Dosunmu, for your patience, love, acceptance, and endurance. During these so many years you endured so much. Thank God for the grace.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. viii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ..................................................................................................... ix

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................... x

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1
   - Background of the Study ................................................................................................. 1
   - Statement of Problem ....................................................................................................... 7
   - Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................................... 8
   - Research Questions ........................................................................................................ 8
   - Research Design ............................................................................................................. 8
   - Theoretical/Conceptual Framework ................................................................................ 10
   - Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................ 12
   - Self as the Research Instrument .................................................................................... 18
   - Data Collection .............................................................................................................. 19
      - Purposive Sampling ................................................................................................. 20
      - Procedures ............................................................................................................... 20
      - Interviews .............................................................................................................. 22
   - Data Analysis ................................................................................................................ 22
   - Reliability and Validity ................................................................................................. 24
   - Generalizability or External Validity ............................................................................ 25
   - Delimitations ................................................................................................................ 26
   - Limitations ................................................................................................................... 26
   - Ethical Considerations ................................................................................................. 26
   - Summary ...................................................................................................................... 27

2. DUAL ALLEGIANCE: CAUSES AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ............................... 29
   - Introduction .................................................................................................................. 29
   - Definition and Description of Dual Allegiance .......................................................... 32
   - Causes of Dual Allegiance ............................................................................................ 37
3. YORUBA CULTURE AND WORLDVIEW AND ITS ENCOUNTER WITH CHRISTIAN MISSION

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 107
A Theoretical Framework for Examining Yoruba Worldview ...................... 112
  The Concept of Worldview ................................................................. 112
  Worldview Types ........................................................................ 116
An Overview of the Functions of Worldview .............................................. 120
Worldview Universals ............................................................................ 122
Yoruba Culture and Worldview .............................................................. 126
Ethno-historical Investigation of the Yoruba ............................................ 126
Characteristics of Yoruba Worldview ...................................................... 130
  Belief in Supernatural Spiritual Beings and Forces .............................. 130
  Yoruba Understanding of Human Nature ........................................... 135
  Causality in Yoruba Worldview ......................................................... 137
  Controlling Powers and Divination ..................................................... 150
Reasons for Consultation with the Babalawo .......................................... 154
Power to Control Life ............................................................................. 160
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angels and Demons: The Concept of the Messengers of <em>Olodumare</em></td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Salvation</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death, Heaven, and Hell</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism and Adaptability</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba Encounter with Christian Mission</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Encounter with Missionaries</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Encounter in Egypt</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Encounter with Missionaries</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Encounter with Missionaries</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion and Worldview Changes</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. FIELD RESEARCH ON DUAL ALLEGIANCE AMONG YORUBA ADVENTISTS           | 195  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Themes</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Dual Allegiance</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Dual Allegiance</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of the Stability and Faith of Spouse</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Beliefs and Familial Pressure</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Western Education</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational Influences</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms and Features of Dual Allegiance</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Visitations to Spiritual and Pentecostal Churches</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Visits to Diviners for Charms, Medicines, and Enchantments</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Members in the Occult</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idolatry and Ritualistic Sacrifices</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Pastors and Prophets in a League with Diviners</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of Dual Allegiance</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Worldview Influences</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Adventist Pastoral Approaches</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Balance between Power, Truth, and Allegiance Encounters</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Conversion Experience</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested Solutions</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. A SUGGESTED CONTEXTUAL RESPONSE TO DUAL ALLEGIANCE AMONG THE YORUBA | 249  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Process of Contextualization: Definitions and Steps</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Contextualization</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualized Church Life</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymnody</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Administration and Decision Making</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualized Theology and Ethics</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Theology of the Invisible .................................................................266
Witchcraft .........................................................................................267
Ancestors and funeral rites ..............................................................268
Curses ...............................................................................................270
A Theology of Power .........................................................................272
A Theology of the Cross .................................................................274
A Theology of Worship and Submission ...........................................276
A Theology of Suffering and Death ..................................................277
Ministerial and Methodological Responses ......................................278
The Need for a More Adequate Pastoral Preparation and Care ......279
Power Encounter for Biblical Balance .............................................282
Meeting the Quest to Know the Future ............................................284
Ministering to the Yoruba’s Quest for Posterity ..............................286
Anticipated Results of Contextualization Process ..........................288
Recommendations ...........................................................................289

Appendix

A. LETTERS .........................................................................................290

B. BRIEF SURVEY OF YORUBA ADVENTISTS ...............................296

C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ..............................................................300

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..............................................................................303

VITA .................................................................................................326
# LIST OF FIGURES

1. Schematic Representation of the Functions of Worldview ................................ 114
2. The Framework for the Analysis of Religious Systems ...................................... 119
3. The Emergence of Modern Worldview .............................................................. 120
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFER</td>
<td>African Ecclesial Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Church Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDMR</td>
<td>Educational Research Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFMA</td>
<td>Evangelical Foreign Missions Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>Evangelical Mission Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNB</td>
<td>Good News Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFMA</td>
<td>Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAMS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Adventist Mission Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>Mission Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDABC</td>
<td><em>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWEM</td>
<td>The Watchman Evangelistic Ministry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Arriving at this stage of this study is not a sole act. I thank God for all the people he used for its accomplishment. I am thankful for the support of my loving family, especially my wife, Rachael Abosede Anike Alege Dosunmu, and my daughters, Shekinah Durodoluwa, Shalom Enitan, Sharon Oluwadara, Shem Temidayo, and my son, Shammah Oluwatumininu, who denied themselves of the needed time with their husband and father, so he could focus on the work and finish it.

I also would like to acknowledge and appreciate the assistance of Dr. Adedeji Adeleke. The Lord Jesus Christ greatly used him in a tremendous way to make this study possible. May the good Lord continue to bless and prosper him and all who are his.

I greatly appreciate Dr. Bruce Lee Bauer, the chairman of the department where I studied, and also the chairman of my dissertation committee, for his spiritual and intellectual guidance, compassion, and prayers during the development of this dissertation. His encouraging looks and prayers gave me strength and hope to continue when others looked away. My deep appreciation goes to Dr. Gorden Doss and Dr. Shirley Freed, who are members of the dissertation committee. Special thanks go to the external examiner of this dissertation, Professor Charles H. Kraft, Professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, and to Dr. Lester Merklin who is the Director of the Global Center for Adventist/Muslim Relations, the Internal Examiner. Thank you so much for your contributions.
I also express gratitude to the faculty members and staff of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, the dean and all his co-workers, the Mission Department, and the PhD/ThD program. Special thanks go to Mrs. Mabel Bowen. She is a “Mother in Israel.” I sincerely appreciate the assistance of Mrs. Bonnie Proctor, the Dissertation Secretary, for her help. My boss at the Periodical Department of the James White Library, Mr. Bernard Helms, is also appreciated for his encouragement. Glory to God in the Highest. Amen.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist Church elder shared with me how when he was in a financial crisis, his brother, who is also a Seventh-day Adventist, visited a diviner who prepared a concoction to improve the elder’s business situation. The church elder refused to use it, stating that he had decided to follow Christ alone despite his poverty. His businessman brother and fellow Adventist did not see anything wrong in seeking help from a diviner to receive help for this type of problem.

During a pilot study\(^1\) carried out on the campus of Andrews University in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the course EDRM 605: Qualitative Research, two of the interviewees who had served as Adventist pastors among Yoruba Adventists told similar stories of how they had to deal with members who still visited diviners. In one situation a member went in search of a diviner’s assistance so she could have a child. Another case involved divination and fetishism to gain a promotion at work. A third person sought power in order to have an advantage over others who were involved in the same kind of

\(^1\)See Paul Dosunmu, “Pilot Studies on a Missiological Study of the Phenomenon of Dual Allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba People of Nigeria” (EDRM 605 Qualitative Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, Summer 2006).
business. All three of these people were active members of the Adventist Church. Charles Kraft and Marguerite Kraft also share a situation in which an attempt to deliver a sick man from demonization proved impossible. The demon taunted the Christian and said, “Your people ride two horses.” Believers who ride the “horse” of allegiance to Jesus on one hand and, on the other, the “horse” of continued dependence on superstition, demonic power, and animism never know the freedom and power of Jesus Christ.

The situations are typical expressions of the phenomenon known as “dual allegiance,” which continues to be a problem in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to such an extent that leaders of the denomination have begun to discuss and deal openly with it as they seek to find solutions to the many challenges this problem brings to the Church. At the 2005 General Conference session another doctrinal point was added to the 27 Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs in an attempt to address the issue of dual allegiance and supernatural phenomena.

Dual allegiance is a form of syncretism “which combines an inappropriate


3A symposium of the Global Mission Issue Committee consultative forum which discussed the challenges of this phenomenon in the Seventh-day Adventist Church took place in the General Conference Headquarters of Seventh-day Adventists in April, 2007.

4Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 149-162.
combination of ideas.”

It has been defined as the blending of unacceptable ideas, practices, or attitudes with biblical truth. Traditionally among Christians it has been used to describe the replacement or dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements. Examples range from Western materialism, to Asian and African animistic beliefs incorporated into the church. Syncretism of some form has been seen everywhere the church has existed.

It has been suggested that syncretism or dual allegiance is unavoidable in any fluid situation. Those presenting the gospel may have a less than accurate understanding of biblical faith. Then, whenever the gospel is presented, those receiving the message enter into a process that rarely ends up exactly where the giver of the message intended.

Therefore, in the process of conversion, syncretism will always occur for a time but what matters is a steady movement toward a healthier contextualization, which could be achieved through a consistent determined study of the Scripture.

---


7Ibid.


How did the faith of Christianity become mingled with the traditional religions it sought to replace among the Yoruba people? Part of the answer is because Western missionaries were often unwittingly influenced by colonialism, the Enlightenment, and the theory of evolution.\(^\text{10}\) Many believed in “progress,” which assumed the superiority of Western civilization, and its inevitable adoption by other peoples. Progress to them meant that old animistic beliefs and practices were merely primitive superstitions that could be ignored.\(^\text{11}\) Therefore, the brand of Christianity that came to Nigeria was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment and the contextual exigencies and assumptions that were prevalent in a secular Western worldview.\(^\text{12}\) Lesslie Newbigin has pointed out that the Western missionary has inadvertently been a major force in introducing secularization,\(^\text{13}\) skepticism concerning spiritual powers, and disbelief in the spirit world among those who were recipients of the missionary effort.

Dual allegiance also continues as a problem among the Yoruba because many missionaries did not appropriately address the African religious worldview at the inception of mission, thereby allowing the old values in the area of spiritual power to live


\(^{11}\)Ibid.


on either in a secret or open association with the faith after conversion to Christianity.\textsuperscript{14}

The importance of the concept of the “excluded middle”\textsuperscript{15} developed by anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert to explain the concept and reason for dual allegiance cannot be overemphasized. Hiebert observed that the Western two-tiered view of the universe typically leaves out an entire dimension seen quite readily by people of non-Western cultures. Hiebert built his analysis on a three-dimensional matrix. The first of these is the world of persons, animals, plants, mountains, and other things that can be seen with the naked eye and related to physically. The second consists of the unseen things of this world, including the realm of the ancestors—the living dead, spirits, ghosts, witchcraft, and earthly gods and goddesses who live in trees, rivers, hills, and villages, magical forces, mana, and evil eyes. This is the “excluded middle” that Westerners often ignore. Third is the unseen trans-empirical world which pertains to God, the devil, heaven, hell, and other worlds.\textsuperscript{16} Belief in the middle level began to die in Western worldviews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the growing acceptance of a Platonic dualism and a science based on materialistic naturalism.

Some missionaries came with worldviews that were largely ignorant of evil spirits, curses, diviners, and witchcraft, which were the very substance that constitutes much of the Yoruba worldview and which is believed to exert a great influence on them.


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 193-195.
Many missionaries were skeptical about such powers and had a Western worldview that denied their existence.\textsuperscript{17} As a result, converts were not taught how to deal biblically with the powers, so in times of crises, many reverted to the explanations and remedies common to their pre-Christian system.\textsuperscript{\textit{17}}

Other needs that are felt to be essential for survival, and which ordered the life of Yoruba people before their exposure to the Christian faith, also were not adequately met. Marguerite Kraft and Charles Kraft describe a similar problem, tracing the history of the spread of Christianity in the various non-Western lands to a period in history when the Western world had largely ceased to believe in spiritual beings and power:

For most of the world, however, including the Western world, traditional Christianity has presented an incomplete God, a God who created and redeemed but whose current activity is difficult to validate. We have a Christianity with a wonderful past and an exciting future, but the present is for many very disappointing. Though large numbers of Westerners seem relatively satisfied with this God, most of the rest of the world is not. They, like biblical peoples, expect God to be God of the here and now, a God who provides enough spiritual power for daily living, power to ward off evil powers that torment them.\textsuperscript{18}

With this kind of outlook on life, several components of the traditional religion of the Yoruba such as the use of incantations or enchantments to ward off evil, the use of charms and amulets for protection, and consultations with diviners, continue to rear their persistent heads during troubles and crises. The Adventist Church and its Yoruba members are not spared from this problem.\textsuperscript{19}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 196.

\textsuperscript{18}C. H. Kraft and M. Kraft, “Communicating and Ministering,” 346.

John Pobee further describes this philosophy behind missionary work at its inception: “All the historical churches by and large implemented the doctrine of ‘tabula rasa,’ i.e., the missionary doctrine that there is nothing in the non-Christian culture on which the Christian missionary can build and, therefore, every aspect of traditional non-Christian culture had to be destroyed before Christianity could be built up.”

This doctrine left other issues unresolved by not considering the religious worldviews of those being evangelized. New converts would denounce their pre-Christian and animistic beliefs and practices publicly, but secretly resort to them in times of crisis, because their original beliefs had not been critically analyzed and dealt with appropriately. No functional substitute or Christian practice that had a dynamic equivalence to the displaced cultural or religious practice was provided, thus creating a cultural void.

**Statement of Problem**

Some Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists practice dual allegiance. Many of the traditional beliefs and practices of the Yoruba have not been seriously studied and subjected to the judgment of Scripture to see which can be retained, which should be modified, or which should be eliminated. Some Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists are weakened in their general spiritual lives and witness because of their dual allegiance. The problem addressed by this dissertation is the syncretistic accommodation of pre-Christian animistic beliefs, worldview, and practices with the Christian faith as reflected in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Yoruba people of Nigeria.

---

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to do a missiological study and description of the phenomenon of dual allegiance through an examination of the various ways contemporary Yoruba Adventists handle misfortune in their lives, to understand the causes of dual allegiance, and to investigate the challenges it poses to Christian mission. The historical spread of Christianity in general and Adventism in particular among the Yoruba, how they responded to the Christian message, and the emergence of dual allegiance will be briefly explored. An Adventist response for dealing with dual allegiance will also be suggested.

Research Questions

Three research questions guide the research. These are as follows:

1. How was Christianity first presented to the Yoruba?

2. How did the Yoruba experience conversion from African Traditional Religion to Christianity?

3. In what ways do contemporary Yoruba Adventists describe the way their biblical faith interacts with Traditional Religion during times of crisis?

Research Design

A research design is defined as “an overall plan for conducting a research project covering all steps from raising the research questions through data analysis.”\(^\text{21}\) An

\(^{21}\)Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999), 98.
appropriate research design to examine dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists is qualitative research. Qualitative research is an all-encompassing concept covering several forms of inquiry such as the basic or generic qualitative research, an ethnographic study, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. 22 This study exhibits features of a basic or generic type of qualitative research that help to discover, understand, and explain the meaning of religious phenomena such as dual allegiance, as well as understand “the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved”23 in the study with as little or no disruption of the natural setting as possible.24

Data conveyed through words have been labeled “qualitative” and consist of direct quotations from people about their experience, opinions, feelings, and knowledge obtained through interviews, detailed description of people’s activities, behaviors, actions recorded in observations, and excerpts, quotations, or entire passages extracted from various types of documents.25 Its appropriateness in this dissertation rests in the fact that qualitative research is exemplary for studying processes—and in this case, the process of conversion and the changes which occur as a result of conversion from African Traditional Religion to the Christian faith among Yoruba Adventists.

This dissertation starts with a literature review on what missiologists perceive to be the meaning and causes of dual allegiance as a religious phenomenon. A biblical

22Sharan B. Merriam, Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Son, 1998), 10, 11.

23Ibid.

24Ibid., 199.

25Ibid., 5.
study of dual allegiance in both the Old and New Testaments of Scriptures is also done in this section, with references made to archaeological findings on the phenomenon.

Chapter 3 of the study explores the history of the Yoruba, their cultural and worldview specificities and their encounters with, and subsequent conversion to Christianity from their African Traditional Religion.

Finally, since the main purpose of the study is to describe the phenomenon of dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists, a qualitative research component was developed to allow the researcher to delve into the topic through stories narrated by purposively selected participants who may have experienced conditions which under normal circumstances result in dual allegiance. As Clandinin and Connelly state, “If we understand the world narratively, then it makes sense to study the world narratively.”

**Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

Robert J. Schreiter defines and describes three kinds of syncretism and three kinds of dual religious systems. In the first type of dual religious system, Christianity and another religion operate side by side. This is a common phenomenon among many Native

---


27 The three forms of syncretism represent three foci around which many syncretistic phenomena can be grouped: (1) where Christianity and another tradition come together to form a new reality, with the other tradition providing the basic framework; (2) where Christianity provides the framework for the syncretistic system, but is reinterpreted and reshaped substantially, independent of any dialogue with established Christianity; and (3) where selected elements of Christianity are incorporated into another system. Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 146, 147.
American groups in North and South America. Another kind of dual religious system has been called double “belonging,” a type that occurs in Asia, where particular religious traditions and citizenship in a nation are seen as inextricably bound together and where religious patterns are so deeply woven into the culture that it is no longer possible to discern easily what is religion and what is culture.

Schreiter’s third type of dual allegiance is the one which seems applicable to the Yoruba people. He describes it as follows:

Christianity is practiced in its integrity, and selected elements from another system are also practiced. Often those elements are perceived by Christian leaders as incompatible and even contradictory to Christianity. Thus, Christians in West Africa often will maintain sacrifices at a shrine to a local spirit or deity. In time of distress, this dual practice becomes especially evident. There are not only prayers made to the Christian deity, but recourse to local priests and healers for their intercession with local deities as well. It is as though the people wish to exhaust all possible channels of mediation. While the dual practices appear clearly contradictory to the Christian leadership, local members do not see the contradictions.

In addition to Schreiter’s understanding of dual religious systems, Kraft’s description of the concepts, universals, and functions of worldviews; the concepts of truth, allegiance, and power encounters; as well as Hiebert’s concept of the flaw of the excluded middle will further help to shape the research. These later three theories, as they impact dual allegiance, are described in chapters 2 and 3 of the dissertation.

---

28 Ibid.


30 Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 148.
Definition of Terms

**African Traditional Religion(s):** This is the religion as practiced by Africans before their encounters with foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity. Many Africans still believe and practice their traditional religion(s), either as traditionalists or as adherents of other religions, but who still hold to certain tenets, beliefs, and practices of the religions of the ancestors. Such terms as paganism, animism, and idol worship, which were once used to describe these religions, have since been rejected by many scholars.31

**Animism:** “The belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power.”32

**Babalawo:** A Yoruba traditional diviner.33

**Christo-paganism:** This is the blending of the worship of traditional pagan religions and a form of Christianity.34

**Conference:** A conference of churches is a section of the Adventist church’s organizational structure which comprises several churches in a region together. The


conference status also implies they can sustain themselves with little or no financial support from the higher organization; that is the Union, Division, or the General Conference—the umbrella organization that oversees the operations of the church in the world.

**Contextualization:** Contextualization is “the efforts of formulating, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency.”


36 Brad J. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 32.

37 Hiebert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 21-29.

living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another.\textsuperscript{39}

Culture is also defined as “the more or less integrated systems of learned ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.”\textsuperscript{40}

**Curses:** Curses are “verbalizations calling upon spiritual forces to harm a person, based upon an animistic understanding concerning ‘the power of words.’”\textsuperscript{41}

**Divination:** “The decision-making process by which animists determine the impact of personal and impersonal powers upon themselves, . . . the method (according to Turner) for ‘bringing into the open what is hidden or unknown.’”\textsuperscript{42} Methods of divination include (1) interpretation of omens, (2) astrology, (3) ritual techniques, (4) employment of ordeals, (5) reliance on the dead, (6) interpretation of dreams and visions, and (7) possession.\textsuperscript{43}

**A diviner:** A traditional “priest who seeks to discern what spiritual being or impersonal force is causing sickness, discord, or catastrophe in order to prescribe some remedy.”\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{41}Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, 225.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 170.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 176-192.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 154.
**Dual allegiance**: Dual allegiance, as used in this dissertation, is a state of mind that is subsequently played out in practical ways. It is the phenomenon whereby a person demonstrates loyalty and dependence on the Christian God as well as on non-Christian African deities, beliefs, and beliefs. Charles Kraft describes dual allegiance as the “condition of those who pledge allegiance to Christ but retain their previous allegiance to traditional power sources mediated by traditional religious practitioners such as shamans, medicine men/women, diviners, fortune-tellers, and priests. Since they find no power in the churches to displace the power they depended on previously, they continue to go to the shaman to meet those needs.”

**Folk religions**: They are socially constructed beliefs and practices that enable people to cope with the struggles of life. Paul Hiebert and others see folk religion, as the term suggests, to refer to the religious beliefs and practices of the common people.

**Flaw of the Excluded Middle**: The features of the traditional worldview that are obscured to missionaries or people of other cultures and worldviews in the course of encounters and interactions.

**Ifa**: The Yoruba deity of divination.

**Mission**: “The work of God in reconciling sinful humankind to himself.”

---


46 Hiebert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 79.


48 Idowu, *Olodumare*, 34.

Missiology: “The conscious, intentional, ongoing reflection on the doing of mission. It includes theory(ies) of mission, the study and teaching of mission, as well as the research, writing, and publication of works regarding mission.”\(^50\) “The study of the salvation activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout the world geared toward bringing the kingdom of God into existence, and . . . the study of the worldwide church's divine mandate to be ready to serve this God who is aiming his saving acts toward this world.”\(^51\)

People Movements: In the context of Christian mission and conversion, a people movement is “the positive drawing of responsive populations of the non-Western world of extended families, clans, tribes, castes, and age grades, where whole villages may represent precise ethnic entities, and where such groups may elect to turn from animism to Christianity as total units at one precise point of time.”\(^52\)

Power Encounter: “A spiritual encounter that exposes and calls to account the powers of darkness in their varied forms by the power of God for the purpose of revealing the identity of the one True God resulting in an acknowledgment of and/or allegiance to His lordship by those present.”\(^53\)


**Syncretism:** “The reshaping of Christian beliefs and practices through cultural accommodation so that they consciously or unconsciously blend with those of the dominant culture”; “the blending of Christian beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity speaks with a voice reflective of its culture.” “Syncretism develops because the Christian community attempts to make its message and life attractive, alluring, and appealing to those outside the fellowship. Over a period of years the accommodations become routinized, integrated into the narrative story of the Christian community and inseparable from its life.”

**Witchcraft:** Witchcraft refers to “ideas about dangerous occult power in social contexts where misfortune is attributed by many if not most members of society to the alleged mystical powers of individuals referred to as witches. It should be noted that in many such contexts, good fortune as well as misfortune may be attributed to ‘witchcraft,’ resulting in a situation of moral ambiguity.”

**Worldview:** The “models of reality that shape cultural allegiances and provide interpretations of the world.” Hiebert points out that worldview is the point of view on the world, a perspective on things, a way of looking at the cosmos from a particular vantage point. It therefore tends to carry the connotation of being personal, dated, and private, limited in validity by its historical conditions. Even when a

---


56 Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, 33.
worldview is collective (that is shared by everyone belonging to a given nation, class, or period), it nonetheless shares in the historical individuality of that particular nation or class or period.”

Self as the Research Instrument

For the field work component of this study, I am the research instrument. It is important, then, to describe my interest in the topic. The phenomenon of dual allegiance has fascinated me for a long time. This fascination ensued from experiences of the temptation to mix my Christian faith with the African Traditional Religion, the religion of my forefathers, after my conversion experience into Christianity. I had an Islamic background which saw nothing wrong in combining the Islamic religion with the worship of Yoruba deities. I can remember that as a child, in addition to going to worship in the mosque, my parents had worshiped the Yoruba deity of medicine and healing—Osanyin—in a corner of our house to which sacrifices and oblations were offered from time to time.

My father was a son of a well-known Ifa diviner and he inherited from him several herbal health formulas. The whole family was usually called upon to be present at the shrine during such worship, although no one forced the children to attend. We did not see anything wrong with being present on these occasions. It was always a festive time to eat what was offered to the deity. We would sneak behind our parents to steal and eat some of the bean cake and other delicacies offered to the deity. When I converted


58 Merriam, Qualitative Research and Case Study, 7.
to Christianity, it was obvious that associating the worship of the deities with the Christian God could not be condoned.

The importance of such a distinction and discontinuity became more emphatically stated as I joined a Pentecostal Christian group which stressed God’s abhorrence of such syncretism and the availability of the power of Pentecost for genuine Christian living today. With the help of my mother, who had seen a great difference in my life due to my Christian conversion, I removed the shrines and various other religious paraphernalia from our home after my father died.

Several attempts have been made by relatives to lure me back into seeking help from diviners and herbalists at specific points of my life, but my belief in the Word of God and the call to a total dependence on him prevented me from such practices. Later as I worked as a pastor in the West Nigeria Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I observed that several church members were caught in the web of dual allegiance and dependence on the power of the charms, medicines, and enchantments to find solutions to one problem or another in their lives.

Data Collection

This section describes the processes involved in collecting data for the field research. It includes the purposive selection of participants who will best be able to provide appropriate data for subsequent analysis, the step-by-step procedures involved in the choice of willing participants, and a description of the interview process.

Purposive Sampling

Merriam states that qualitative researchers often (though not always) use nonrandom, purposeful, and small samplings, as opposed to the larger, more random sampling of quantitative research.\textsuperscript{60} Purposeful sampling is used to select participants who will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions and is used to select individuals, sites, or documents that will be most informative.\textsuperscript{61} The followings criteria were used to choose the participants for the research:

1. Active Adventist church members
2. Mature adults
3. Lay members, pastors, and administrators
4. Both men and women
5. Varying degrees of education
6. Multigenerational Adventists and others who were not Adventists
7. Participants married to Seventh-day Adventists and those married to non-Adventists
8. Participants from early planted churches and from recently established churches.

Procedures

Letters requesting permission to carry out the research were written and sent to

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 8.

the presidents of the Nigeria Union Mission and the South West and West Nigeria Conferences. The focus of the research was explained in the letter and the cooperation of the conferences sought (Appendix A).

Data were gathered from the union headquarters and from the headquarters church of the West Nigeria Conference in Ibadan and from a first-generation Adventist church in each conference that was planted by the first missionaries and local workers who assisted them. This was done to enable the researcher to interview multigenerational, traditional, as well as recently converted Adventists, with different levels of educational achievements.

The pastors and the head elders at each of the research locations were contacted to help identify at least eight members in each location who had at one point or another faced a life crisis. About 22 potential participants were identified and given a brief survey to fill out. This was more of a demographic survey to help identify participants representing broad diversity. The survey showed their age bracket and gender, the number of years they had lived as Adventists, the type and level of literacy, the religious background from which they converted to Christianity, the nature of the crisis they or their relative had, and whether or not they were willing to share their experience with me (Appendix B).

Twelve respondents were chosen from the group. The remaining 10 who answered the brief preliminary survey and met the criteria for selection, were kept on a stand-by list should any of the selected respondents drop out in the interview process. The final list of participants in the study were two serving presidents, one retired administrator, two women, three lay Adventist men, and four serving ministers in various
capacities in the church in the two conferences. Each person interviewed signed
a consent form, attesting to the voluntary nature of their participation in the study.

The interview sessions were held at different locations and in different towns in
the two conferences. In addition to recording the interviews on audiotapes,
field notes were taken daily. I gave each interview transcription an alphabetical notation
to protect the privacy of the interviewee, for example, A, B, C, up to L.

Interviews

An interview protocol was developed (Appendix C). These were open-ended
questions, which allowed the researcher to explore how the participants handled some of
the challenges they faced, or their relationships. Since dual allegiance is manifested
mostly during critical life experiences, questions which probed into how the participants
or another member of the church they know dealt with the crises of their lives helped tap
into the internal dynamics of their grief management and coping mechanisms. This in
turn helped to uncover the presence or absence of dual allegiance, the forms, and causes
of the phenomenon among them.

After asking them a few preliminary questions, participants were encouraged to
narrate the story of their conversion to Christianity, and to discuss whether it was a
process or event. They were then invited to narrate the story of the crisis they had, its
nature, the various options they knew were available to them, as Yoruba, and the options
they took to resolve their crisis they faced.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of the interviews was done by first of all reviewing and
transcribing the interview audiotapes. The constant comparative method\(^{62}\) developed by Glaser and Strauss, which entails comparing units of data within each interview and between interviews was used. Themes and sub-themes were identified and refined as the data from the field notes were reviewed and as the tapes were listened to.\(^{63}\) Elliot W. Eisner postulates that data from qualitative studies are usually expressed in stories\(^{64}\)—the stories of the respondents. That is, the researchers try to “craft a picture of the situation, person, or community they have studied.”\(^{65}\)

One way to do this is the formulation of themes, which “are the recurring messages construed from the events observed.”\(^{66}\) A four-column table was created for the coding purposes. The first column was used for the numerical codes of the themes. The second contained the emergent themes and sub-themes. The third column was used to identify the responses to interview questions where the specific theme emerged, represented by a capital letter that stood for each interviewee to ensure anonymity. The fourth column contains all the pages in the various transcripts where each supporting piece of data for the themes was found. These were further compared to reduce redundancy that occurred in the initial codification of the data.


\(^{63}\)Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study*, 18.


\(^{65}\)Ibid.

\(^{66}\)Ibid.
Van Manen\textsuperscript{67} observed that “the notion of theme is used in various disciplines in humanities, art, and literary criticism.” As Eisner shows, the formulated themes provided structure for the interpretation and appraisal of the phenomenon described.\textsuperscript{68} Further, within this structure, I then selected materials from the collected data and used them to illuminate the themes which were formulated, in a rich, thick descriptive way.

**Reliability and Validity**

Methods for ensuring internal validity in qualitative research include triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory and collaborative research, clarifying researcher bias, rich/thick description, negative or discrepant information, and peer debriefing.\textsuperscript{69} For this study, rich/thick description, triangulation of responses from different participants, and peer debriefing were used. Rich/thick descriptions and quotes from participants were used to enhance the validity of the study. According to some of the participants, there was no consensus in some of the influences on dual allegiance. For example, some of the participants thought that the level of Western education leads to the reduction in dual allegiance; others submitted that Western education has no influence, citing the situation of the pagan sacrifices found on the campus of one of the denomination’s higher institutions of learning.

Negative or discrepant information was also included in the report of the study so


\textsuperscript{68}Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 190.

as to reveal all the findings of the research which were unconfirmed by the participants. I also selected a senior minister as a peer reviewer who is now the President of the West-Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who is also concerned about dual allegiance in the Adventist Church in Africa and who had just concluded a Doctor of Ministry dissertation on the topic as a peer reviewer. We communicated to review the transcripts via email and also subsequently discussed the research findings.

In addition, at the level of the analysis of data, validity was sought through considering other alternative plausible explanations for the data acquired from the field research. The validity of the study was further enhanced by elaborating and presenting an all-encompassing report of the understandings of the Yoruba Adventists interviewed and not just a one-sided account, and by being sensitive to the ways in which the data may have been shaped by the presence of the researcher.

**Generalizability or External Validity**

Generalizability or external validity is the degree to which the findings of one study can be applied to similar groups, individuals, or situations. Merriam states, “[A] small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true to many.” Eisner describes three aspects of generalization: skills, images, and ideas. As this dissertation is read, the reader will notice images—pictures of the way dual allegiance is practiced in Nigeria. These images may be generalized to other places where Christianity

---

70 Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study*, 208.

is practiced along with traditional religions. For example the idea of the flaw of the excluded middle becomes vivid as one reads the descriptions of how some Yoruba Adventists deal with crises and challenges of life.

**Delimitations**

The problem of dual allegiance is widespread not only in Africa, but also in other parts of the world, but this dissertation is delimited to dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists in Nigeria. It was further delimited to active Adventist members. (See purposive sampling section of this dissertation.)

**Limitations**

A limitation may have been created by the relationship of some of the interviewees with me. I had previously been the pastor for some of them. It is possible that the dynamics involved in the pastor-member relationship in the Yoruba African cultural milieu had some impact upon the participants’ willingness to share openly and truthfully, in a quest to maintain that relationship. Additionally, due to the secrecy with which dual allegiance is practiced and the fears associated with the supernatural, talking explicitly about the topic may have been uncomfortable for the participants.

**Ethical Considerations**

This is research involving human subjects. All the ethical principles itemized in the Institutional Review Board procedures for such research were taken into

---

consideration and followed during the research. These included choosing competent human subjects who were willing to voluntarily participate in the research. The identity of participants in this research was held in strict confidence through the use of pseudonyms for each of the participants.

The recruitment and selection of subjects for the research was reasonably related to the research. There were no impositions of inequitable risks and burdens on any segment of society. In addition, no segment of society by conscious exclusion from participation in the research will be denied the benefits of the research. The participants were also informed at the beginning of the interview process that no material or monetary rewards were to be given to those who would take part in the interviews.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to describe dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists. Dual allegiance is syncretism that affects the authentic Christian nature of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, in both the Old and New Testaments, the people of God were warned about mixing pagan and biblical religions. For this reason, any Christian worker whose roots are in Scripture will be predisposed to resist anything which could lead to syncretism or dual allegiance of any kind. When compromise is rampant, church growth is stunted and God’s work loses vitality. There has been little or no biblical reflection or a satisfactory missiological consideration of dual allegiance in the Adventist Church among the Yoruba.

This study unfolds the way Adventists in Nigeria experience dual allegiance. The second chapter looks at dual allegiance from a biblical perspective. The third chapter is a description of the Yoruba culture and worldview and encounter with Christian mission.
The fourth chapter is a report of the field research. The fifth chapter is a suggested response to the phenomenon of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists.
CHAPTER 2

DUAL ALLEGIANCE: CAUSES AND

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

In the process of fulfilling the Gospel Commission, the disciples preached the
gospel cross-culturally. African cultures with their pre-Christian supernaturalistic
worldviews encountered and interacted with the gospel in different ways and at various
levels in different African societies. Bolaji Idowu\(^1\) describes the Yoruba milieu as
follows:

The real keynote of the life of the Yoruba is neither in their noble ancestry nor in the
past deeds of their heroes. The keynote of their life is their religion. In all things,
they are religious. Religion forms the foundation and the all-governing principle of
life for them. As far as they are concerned, the full responsibility of the affairs of life
belongs to the Deity. Their own part in the matter is to do as they are ordered through
the priests and diviners whom they believe to be the interpreters of the will of the
Deity. Through all the circumstances of life, through all its changing scenes, its joy
and troubles, it is the Deity who is in control. Before a child is born, the oracle is
consulted and due rites observed; when the child is born, the oracle gives directions
about it; at every stage of life—puberty, betrothal, marriage, taking up a career, things
which make up human existence here on earth—man is in the hands of the Deity
whose dictate is law, and who is waiting on the other side of this life to render to him
as he deserves. The religion of the Yoruba permeates their lives so much that it
expresses itself in multifarious ways. It forms the theme of songs, makes topic for
minstrelsy, finds vehicles in myths, folktales, proverbs and sayings, and is the basis of
philosophy.

\(^1\)Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs*, 5.
Idowu portrays the wholistic nature of the Yoruba religious view which serves to minister to their existential needs. Writing in the African context, Theoneste Nkeramihigo indicates that Christianity was incarnated in a Western cultural context which at that time was becoming more and more secularized, but was presented to non-Western peoples\(^2\) who were still spiritualistic and held a supernaturalistic outlook on life. Multitudes were converted in Africa to the Christian faith. But the veracity of the conversion experiences among Africans including the Yoruba stands to be questioned in recent days. This is so because of the evolution of different new religions such as Santeria, which results from a syncretistic combination of Yoruba traditional religious worldviews, beliefs, and practices and a form of Roman Catholicism, and the formation of different churches that have accommodated several pre-Christian deities and the worldview of the Yoruba and other people groups in Africa to the Christian faith.

Historically, there have been three options when it comes to relating to the gospel in a new cultural setting. These are, first, the total rejection of the old ways, whereby recipients of the gospel were told that their entire outlook, beliefs, and practices before coming in contact with the gospel of Christ were satanic and evil so they must all be done away with and replaced with Western (Christian) ways. Second, the uncritical acceptance of the old ways, values, and customs which leads to what has been termed Christopaganism—the fusion of the pre-Christian religious heritage of the recipients of the gospel and a form of Christianity. Third is critical contextualization, which involves

dealing with the old beliefs and practices consciously through a process of critical contextualization, which according to Hiebert et al. comprises four very important steps.  

These four steps, which will be more clearly applied to the process of contextualization discussed in chapter 5, include a phenomenological analysis of the culture of the recipients of the gospel, an ontological critique of their culture, an evaluation of the elements of the culture in light of the Word of God, and a missiological transformation of the culture which helps people move from where they are to where God wants them to be. This missiological transformation includes the total rejection of all unbiblical elements of the recipient culture, the provision of functional substitutes for these discarded elements, changes in the meanings of those elements which are neutral, and with all these steps guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

The first two options of dealing with the recipient culture lead to syncretism, both secret and open. The rejection approach drives the old practices underground with the “Christians” practicing the old way in secret. This leads to what has been called “split-level Christianity” or “dual allegiance.” The second approach of uncritical acceptance of the old ways leads to open syncretism where the amalgam is seen as a normal religious experience.

Wande Abimbola, a scholar in African Traditional Religion, contends that Ifa, the pre-Christian deity of divination in Africa among the Yoruba, is frequently resorted to in


times of crisis and stress by Christians.\(^5\) The Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba is also affected by such practices, which usually lead to powerlessness in the churches. Yet a central teaching of the Scriptures shows that Christians are not to worship just any god but the true God, for God says, “I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals” (Exod 20:3, 5, GNB).\(^6\)

What causes a Christian to resort to fetishistic approaches to solving life’s problems and getting caught up in the web of dual allegiance? There has been little biblical reflection or no satisfactory missiological consideration of the phenomenon of dual allegiance in the Adventist Church especially among the Yoruba people group of Nigeria. Therefore, the importance of this study cannot be overemphasized.

The main objective of this chapter is to conduct an in-depth study of the phenomenon of dual allegiance in the context of Christianity and African Traditional Religion and identify some of the likely causes of the phenomenon in the church. It is hoped that this will provide knowledge that will lead to a suggested missiological response on how to deal appropriately with dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists.

**Definition and Description of Dual Allegiance**

Dual allegiance is akin to syncretism. Alan R. Tippett defines syncretism as the “intentional or unintentional union of two or more opposite forces, beliefs, systems or  

---


tenets so that the resulting amalgam is a new thing, neither one nor the other.”

David Lindenfeld identifies two levels of syncretism — “syncretism from above” and “syncretism from below,” depending on the intentionality or the unintentional nature with which syncretism occurs. Syncretism from above refers to conscious decisions of religious authorities to incorporate native elements in their attempt to bring new adherents into the fold. This is vigorously condemned in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Syncretism from below refers to ways in which people incorporate elements from other religions more or less spontaneously, whether consciously or not. This type of syncretism or dual allegiance can be found among Seventh-day Adventist Church members. In spite of the fact that they know it is unbiblical to engage in dual allegiance, but in times of crises they may think they cannot do without the help and protection found in the old ways.

From a theological perspective, it is observed that syncretism is “a theologically untenable amalgam.” That is, it is the unscriptural and uncritical mixture of the different systems of beliefs, such as in Santeria in which Yoruba and other African beliefs and


deities are combined with the Roman Catholic form of Christianity to form a new religion.

However, dual allegiance is a state of mind that is subsequently played out in practical ways. It can be described as the phenomenon whereby a person demonstrates loyalty and dependence on the Christian God as well as on non-Christian African deities. It is difficult to differentiate dual allegiance from syncretism. It appears that dual allegiance leads to syncretistic activities and vice versa, which eventually may further produce a new religion, such as Santeria in the Caribbean, and Candomble\textsuperscript{10} and Umbanda\textsuperscript{11} in the Americas. Dual allegiance constitutes an internal or psychological system of inconsistencies, doubts, and fears that eventually become manifest in the lives of the religion’s adherents. Western people with their almost complete dependence on the modern scientific or secular methods of addressing human needs, with only a faint or

\textsuperscript{10}Candomblé, the best known and most traditional of Brazil's African-derived religions, is centered in the city of Salvador and traces its origin to the Yoruba and Dahomey religions of West Africa. In Candomblé—a syncretic religion (one that combines elements of more than one religion) with both African and European elements—deities are called forth through the spirit possession of cult initiates. Despite police raids and other forms of social discrimination in years past, Candomblé has persisted and flourished as a vibrant symbol of Afro-Brazilian cultural identity. Maxine L. Margolis, Maria E. Bezerra, and Jason M. Fox, “Countries and Their Cultures—Brazil,” http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401700038.html (accessed September 17, 2010).

\textsuperscript{11}Umbanda is another highly syncretic religion with spiritist elements that began in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1920s and spread to urban areas throughout the country. With some thirty million followers today, Umbanda has been called the one true national religion of Brazil because it embraces elements of all three of the nation's cultural traditions: African, European, and Indian. Margolis, Bezerra, and Fox, “Countries and Their Cultures—Brazil.”
slight passing reference to religion or faith in God among believers, can also be said to illustrate a dual allegiance.

In dual religious systems, people follow the religious practices of two distinct and opposing systems of conflicting beliefs. Kraft contends that a large percentage of the world’s Christians participate in dual allegiance of one sort or another. In some instances, according to Schreiter, who studied the phenomenon, the opposing systems operate side by side. Sometimes one system is followed more faithfully than the other as in Africa, where people follow the Christian system but retain certain elements of the traditional religious system. In other instances, the two systems may be followed almost equally as among Native Americans of the North American southwest, among the Quechua and Aymaran people in the Andes, and among people in Japan, Taiwan, and South Asia.

Dual allegiance, according to Kraft, ensues from the fact that converts into Christianity find little or none of the spiritual power they crave for meeting their needs for healing, blessing, guidance, even deliverance from demons, in the type of Christianity they have converted to, and so they continue their pre-Christian practice of going to shamans, priests, diviners, temples, shrines, and the like for spiritual power. They may attend church faithfully and be truly committed to Christ on Sundays or Saturdays. But if they wake up ill on Monday, off they go to the shaman since there is no healing in the


\[13\text{Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 147.}\]
church and the hospital is too slow and expensive.\textsuperscript{14}

The beginning of this phenomenon among God’s people dates to the time of the fall. Adam’s fall into sin involved a battle for his allegiance. He failed to maintain allegiance to God and chose to listen to his wife who had been deceived by Satan. Unfortunately, this battle is still raging in more and more sophisticated and subtle ways and at different magnitudes in the world today. From their global experiences and encounters with world and local leaders of various church denominations, the Krafts have come to the conclusion that the most serious problem in worldwide Christianity is what they call “dual allegiance” or “bifurcated Christianity.”\textsuperscript{15} This happens in a couple of ways:

1. When people come to Jesus but continue to depend on other spiritual powers for protection, healing and guidance (e.g., the continuance dependence on shamans and pagan, Buddhist or Hindu priests, amulets, sacrifices and pagan, Buddhist or Hindu rituals), or 2. When people add to their Christian commitment a dependence on occult powers (Freemasonry, New Age, Eastern Martial Arts, fortune telling, astrology, horoscopes, and psychic healing), [or African traditional priests].\textsuperscript{16}

Schreiter describes three syncretistic and three dual religious systems, which have been presented in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. These descriptions will be used as a further illustration of the framework for the research.

An important consideration in this discussion and treatment of dual allegiance is its impact on church growth. One marvels at, and sometimes looks down on those denominations that experience astronomical growth, insinuating that their growth is due


\textsuperscript{15}C. H. Kraft and M. Kraft, “Communicating and Ministering,” 349.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
to their involvement in dual allegiance. Justified as this observation might be in some cases, especially when church founders and pastors will not stop at anything to gain more membership and more money to support them and their programs, these growths appear genuine. This is because some of these churches have made a correct assessment of the African worldview needs, have identified these needs, and have made well calculated and strenuous efforts to develop appropriate ministries to address them.

Those churches, for example, which minister biblically to the felt need for spiritual power among Africans tend to have greater growth, while those who still base their ministries on the Enlightenment-laden messages and strategies of Western missionaries, to whom such needs were largely unrecognized, manifest a comparatively minimal or unsustainable growth patterns. This warrants identifying and applying appropriate missiological strategies to address dual allegiance among the Yoruba in particular and in world mission in general. The next section of this chapter examines both the external and receptor causes of dual allegiance.

**Causes of Dual Allegiance**

There are both external and receptor causes of dual allegiance. The external causes are factors that are due to the interactions of foreign or outside influences with the Yoruba, that eventually led to the development of dual allegiance among them. Receptor causes are factors which originated from the Yoruba’s perception of

---

Christianity when they encountered it, and the ways they integrated it into their culture.

External Causes

External causes of dual allegiance include the flaw of the excluded middle, failure to contextualize, failures in the three essential Christian encounters—allegiance, truth, and power encounters—and the insensitivity of the missionaries to slavery in its early stages when Africans, including the Yoruba, were displaced from their homes and comfort zones, and transplanted to foreign lands as slaves.\textsuperscript{18} Such acts of inconsistencies led many Africans to reject Christianity and to convert to Islam or revert back to traditional religion, or in other situations blend their traditional religions together with a form of Christianity.

The Flaw of the Excluded Middle

The concept of the “excluded middle,” which was developed to describe the discrepancies between the Western missionary worldview and that of the non-Western recipients of the missionary efforts by the missiologist, Paul G. Hiebert, offers tremendous insight into the understanding of one of the causes of dual allegiance. Hiebert developed an analytical framework by using two dimensions for his analysis. The first is the seen-unseen dimension, and the second is the organic-mechanical continuum.\textsuperscript{19} It sounds natural and existential for people all over the world to try to

\textsuperscript{18}Elizabeth Isichei, \textit{From Antiquity to the Present: A History of Christianity in Africa} (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 71, 72.

\textsuperscript{19}Hiebert, \textit{Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues}, 193.
construct a consistent method of understanding and explaining the world around them and also to develop a coherent way of dealing with their everyday experiences. This is what Hiebert refers to as folk sciences through which they explain and control their cosmos. 20

The first dimension, according to Hiebert, is that of immanence—transcendence. On one side is the empirical world of the senses, the physical world that one sees, touches, feels, and with which one is acquainted through simple direct natural contact. 21

The Yoruba know the sun and the moon, the ground upon which they tread and till to get food and other essentials of life, the water they drink and use for several other purposes, the mountains around them, and the valleys and the plains—the environment in which they live. Their hunters know how to set traps in the bush to catch prey with which to feed their families. The farmer knows how to till the ground, the right time to plant, how to control weeds, and the right time to harvest. People also have theories about human relationships, courtship, marriage, childbearing, and how to raise children, treat their spouse, and deal with a relative. They use “explanations based upon empirical observation and deduction. Western science, in this sense is not different, only it may be more systematic” in the exploration of the empirical cosmos. 22

Above this physical level lie the invisible forces and beings that, though they


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.
cannot be seen with the naked eye, are deemed to exert powerful influences on human destiny. These include the ancestors—the living dead portrayed powerfully among the Yoruba by the *Egungun* cults and festivals, also ghosts and spirits, demons and earthly gods and goddesses, some of which are deified heroic ancestors considered to live in trees, rivers, hills, and villages. These living dead, as the ancestors are also known, exist, not in some other world or time but with humans and animals of this world and time, but they are invisible to the common senses.

In medieval Europe these beings included trolls, pixies, gnomes, brownies, and fairies all of which were believed to be real, and which were believed to be able to influence human life, both negatively and otherwise. This level also includes supernatural forces, such as mana, planetary influences, the evil eye, and the power of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft. Hiebert et al. postulate that “in many traditional religions there is no sharp distinction between the seen and unseen realities of this world. Spiritual beings and forces play a central part in the lives of the people. They inhabit the world of the shadows.”

At another level, further from the immediate world of human experience, is the realm of the transcendent—hell, heaven, eternity, etc. This transcendent realm fits the African concept of a high God or the supreme deity known as *Olodumare*, and the Hindu’s ideas of Vishnu and Siva. The Jewish idea of Yahweh stands in marked contrast

---


to the Baal and Asheroth of the Canaanites, who were deities of the world of the middle zone.\textsuperscript{25}

Among the Yoruba of West Nigeria, a lot of what happens in the natural, physical world—sicknesses, poverty, diseases, failure, success, wealth, and prosperity of children—is attributed to have its origin and causes in the middle zone. It is strongly believed that the dead ancestors still exert a tremendous influence on whatever happens in this world. It is, therefore, no wonder that people who are born and live within this kind of culture spend a lot of time contemplating the beings and forces in this zone, offering sacrifices to appease the deities, wearing charms to scare them away, or visiting powerful shamans or diviners who can make a more powerful charm to suppress and overcome such malignant spirits.

Hiebert’s second analytical framework is that of the organic-mechanical continuum that has two basic analogies that are particularly widespread: (1) to see things as living beings in relationship to each other, and (2) to see things as inanimate objects that act upon one another like parts in a machine.\textsuperscript{26}

Organic explanations see the world in terms of living beings in relationship to one another. Like humans and animals, objects may initiate actions and respond to the actions of others. They may be thought to have feelings, thoughts and wills of their own. Often they are seen as social beings who love, marry and beget offspring, quarrel, war, sleep, eat, persuade, and coerce one another.\textsuperscript{27}

Hiebert describes the mechanical analogy as follows:

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26}Hiebert, \textit{Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues}, 195.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid.
In the mechanical analogy all things are thought to be inanimate parts of greater mechanical systems. They are controlled by impersonal forces or by impersonal laws of nature. For example, Western sciences see the world as made up of lifeless matter that interacts on the basis of forces. Gravity pulls a rock down to the earth not because the earth and rock wish to meet—neither earth nor rocks have any thought in the matter. In Western science even living beings are often seen as being caught up in a world ultimately made up of impersonal forces. Just as we have no choice about what happens to us when we fall out of a tree, so it is often thought we have no control over the forces in early childhood that are believed to make us what we are today. 28

Mechanical analogies are essentially deterministic and amoral. Human beings can study the laws involved in their interactions and then manipulate them for their uses. These forces are intrinsically neither good nor bad, so can be used for both. 29 The nineteenth-century missionary work took place when the Western worldview had long stopped believing in the existence of the forces operating in the middle zone. There was a growing acceptance of a Platonic dualism and of a science based on materialistic naturalism. 30 “The result was the secularization of science and the mystification of religion. Science dealt with the empirical world using mechanistic analogies, leaving religion to handle other-worldly matters, often in terms of organic analogies.” 31

Western Christians often explain causation in a mechanistic/natural way, while the African recipients of the missionary work view causation in a personal/spiritual way. 32 Although it has been suggested that this observation does not portray the total


29 Ibid., 417, 418.


31 Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues, 197.
picture of the nature of these missionary expeditions, the observation still holds a great level of validity. This means that the missionaries had stopped believing in the existence and activities of witches, spirits, gnomes, and pixies. With the advancement in science, the concept of germs, pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and fungi as causatives agents of sicknesses and diseases had advanced.

The Enlightenment and secularization had affected almost all facets of life, including religion, and despite the biblical understanding of the existence of evil, spiritual powers, witches, wizards, and the spirit world had become excluded from most of the missionaries’ worldview. Kraft also points out that Westerners, for example tend to categorize the spirit world along with fairies, elves, and other mythical beings . . . [as things] we do not take seriously. This evaluation affects our attitudes toward spirit beings and tends to block our attempts to take angels and demons seriously, even though as Christians we claim to accept anything we find in the Bible.

However, these forces and beings were still alive and active in the recipient cultures where Western missionaries lovingly took the gospel, albeit, devoid of the spiritual power which was its essence. With this middle zone still deeply entrenched in the worldview of the non-Western recipients of the secularized gospel, Christian mission largely ignored spiritual powers and how to deal appropriately with them. Thus, it was only natural for the new converts to resort to the beliefs and gods of their forefathers for


power and sustenance as well as for the resolutions of difficult questions for which they sought answers, which were not found in the now secularized outlook of the missionaries. The result was dual allegiance.

This concept of the excluded middle has contributed to an understanding of how dual allegiance occurs in the church. The overwhelming influence of secularization and the Enlightenment on mission spread all over the world, resulting in a gospel that often did not address the middle zone because that zone was excluded from the missionaries’ worldview, while still exerting a great deal of influence on the lives of new converts. This caused some to secretly seek out help from the pre-Christian sources since this middle zone was not addressed by the missionaries. Faith is very important in situations like this, since faith comes from hearing the Word of God, which specifically would have been expected to address these issues (the Bible is replete with dealings with the supernatural, and how to overcome them). Unfortunately, the Enlightenment-laden gospel the missionaries or the African agents preached often excluded this vital aspect of Christianity, thereby rendering the believers powerless in the face of demons that were seeking to destroy them.

Due to this insecurity, the believer sought out help in the old ways, since the gospel preached had no assurance that the Christian God could handle or satisfy the felt-needs of life. This problem of unfulfilled basic needs for spiritual power in missionary Christianity and the quest to have them satisfied was one cause of dual allegiance.

**Failure to Contextualize**

Failure to contextualize is another external factor causing dual allegiance. Darrell Whiteman has suggested,
When we fail to contextualize, we run a much greater risk of establishing weak churches whose members will turn to non-Christian syncretistic explanations, follow non-biblical lifestyles, and engage in magical rituals. This is because a non-contextualized Christianity seldom engages people at the level of their deepest needs and aspirations, and so we end up with what Jesuit Jaime Bulatao in the Philippines calls a “split level” Christianity. When this happens, Christianity appears to provide answers to some of life’s questions such as one’s ultimate destiny, eternal salvation, etc., but the concerns of everyday life such as why tragedy strikes, why one’s garden dries up, etc., do not receive a Christian answer, so people return to animistic explanations for dealing with everyday problems.\(^3^5\)

It must be reiterated that it is not essential Christianity or genuine biblical Christianity which has not addressed these very important worldview issues of the non-Western recipients of Western missionary endeavors. Jesus identified with the everyday concerns of the people he ministered to while on earth. He knew that there were spiritual, usually satanic, causes of tragedies whose manifestations occur in the physical realm. He gave a parable in which he identified the “enemy” as responsible for such calamities (Matt 13:38).\(^3^6\) It was the devil and his agents who moved Herod to destroy the children of Bethlehem in an attempt to get the child Jesus (Matt 2:16). Satan can cause storms to rage while Jesus sleeps in a boat with his disciples in order to force him to abort his mission (Matt 8:22-25). Demons were often responsible for the blindness and dumbness found in the deaf and dumb (Matt 12:22). Also, the Bible is replete with prophetic ministries which answered and ministered to the existential needs of the people. Visions, dreams, and revelations were some means God used in communicating with his people.

The disciples readily understood evil and its power and had learned to claim the


\(^3^6\)All Bible texts are from the KJV unless noted otherwise.
power of the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit to minister deliverance to those under the chains and shackles of the devil (Matt 8:28-32). This dimension of a Christian power ministry was largely missing during nineteenth-century missionary endeavors, as it still is in most evangelical churches today, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is obvious that the Christianity the world needs today must include spiritual power which takes the spiritual dimension into consideration while identifying the availability of divine power to meet the needs of people.

The theology and church life of believers also need to be contextualized, since foreign theological constructions often fail to meet the Yoruba Adventists’ needs. A lack of sensitivity to tribal beliefs and a reluctance to replace them with biblical practices also helped create the Christopaganism or dual allegiance, which Tippett and other missiologists find appalling. The problem is that missionaries thought Africans would practice Christianity in the same way they did. They did not realize that culture shapes beliefs and practices or take that fact into consideration.

**Failures in the Three Encounters**

There are three encounters which have been discovered to be essential for the birth and appropriate development of genuine Christianity. These encounters include allegiance encounters, truth encounters, and power encounters. Without the experience of all three encounters in the life of the converted believer, dual allegiance can result.

The history of mission among the Yoruba demonstrates that converts were not always led into these three encounters.

Allegiance encounter

Jesus constantly invited people into a deeper allegiance and commitment to him and the Father. He taught that it is impossible to serve two masters, therefore one must choose between God and mammon. At conversion, one of the most important changes that occurs is a change in one’s ultimate allegiance from the world and its values and powers to God and his kingdom. It is crucial to maintain an allegiance to the God of the Bible by obeying and trusting in him alone. This implies that God alone should be depended on for all one’s needs, whether spiritual or otherwise.

There are several important questions connected with this discussion. For example, before the arrival of the Western missionaries with their modern hospitals and healing systems, the local people were acquainted with several healing methods that centered on the use of herbs and ritualistic baths, in addition to the use of charms, enchantments, sacrifices, and divination. These methods often worked for them. The diagnosis was usually made by the diviners, who were also the doctors (witch doctors) in the societies.

Were all of these evil methods, as suggested by the missionaries, especially in view of the recent search for medicinal herbs in order to reduce the amount of poisonous chemicals being used as medications today? Was there anything that could have been


kept as good, positive, and acceptable to God among the non-Western practices of medicine and healing? Today, there is an encyclopedia of medicinal plants, some of which the African indigenous doctors had been using before their encounters with the West. Was there no way to use their healing knowledge and still follow Jesus? Would it have been a dual allegiance if they had kept the use of their medicinal plants that are well known to be efficacious against the diseases that had plagued them without the incantations and the invocation of spirits?

These and many other questions need to be reviewed and dealt with in mapping out an appropriate contextual theology for ministries among the Yoruba, other Africans, and the other people groups of the world.

Truth encounter

A truth encounter involves the preaching of gospel truth. Jesus once said, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). He also prayed God to sanctify his disciples by his word, which is truth (John 17:17). Jesus spent a great deal of his time on earth teaching truth and inviting those who heard the truth to follow and obey it. A truth encounter is about the knowledge and understanding of the Word and the promises of God. It is this understanding that, when appropriated to the life in faith, sets a person free. Kraft depicts the importance of a truth encounter as follows:

Prior to making a commitment to Christ, we need a certain level of understanding of the truth. Whenever truth is taught, it confronts or encounters ignorance and error. As we grow in our commitment to Christ, we need a continuing deepening of our understandings of God’s truth to fight any ignorance and error to which we are exposed.40

There is a struggle between light and darkness and the battlefield is the minds of men and women who are accosted by the truth. Truth dispels darkness, ignorance, and bigotry and allows for an informed faith that is based upon the truth of the Scriptures. The importance of a truth encounter in Christian experience cannot be overemphasized. It is instructive that the almost 1,300 years of darkness, religious ignorance, and intolerance in the history of the human race, were due to the removal of the truth of God’s Word from the reach of the common people. They were prevented from knowing truth and did not have a truth encounter, so many perished for a lack of knowledge.

People were told that the Bible was written in only three “holy” languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, and even then it was chained to the pulpits of the cathedrals, where only “holy men” could read it. In the same way today, when people do not have access to truth it is easy for them to slip into syncretism. God’s Word is the antidote for dual allegiance. Adventists have usually done an adequate job of leading converts to a truth encounter.

Power encounter

A power encounter is the interaction and the spiritual warfare that ensue between the power of God and the power of Satan in the lives of the recipients of the gospel of Christ. The term power encounter was coined by Alan Tippett to label the kind of phenomenon he found that was crucial in the South Pacific when an individual or a people movement to Christ occurred. In this kind of encounter, the power of Satan found in the idols, deities, totem animals, and sacrifices rendered to idols is subdued and

---

vanquished by the power of God, which eventually allows the people to give up on these deities and convert to Christianity. Power encounter also includes the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers, which substitutes the satanic powers and influences that were in operation in their lives before their conversion to Christianity, leading to a victorious daily living.

There are many stories of power encounters in the Scriptures. The dispute between Moses and the magicians of Pharaoh was a power encounter (Exod 5-12); Elijah and the prophets of Baal were also engaged in a power encounter (1 Kgs 18). Paul and Silas were engaged in power encounters at various times in their ministries (Acts 16). Scripture is replete with incidences of this type of encounter, but such encounters seem to have faded away in the Adventist Church today. Perhaps, this disappearance of power encounters in Christianity generally can be seen as Satan’s contextualizing his strategies whereby the differences between light and darkness, and the battles between God and Satan become indistinct. Even as Paul intimated, Satan now poses as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). How else can one explain the use of charms and fetish sacrifices by some church members and many Christian pastors in Africa in order to be able to perform miracles and pull crowds to their meetings and thus gather more money into their coffers and fame for their human egos?

Jesus demonstrated his power and authority in opposition to satanic workings as he taught (Luke 4:32) and as he healed (Luke 4:36, 39). Kraft contends that most of the world’s people are seeking greater spiritual power to cope with the experiences of life.

—

However, since they are not appropriately taught about the availability of Pentecostal power that is sufficient to meet their power needs, they resort to alternatives, which often lead them to engage in dual allegiance.

Kraft indicates that Western witness, having largely ignored spiritual power issues, has tended to unwittingly recommend secularization as the antidote to traditional approaches to obtaining spiritual power. Western secular medicine and hospitals, for example, are offered as the answer to health problems, secularizing schools as the right way to deal with what Westerners perceived as ignorance, secular agricultural techniques, even secular approaches to church management and leadership, not to mention insights into culture and communication that largely leave out the activity of the Holy Spirit. With this approach, is it any wonder that mission-planted churches around the world are deeply involved in secularizing their members? . . . Without intending it, then, our strategy has been to secularize in order to Christianize. What this approach has produced, is secular churches (like most of those we have in the home countries), that depend almost entirely on the power of secular techniques and structures to replace traditional methods of blessing, healing, teaching, and organizing. There is, of course, a certain amount of power in these techniques. But it is stronger on the human and/or naturalistic power than on spiritual power, even though it often replaces what people have traditionally sought in spiritual ways.  

However, pastors, evangelists, and missionaries should follow Jesus’ example and use spiritual power as a primary method of blessing and sharing the gospel with those whom Satan holds in captivity. This approach necessitates the presentation of the gospel that allows for power demonstrations and power encounters. In a “power oriented society,” such as among the Yoruba, “change of faith had to be power-demonstrated.” Those denominations in Nigeria which depend on and claim the benefits and efficacy of

---


44 C. H. Kraft, Christianity with Power, 200.

45 Alan Tippett, People Movements in Southern Polynesia (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971), 81.
the power of the Holy Spirit are growing at a much faster rate than those that do not have such a relationship of dependence on the Spirit’s power.

Power encounters among the Polynesians were responsible for the people movement which occurred among them at the inception of Christian mission. A typical example is that of the conversion of a village chief, who after his conversion to Christ thrashed the possessed priestess, hung the idols, and burned the god houses to convince the people by ocular demonstration\(^{46}\) of the greatness of the power of his newfound faith and the God who had more power than his old deities and the priests and priestesses he had once dreaded.

There is a similar record of a power encounter between the Ijebu—a subtribe of the Yoruba and the God of the missionaries. John Baur states that the reason for the responsiveness of the Ijebu neighbors of the Egba, who had previously been so negative and antagonistic to the Christian missionaries, was their disappointment with their *juju* religion, which despite sacrificing 200 men and women to their deity, the Ijebu were still subdued by force of arms in 1892 in a battle that involved the missionary-backed Egba. “Being deeply religious, they could not help assuming that the white man’s power resided in his religion”\(^{47}\) and so they decided to convert due to their encounter with the power of God.

In the history of Protestant mission and the Christian church, it has been observed that “much of the world’s Christianity is anemic because it was not presented with such

\(^{46}\)Ibid., 83.

exercise of divine power as part of it. Pentecostal Christianity, on the other hand, is usually more acceptable and meaningful to most of the world’s peoples because it includes this dimension of the Christian message.”

This is one dimension of the Christian mission which must find its way back into the church today. Kraft states that, further, most of the world’s peoples are seeking greater spiritual power to cope with the exigencies of life. That is why following Jesus’ example, we are to use spiritual power as primary method of blessing and communicating to those whom God loves. An approach to presenting the gospel that focuses on power demonstration and power encounters would seem then to be warranted by both Scripture and common sense.

These three encounters, allegiance, truth, and power, need to be addressed in their appropriate relationship for a truly indigenous and contextualized Christianity to emerge, otherwise dual allegiance is almost inevitable. Truth without allegiance and power leads to a faceless, cold, powerless, formal and sanctimonious hypocritical religion that has no life to it and that could degenerate into dual allegiance. In the same vein, power without truth and allegiance encounters cannot produce genuine Christianity. Fanaticism, blind faith, and false religion soon follow its trail and Christianity becomes just another charm added to a syncretistic assortment of paraphernalia. Hypocrisy ensues from power and truth without allegiances. Therefore, these three encounters must all be present for appropriate Christianity to develop.

Unfortunately, according to Kraft,

the majority of Christian witness coming from the West has neglected the advocacy of power encounters in the presentation of the Gospel. Though the Pentecostals and charismatic witnesses have done better, evangelicals, [including Adventists], have stressed allegiance and truth but been deficient in the power dimensions of the

---


biblical message. This has resulted in what is undoubtedly the biggest problem in worldwide Christianity: dual allegiance.  

**Slavery**

Another cause of dual allegiance was the slavery, displacement, and the inhuman trafficking of Africans by Westerners. Santería is a religion which evolved among slaves of African origin, especially the Yoruba, who combined Yoruba beliefs and a form of Roman Catholicism. A glance at the pantheon of deities and saints venerated in Santería soon reveals the clear imprints of Yoruba religious beliefs and practices. Murphy presents its origin as follows:

In the new World, the Yoruba were forced into a new religious system of pervasive power. This new tradition shaped their lives, and their native vision of the world was gradually adapted to complement and reflect the Catholic worldview. A new bilingual tradition emerged, at once a resistance to Catholic oppression and an accommodation to Catholic values. It came to be called Santería, the way of the saints, because the devotions to the orishas were carried out beneath the images of the Catholic saints. What may have begun as a subterfuge, an attempt to fool Catholic observers while preserving the ways of the orishas, became a universal religious vision in which a Catholic saint and a Lucumi orisha were seen as different manifestations of the same spiritual entity. As the Yoruba had become Lucumi in Cuba, so the Yoruba religious vision had become Santería, an attempt to honor the gods of Africa in the land of the Catholic saints.

The development of Santería ensued from an incomplete conversion process in

---


52 The Yoruba were quick to establish a strong community in Havana, Cuba. They came to be called “Lucumi” after their way of greeting each other, *oluku mi*, “my friend.” Murphy, *Santería*, 27.

53 Ibid., 31, 32.
the lives of the slaves, who appeared to have been conscripted into the Roman Catholic religion by what appears to be a national edict of the king of the Spain who ruled the islands where they lived.\textsuperscript{54} This is an example of syncretism from below. In such conversions, engineered by force, syncretism and dual allegiance in the likes of Santeria, Macumba, and Cadomble are inevitable developments.

This amalgamation of Christianity with idolatry as expressed in Santeria can also be traced to the ungodly and inhuman traffic of fellow human beings by those who professed to know the true God. Slavery is obviously a sad chapter in the history of the human race, most especially in its occurrence among Christians. Isichei points out that “the greatest weakness of the Christian in Black Africa in the Middle Years was its close association with the slave trade. There was a basic contradiction between converting Africans and purchasing them as slaves. . . . Some priests traded in slaves.”\textsuperscript{55}

Unfortunately, the gains of the missionary ventures are now being threatened by the very religions Christianity once thought it had displaced and replaced.\textsuperscript{56} The development of Santeria appears to have been a survival strategy for the deeply religious African in a hostile and harsh environment while living under the heavy yoke of slavery. Santeria came to be viewed as a normal religious phenomenon and also a new religion, which now has followers in the millions, especially in the Americas.

Some of the deities worshipped in Santeria are known by the same names as they

\textsuperscript{54}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{55}\textsuperscript{Isichei, A History of Christianity in Africa, 71.}

\textsuperscript{56}\textsuperscript{Paulien, “Dealing with Syncretism in Insider Movements,” 222.}
are known in the various forms of African Traditional Religions from which they came. In Santeria, Sango, the Yoruba deity of thunder, Ogun, the god of Iron, Yemoja, the goddess of the sea, Esu or Elegua (translated as the devil in the Yoruba bible), who is known as the trickster, the guarder of the crossroads, the gatekeeper of heaven, the choice giver and justice maker are lumped together with other saints in Roman Catholic tradition and are venerated and worshipped. This is the quintessence of dual allegiance, which had developed from an incomplete conversion in an abnormally harsh and evil environment of humiliation and injustice by people who professed Christianity but denied the power of it.

Discrepancies in the Missionary’s Worldview and Yoruba Culture and Worldview

There are several cultural and worldview factors, and especially discrepancies between the culture and worldview of the missionaries and the recipients of their work that are responsible for dual allegiance. To understand these factors, it is appropriate to briefly define culture and worldview. “Culture is a society’s complex, integrated coping mechanism, consisting of learned patterned concepts and behavior, plus their underlying perspectives (worldview) and the resulting artifacts (material culture).”


H. Richard Niebuhr in his classic, *Christ and Culture*, cites Malinowski’s definition of culture as the “artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes and values.” Culture also includes speech, education, tradition, myths, science, art, philosophy, government, rites, beliefs, inventions, and technologies humans have acquired to make life more bearable and conducive. Culture must also include the thought patterns, which are the way people think, act, and react to various situations of life. Hiebert defines culture as “the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.”

Three dimensions of human culture can be identified from Hiebert’s definition. These are the cognitive, affective, and the evaluative dimensions. The cognitive dimension represents knowledge, logic, and wisdom with which matters of importance are handled in a specific culture. The affective dimension deals with the feelings of fear, security, peace, and aesthetics. The evaluative dimension has to do with ethical values, allegiances, etc. These various dimensions of a culture must be taken into consideration for an appropriate Christian ministry to take place.


62 Ibid., 31.
Worldview, which is the deep level of culture, is defined as “the culturally structured set of assumptions (including values and commitments/allegiances) underlying how a people perceive and respond to reality. Worldview is not separate from culture. It is included in culture as the deepest level presuppositions upon which people base their lives.”

Traditional and modern worldviews have certain contrasting features. Some of these features include the following: A traditional worldview is holistic and does not make a separation between the natural and the supernatural, and has no segmentation of the institutions and elements of life; a modern worldview separates the natural from the supernatural and has specialized institutions and elements of life. Also, a traditional worldview sees reality as extending beyond the observable natural world to the unseen world of the ancestors, supernatural beings, spirits, and witchcraft, etc., while a modern worldview sees reality only in the realm of observable phenomena.

Christianity, which began and developed within a Middle Eastern, traditional, wholistic, supernatural worldview, evolved in its contact with the modern, rationalistic worldview of Western Europe and America. It must be emphasized that there are a lot of similarities between the original cultural environments in which Christianity developed and the non-Western cultural milieu where it was transplanted. The challenge was that it was transplanted after it had lost sight of much of its holistic aspects. The vast majority of the missionaries, who took the gospel to the other nations of the world in the modern

era, came from the Western world.

Charles Kraft identifies the influences of the various cultural revolutions that occurred in Western societies and their relationship with faith and God.

Western societies passed through the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and a wide variety of ripples and spin-offs from these movements. . . . The result: God and the church were dethroned, and the human mind came to be seen as savior. It is ignorance, not Satan we are to fight. And our weapons are human minds and technology. God, if there be a God, only helps those who do it all themselves. Thus, by the nineteenth century, God had become irrelevant to most Westerners.64

This evolving atheistic and secular nature of the Western milieu out of which the nineteenth-century missionary endeavors originated and developed inevitably exerted a tremendous influence on both the nature and form of the gospel these missionaries took to the world. Kraft and Kraft describe the Western missionary worldview which was drastically different from those of the recipients in non-Western lands as follows:

And they [missionaries] came at a time in history after the Western world had largely ceased to believe in spiritual beings and powers. Even within the church, then, the intellectualism of Reformation Christianity combined with the anti-supernaturalism of secular society to produce a brand of Christianity that found more power in reason than in prayer. Medical advances came to be depended on more than prayer for healing, psychology more than deliverance for emotional problems, what humans do in the visible world than what God does in the invisible. Church meetings came to be centered around sermonizing rather than worship.65

These differences between the worldview of the missionaries and the recipients of missionary work often led to dual allegiance in the newly established congregations because “there was little in the missionaries’ background that prepared them to even

64C. H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 31, 32.

accept, much less deal with the reality of the spirit world.  Those missionaries who took the pagan practices and the spirit world seriously enough were either frightened by them or committed to reasoning people out of them. The result was that the religious and worldview perceptions of the recipients of the missionary movements were not appropriately addressed, so many practices went underground, hidden under a form of conversion to Christianity. During times of pressing needs for which the Christianity presented to them had not made provision, dual allegiance ensued because many returned to the pre-Christian methods of addressing such needs and solving their problems.

Marguerite G. Kraft tells of a medicine woman who became a Christian and how she related to her occupation:

[She] explained that she deals with physical ailments including barrenness (Bazza 1990). She does not deal with spirits because of the danger to her as a woman and her twelve children. She sends people to the male spirit doctor nearby when it is necessary. She learned herbal treatment from her mother and grandmother, who were practitioners. The interviewee became a Christian in 1979 and goes to church regularly, refusing to practice medicine on Sundays. She explained that prayer and the power of God give the medicine more potency. She has combined a relationship with God and her practice of traditional medicine.  

The situation cited above appears to be an appropriate way to deal with the issue of traditional medical practice after conversion to the Christian faith, except the idea of sending people to male spirit doctors, since Christians have power in Christ to deliver from the power of evil spiritual forces which torment people. The woman’s refusal to deal with the spirits due to lingering fear also reveals a weakness in her new worldview and beliefs about evil spiritual forces and their influences in life. She fears being

\[66\] Ibid.

\[67\] M. Kraft, Understanding Spiritual Power, 106.
attacked as well as putting the lives of her twelve children in danger. This indicates a weakness in her understanding of living in Christ for she not only should be delivered from the power of evil, but should also be empowered to live victoriously above the fear of evil spirits. In most cases, the persistence of such fear often leads to dual allegiance, whereby the Christian still remains a regular visitor to the shaman and diviner in order to acquire charms and amulets for protection.

As stated above, in the process of presenting the gospel cross-culturally, three possibilities exist in the interactions between the recipient culture and the gospel message. Both the uncritical acceptance of the pre-Christian culture and the wholesale denial of the old ways result in syncretism and dual allegiance. The best approach for Christian mission is to engage in critical contextualization, whereby the old ways are neither accepted nor rejected without first examining their essence critically. Those parts of the culture that do not go against biblical principles are kept, while those that are opposed to God’s Word are either modified or rejected.

**Misapplication of the Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Mission**

Another cause of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists is what Adekunle Alalade refers to as a “misapplication of the Seventh-day Adventist theology of Mission a Christ-against-Culture Paradigm.”⁶⁸ In his discussion of the influence of this paradigm, Alalade identifies the fact that the message of Rev 14:8 constitutes a very important and

---

⁶⁸ Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 93.
inseparable part of the Adventist theology of mission. This second angel’s message, “fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she made all nations drink of the wine of her impure passion,” in conjunction with chap. 18:4, “Come out of her my people,” was that part of the three angels’ messages stressed by the missionaries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The Adventist understanding of Babylon is that it constitutes both the Roman Catholic Church and other Protestant churches that had rejected the warnings of the first angel. Ellen G. White states:

But the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844. The churches then (Catholics and Protestant) experienced a moral fall, in consequence of their refusal of the light of the advent message; but that fall was not complete. As they have continued to reject the special truths for this time, they have fallen lower and lower. . . . Rev 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejection of the three-fold warnings of Rev 14:6-12, the church will have reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion.  

According to P. Gerard Damsteegt, the Millerite understanding and subsequently the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Babylon from which missionaries were supposed to call people out of was the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches who rejected the Adventist pioneers’ proclamation of divine warnings as given by the first angel. Therefore, he concludes that Babylon must be limited to the apostate Roman Catholic and Protestant churches who through their false doctrines make the world

---

69 Ibid.


commit the sins mentioned above.

However, instead of applying the message to the apostate religious organizations which J. N. Andrews, the first known Adventist theological scholar, also referred to as Protestant as well as Catholic churches, Adventist missionaries applied the “come out of her” to the rich cultural heritage of the people in the mission fields outside of North America and Europe. This Christ-against-culture paradigm resulted in the concept of *tabula rasa* described by John Pobee as the “doctrine that there is nothing in non-Christian culture on which the Christian missionary can build, and consequently every aspect of the traditional non-Christian culture must be destroyed before Christianity can be built up.” This too contributed to dual allegiance because many elements of the Yoruba culture were not necessarily evil. When everything was discarded without review, many important elements of the culture were destroyed leading to the creation of a cultural vacuum. This vacuum caused many to return to their previous African presuppositions used for explanations and remedies in times of crises.

Partly as a consequence of the *tabula rasa* approach to missions, the earliest missionaries to Nigeria (including Seventh-day Adventist missionaries) turned their backs on anything African. Kraft states that “the answer that advocates of God-against-culture positions typically recommended is for Christians to withdraw, reject, escape, 

---

72 Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 94.


isolate and insulate themselves from the world in order to develop and maintain holiness." Some in Africa were even required to move from their home to a Christian settlement called a *Topo* by the Roman Catholic Church in Yoruba land in Nigeria. The Adventists simply called it a mission compound that was known in various vernacular translations as *Oke-Ogba* at Otun in Ekiti State, and *Oke Oyinbo* at Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, in Yoruba land. Thus Christians were called out and apart from society, instead of being redeemed in society. No wonder the Adventist Church was and is still looked upon as a foreign institution when compared with the African Indigenous Churches.

Kraft postulates that this approach, while rightly understanding that Satan makes use of human culture for his own end, makes three serious errors. The first error is that this approach equates the concept of ‘culture’ with only the negative use of the Greek word *kosmos* in the New Testament. However, *kosmos* is the word John employs in John 3:16 as well, but with a positive or neutral meaning, showing that the world is the object of God’s love and the recipient of his gift of salvation. The second fallacy in the Christ-against-culture view is to assume that culture is only an external thing. However, it is also internal. Kraft submits, “It assumes that it is possible by ‘running’ to escape from one’s culture. But anthropological understanding proves that this assumption is untrue. Human beings are indelibly bound to, and by their culture, though it is possible to


76 Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 94.

innovate, replace, add to, transform and in other ways alter their use of culture that they have received.”

The third error of this approach is the assumption that, since Satan is able to use culture to his ends, all culture is evil. Alalade discusses this fallacy by examining Adventist mission work in Nigeria and pointing out that both Western and indigenous pastors and church administrators are still guilty of this third fallacy. Without any investigation they labeled and are still labeling everything African as primitive and evil.

Furthermore, the Christ-against-culture approach undermined the unity of a traditional society and the authority of the monarchial traditional rulers, thereby calling forth their anger and resentment against Christianity as a disintegrating factor in society. For this reason, Christianity was not only considered foreign, it was also regarded by the majority as a positive evil. Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Nigeria (both foreign and indigenous) have failed and are failing to do the hard work of critical contextualization, have neglected the worldview, those central governing set of concepts and presuppositions that the Yoruba live by, and have called everything evil. Hence, comparatively few Yoruba are Adventists today and some of those who are also engage in dual allegiance. Condemnation has also created a patriotic spirit among the traditional religionists, who became quite vigilant about protecting and preserving the cultural and

---

78 Ibid., 106.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid., 100-101.

81 Ibid., 102.
religious beliefs and practices. Many traditionalists, in the face of wholesale condemnation by Christian mission, became even more militant in their religious life and persecuted their relatives who accepted Christianity.

Alalade’s position in his development of the misapplication of Seventh-day Adventist theology of mission as a factor militating against the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa can also be seen as one of the most important factors leading to dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. This ensues from the fact that the paradigm, Christ-against-culture, nurtures the concept of *tabula rasa*, which in turn forces many cultural beliefs, practices, and worldview assumptions underground only to surface at critical moments in the life of the believer. In Nigeria and elsewhere, Seventh-day Adventist Western missionaries and indigenous pastors have inadvertently set people against their culture in the name of religious conversion. A missionary practice that is founded on the Christ-against-culture view is divisive and a disservice to the recipient’s culture while creating untold confusion in mission fields.

Nevertheless, several components of Alalade’s thesis lack total accuracy, and others are misapplied. First, Niebuhr wrote within the monocultural American context, not from a cross-cultural missiological perspective. Christ against culture means all cultures, American culture included. However, early Christian missionaries typically did not take this posture in relation to their own culture. They often thought that their own cultures were Christian and good. Their ethnocentrism caused them to view African cultures as bad. In this way, Alalade misuses Niebuhr’s category. Missiologists no longer use Niebuhr because his categories do not apply.

Second, in his examination of the Seventh-day Adventist theology of mission,
which was dynamic and hopefully still is, Alalade omits the idea that is developed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* that points out that, in addition to the church’s understanding of Babylon to be Roman Catholic and Protestant churches that rejected the warnings of the first angel’s Message, Babylon, both literal and mystical, “has thus long been recognized as the traditional enemies of God’s truth and his people. As used in the book of Revelation, Babylon is symbolic of all apostate religions, organizations, and their leadership from antiquity down to the close of time.”\(^82\) This definition of Babylon includes all apostate religions, which are found in heathen cultures as well as all human philosophical conjectures that are opposed to the truth of God, such as secularism, socialism, communism, and materialism.

Third, Alalade also fails to differentiate between components of culture that are unbiblical and for which a dynamic equivalent or a functional substitute is needed upon conversion to Christianity, and a blanket acceptance of the whole culture. He seems to believe that all culture is inherently good. However, it is the evil found in every culture that God stands against, not the culture itself.\(^83\) There is no perfect culture. Therefore, all cultural components must be subjected to scriptural scrutiny and are to be accepted or rejected on the basis of such critical evaluation.

Receptor Causes

The shape of contemporary Christianity among the Yoruba is also a product of


\(^{83}\)Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 99.
factors within the Yoruba people. Receptor causes of dual allegiance include the culture and worldview of the Yoruba, such as perceptions about causation of life experiences, the role of the ancestors, parental curses, witchcraft, and the use of enchantments. A study of Yoruba worldview is the focus of chapter 3. Conversion practices, what it means to become a Christian to the Yoruba, reasons for converting to Christianity, and how the experience of conversion takes place also have an impact on whether dual allegiance occurs among the Yoruba.

Another factor is the role that Ifa, the Yoruba deity of divination, played during nineteenth-century Christian missionary work. The influence of the discrepancies between the worldview of missionaries and that of the recipient culture has already been discussed above under external causes of dual allegiance. This section focuses on conversion practices and the role of Ifa in the nineteenth-century mission work among the Yoruba as causes of dual allegiance.

Conversion Patterns

According to Hiebert, there are three levels in the process of conversion that include (1) changes in outward behavior and rituals, (2) transformation of a people’s beliefs, and (3) transformation of values at the level of their worldview. It is only when conversion takes place at the worldview level that new converts are able to resist reverting to old beliefs and practices. Other scholars in the study of religious

84 Hiebert, “Transforming Worldviews,” 10, 11.

conversion suggest that there have been several models of religious conversion used in mission work throughout the world. One is the process-model, whereby converts of various world religions at different moments in time go through similar stages, until finally reaching full or spiritual conversion.

Questions such as what happens after the acceptance of Christ into one’s life as Lord and Savior (as in the life of an African who until his conversion to Christianity had grown up fulfilling the demands of traditional religion and witchcraft) are asked in order to understand the process of conversion and its relationship with dual allegiance. Following one’s religious conversion, will witchcraft be entirely rejected or simply given a new meaning (demons and bad spirits)? Or will converts put such phenomenon as witchcraft in another framework of meaning, which of course guarantees its continued importance in their lives?86

In most cases these questions are rarely asked and even if asked, they are not pursued to their logical conclusions. Christians should be taught to live differently not only in lifestyle and beliefs, but also at the worldview level. In the absence of such an effort, “if conversion includes a change in beliefs and behavior, but if the worldview is not transformed, in the long run the gospel is subverted and the result is syncretistic Christo-paganism, [or dual allegiance], which has the form of Christianity, but not the essence.”87

86Ibid., 151.

87Hiebert, “Transforming Worldviews,” 11.
Another conversion practice⁸⁸ that may lead to dual allegiance is what has been termed a “people movement.” In the context of Christian mission and conversion, a people movement is “the positive drawing of responsive populations of the non-Western world of extended families, clans, tribes, castes, and age grades, where whole villages may represent precise ethnic entities, and where such groups may elect to turn from animism to Christianity as total units at one precise point of time.”⁸⁹ This is a phenomenon that is most likely to occur in societies which still have strong communal ties and associations with the community leadership and strong communal decision-making processes.⁹⁰ In addition, such communities are also deemed to be highly responsive to the gospel and have a high affinity to change.

The term “responsive populations” is used to describe large homogenous units of people who, once they have made their decision, act in unison.⁹¹ Charles H. Kraft reports this kind of people movement in Northern Nigeria where he was baptizing up to 150 people in a month, despite his insistence that candidates must undergo six months of training before baptism.⁹² The divergent or reverse phenomenon is what has been termed

⁸⁸Tippett, Introduction to Missiology, 47.
⁸⁹Ibid.
⁹¹Tippett, Introduction to Missiology, 47.
nativistic movement. This is the negative pushing away from Christianity for the purpose of differentiation.\(^93\)

Spiritually, people movements and nativistic movements are direct opposites, but psychologically they comprise almost identical dynamics. Dependence on the community leadership and a joint decision to become Christian could lead to dual allegiance. This tendency has led to a longstanding criticism against some group movement,\(^94\) for unless the gospel worker takes the extra care, time, and energy to follow up the people converted through mass movement into Christianity with appropriate study of the Word and taking into consideration the various principles of critical contextualization, Christopaganism and dual allegiance will usually be the end result whereby paganistic beliefs and practices are observed secretly, or at times openly.

The validity of a people movement as a conversion practice is beyond question, for it is biblical. Jesus ministered to and called multitudes to discipleship. Jesus used concepts that are collective, namely, folds and flocks (John 10:16), and as portrayed by three parables in Luke 15. “The isolated one belongs again; the lost sheep is no longer lost; the lost son is home again. Even when he deals with individuals he has the total group in mind.”\(^95\) Even the great commission is given in terms of ethnic units. The “human group is a thing to be preserved . . . [and] the isolated individual needs to be

\(^{93}\)Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology*, 47.

\(^{94}\)Ibid., cf. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 327.

restored to the place where he or she belongs.”

People movements are also found in the early church. The experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) is a very good example. Three thousand souls (v. 41) were baptized together and immediately established in the fellowship of the church, which must be understood as the milieu for further instructions in doctrines, in fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. The Pauline missionary experiences are also filled with people movements where the Holy Spirit was at work bringing a lot of people and groups of converts together to establish churches. Tippett reiterates that

the New Testament church was planted by the apostles, through group movement patterns, by the power and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The church grew from a recurring spiritual experience that brought conversion responses to multi-individual communities upon their receiving of the Spirit. Where they did not respond, this was said to be resisting the Spirit.

In spite of these positive accounts of people movements in the Bible, anthropologically, there still lingers the problem and danger of dual allegiance in the midst of the converts, especially when the multi-individuality is not impacted by a genuine and total surrender to Christ. The case of Simon Magus is a potent example of the danger of dual allegiance. Kraft states, “When large groups adopt the Christian faith

---


97 Ibid., 47.

98 Orlando Costas points out that “the concept of multi-individual decisions gives a sociological orientation to the experience of conversion because it affirms that conversions, which depend on a personal act of faith in Christ, can take place in a group setting, where all the members of a given group (family, clan, tribe, or mutual interest groups) participate in a similar experience with Christ after considering it together and deciding for Christ at the same time.” Orlando Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1974), quoted in Hiebert, *Transforming Worldview*, 328.
with their pre-Christian ways largely intact, they may change their behavior [more] and worldview less than they should in the first generation.”

This is an allusion to the fact that when an individual in a group comes to faith in Christ, the first generation of believers appears to be more sensitive to their pre-Christianity beliefs and worldview. A dilemma and great struggle may at times ensue as a result of the contradictions that prevail in their lives. On one hand are the promises of blessings and salvation as a result of coming to Christ. On the other, the previous approaches to solving their life challenges and problems were also real, despite the baggage and mind bondage and ties that the spirit world may have had. The mind-tricks the devil uses on the new converts and the temptations to revert back to the formulas of their pre-Christian religious beliefs and worldviews are constant. In spite of a concerted effort to reject anything perceived to be associated with the previous beliefs and worldview, at the beginning, Christianity and the power of the Christ are not yet understood well enough for many to wholly trust in God’s power to save. Trusting God’s power depends on the way the Scripture is presented as well as the follow-up the new believer receives. Another problem is the possibility of a mixed multitude in a mass movement in the first generation. Many in a mixed multitude may pass outwardly as Christians, but down deep, the old worldview still remains very intact, barely untouched, and not transformed by the gospel message.

The history of the conversion to Seventh-day Adventism in Ipoti-Ekiti, a subtribe of the Yoruba, portrays a people movement that may not be free from the taint of dual

---

allegiance. In his book, David Babalola elaborates on the call and ministries of Pastor Isaiah Ajibola (Ikupolokun) Balogun and the prevailing milieu of his work. This includes the experience of a people movement from the Anglican Church to the Adventist Church where the majority now claims to be Seventh-day Adventists.

Babalola narrates the story of how this people movement led to the conversion of almost the whole town to Adventism.

Before the arrival of the Adventist message at Ipoti-Ekiti, the Anglican Church had been well established in the community. The congregation was managed by a group of lay leaders. Periodically, they had ministers from Ijero and Ado-Ekiti visiting them. However, the local members desired strongly a resident clergy man who will live with them as the custom was in other towns. They thereby made several appeals to the Anglican Church authority in Ijero-Ekiti for a minister to be stationed in the town.

After meeting the conditions requested for a minister to be sent to them, one was sent only to be removed the next day. This was in 1914, the year Elder D. C. Babcock, the pioneer Seventh-day Adventist missionary to Nigeria, arrived at Erunmu. This Anglican congregation became discouraged and bitterly disappointed. Their hope of having a minister to guide them in the things of the Lord was shattered and from that moment on some prominent members of the congregation made up their mind to seek an alternative. It was at this time that Isaiah Balogun left Adebayi, a town near Erunmu in the Ibadan area where he met Pastor Babcock. He then informed the disenchanted Anglican members of Ipoti of a new denomination upon his return to Ipoti-Ekiti.


101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.
Eventually these Anglican Church members accepted the Adventist faith and today Ipoti-Ekiti is mainly Adventist. This mass movement of the people into the Seventh-day Adventist Church also took place in another town nearby called Odo-Owa. Elder Babcock later referred to the impact of this experience when he said, “Under the blessing of the Lord, about 78 people were baptized at one time in Ipoti, the outlook was cheering and within a short time suitable buildings were erected.”

Those seventy-eight people were given Bible studies to further strengthen their faith. However, it is obvious that the content of these Bible studies did not address the cultural and worldview parameters and how to deal with them in such a way as to help the believers resist the pull of dual allegiance. The main emphasis was on the Seventh-day Sabbath, the Second Advent, the state of the dead, and other doctrines that were perceived to be the points of difference from other Christian denominations. There was not and still is not a Bible study guide that has taken the African culture and worldview seriously enough to make a definite and accurate statement on how, for example, to deal with the ancestors, witchcraft, the spirit world, enchantment, the fear of the unknown—the influence of which Yoruba Adventists still believe can affect all aspects of life, conversion notwithstanding.

Ongoing discipling is of paramount importance until a total renunciation of dual allegiance occurs. Arnold Clinton points out that the public renunciation and burning of magical books in the church at Ephesus during Paul’s stay in that city demonstrates the temptation that believers faced to continue to practice magic even after their conversion.

to Christianity (Acts 19:18-19). He also underscores the fact that Luke’s record shows that it was people who had “believed that confessed their continued participation in occultic arts that brought their books and publicly burned them. One cannot but wonder how many did not participate in this act of renunciation!”

During the early years of Adventist mission among the Yoruba, the concept of *tabula rasa* still featured prominently as Alalade shows in his book. People had their fears, concerns about charms, enchantments, witchcraft, and the influence of ancestral spirit denied, and as a result forced underground. Unfortunately, such an attitude does not remove the fact that people are still being haunted by their pre-Christian beliefs in the spirit world as causal forces and factors of their life experience.

**The Role of *Ifa***

The role *Ifa* divination played in nineteenth-century mission among the Yoruba also paved the way for the evolution of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. The history of the conversion of the Yoruba to Christianity and subsequently to Adventism bears the hue of the active role of *Ifa*, the Yoruba pre-Christian art of divination and revelation, which also has paved the way for dual allegiance and syncretism. In an article entitled, “The Role of *Ifa* in the Work of the nineteenth-Century Missionaries,” S. A. Adewale traces the historical trajectory of nineteenth-century missionary endeavors and the role of *Ifa*. According to Adewale, all previous attempts to evangelize the region proved abortive:

---

The first attempt to evangelize the people of Nigeria was at Benin about 1484 when a request came from the king of Benin. The king acted on his own volition and from all indications his interest was not in religion for, according to Groves, the king’s desire seemed ‘to have been for the Portuguese armed help rather than for Christianity. The Portuguese missionaries came with all their might and enthusiasm, addressed themselves to the task and had the king himself converted and baptized but unfortunately the mission was not successful, and the converts quickly reverted to their traditional forms of worship.  

The Spanish Friars’ attempt of 1655 was also unfruitful. They converted the king and some other people and had them baptized. The mission was making encouraging progress, but owing to the bitter feelings between the Portuguese and the Spanish, the endeavors of the Spanish missionaries failed. The Portuguese missionaries frustrated the Spanish missionaries and forced them to withdraw, and eventually Christianity faded from Benin. Adewale identifies the strength of the traditional religion in the traditional society and the society’s unpreparedness for a new religion as the reasons for the collapse of these initial efforts in West Africa.

This situation changed in the nineteenth century when the Egba, a subtribal group of the Yoruba, because of an Ifa prediction, welcomed and accepted Christian missionaries to work and make converts among them. According to Adewale, the Egba’s choice of settlement was dictated by an Ifa oracle, which as African traditionalists they consult before taking major steps in their life. They were told “that prosperity would be


\[108\] Ibid.
their lot on the proposed settlement.”

109 This was the first positive declaration that inspired the Egba to migrate to Abeokuta. Adewale further states:

The oracle further declared that most of the Egba sons and daughters who had been sold into slavery would be found on the land and that a nation from over the seas would raise the status of the Egba. The assurance given by Ifa encouraged the Egba to leave their homestead in Egba forest, for they believed that Ifa would not tell a lie. They reached the proposed site which was later named Abeokuta in 1830 and consulted Ifa again. The purpose of re-consulting Ifa was to obtain further guidance in regard to their existence on the land and the oracle confirmed its previous predictions, adding that the power from across the seas would help the Egba and make them a great nation. The oracle also enjoined them to hasten through sacrifice the advent of the powers.

110 The Egba were so anxious about the arrival of the predicted power and the help it would render to them that without any delay, the sacrifice was offered. In actual fact, the Egba were at time confronted by many problems and they needed help. For instance, King Gezo of the Dahomeans and his people were threatening an attack against them and they wanted to be safe and secure from neighboring Yoruba countries.

111 They were therefore eagerly awaiting the arrival of the power. Eventually in 1842, Thomas Birch Freeman, a Ghanaian Mullato and a pioneer Methodist missionary, made a brief appearance and was ushered in with rousing and hearty welcome. Sodeke, the ruler of Egba, had taken all necessary measures to make his journey to Abeokuta comfortable and free from any predicaments. Walker who described the event said: “Sodeke sent 14 men to conduct Freeman to Abeokuta. He sent an imposing escort of a


111 Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, 112.
Adewale believes that “this confirmation formed the basis of the traditional Egba’s personal and direct association with the missionaries who, they believed, were sent by the gods to save them from destruction, adversity, and calamity and like miseries.”

Walker reports on the Egba’s reception of the missionaries:

Early in the morning of January 4, 1843, Sodeke’s son came with a band of Egba warriors to receive the visitor [Townsend]. With much noise of drum and shouts of welcome, the crowd of horsemen, and others led Townsend over into the town. It was truly an African procession without form or order, everybody following his own inclination, armed with spears and others with muskets.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) decided to start a Yoruba mission with Abeokuta as its first station. A group of three ministers and four African teachers were sent in 1846. Henry Townsend led these ministers that included the renowned Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave who subsequently became an Anglican Bishop and

---

112 Ibid.

113 Ajisafe, History of Abeokuta, 86.

114 Ibid.

who translated the Bible into Yoruba and did works in other Nigerian languages.\footnote{Baur, \textit{2000 Years of Christianity in Africa}, 112.}

Thus the predictions of \textit{Orunmila}, the pre-Christian Yoruba deity of divination through the \textit{Ifa}, about the coming of missionaries referred to as the “power” by the oracles caused the Egba to welcome and accommodate Christianity in their midst. In this particular situation, the practice of \textit{tabula rasa} was inconsequential among the Egba. \textit{Ifa} prepared the way for the gospel to be received by the people. They were told to be hospitable to the missionaries and to learn about their God and accept him. The situation is reminiscent of the encounter of Paul and the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination in Acts 16:16-18, who followed Paul and Silas saying, “These men are the servant of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” In this instance, Paul’s approach to the situation stood in marked contrast with Townsend and his co-missionaries’ methods.

According to C. P. Groves, “each time the oracle was consulted about the missionaries, it said nothing inimical about them. All the oracle said was the missionaries should be permitted to teach.”\footnote{Charles Pelham Groves, \textit{The Planting of Christianity in Africa}, 4 vols. (London: Lutterworth, 1948-58), 2:53.} Townsend himself confirmed this when he said, “The great oracle that is to them as a Bible, has been consulted again and again about us, and has, I am told never been induced to utter a word against us.”\footnote{Ibid.} Townsend further states his understanding of what could have happened to the revelations from \textit{Ifa}, had the priests been dubious. “It is in the power of the priests to falsify, but he does not,
although unquestionably it would be to his own interest to do so.”

As rosy as this story may have sounded, it became obvious that the primary reason for which the Egba accommodated the missionaries was not primarily because of the interest they had in the new religion. Economical and political reasons topped the agenda. Not many of the people, especially the traditional religionists, actually were comfortable with the coming of the missionaries. Baur intimates that fact.

The Egba allowed the Christians faith to be preached only to the Saros, i.e. the home-comers from Sierra Leone, and not to the real natives. They would permit their children to learn the White man’s skills but not to abandon the religion of their ancestors. So there was often religious persecution at the domestic level although publicly religious freedom was professed. After two years only five people had been baptized among them Crowther’s mother and sister.

This antagonistic attitude of the Egba chiefs and traditionalists eventually changed due to their needs for the assistance of the missionaries who organized the defense of the city against the attacks of Gezo the king of Dahome. I personally believe that Townsend and the other missionaries with him did not have any option other than deal with the situation the way they dealt with it. They could only accept the hospitality and the spirit of amity with which they were welcomed. Nevertheless, this approach was laden with several problems, especially syncretism and dual allegiance in the conversion of those who believed on the basis of predictions from their deity. To later preach to the people to abandon their fetishistic paraphernalia and paganistic ways and outlook became difficult because of the way the traditional religion had paved the way for the first

---

119 Ibid.

120 Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, 112.

121 Ibid.
missionaries to have access to the people. Tippett says that

to strive to bring the pagan to a decision for Christ, what church growth theory calls
verdict theology, is to create a dialogical crisis, and this is frowned on. This attitude
of ‘if you cannot bring individuals to decision, then come to terms with them and
coexist’ is certainly not scriptural. It eliminates the existential cross of the disciple of
Christ from his or her ministry in the world.122

This situation portends another method of the devil to muffle the gospel and make
the differences between the truth of that gospel vague and hazy in addition to the old
religious system which needs transformation through acceptance of Christ as the Savior
of the race. This lack of clarity also leads to dual allegiance, a combination and
cooperation between a form of Christianity and Ifa divination among the Yoruba.

The prophecy eventually was fulfilled. The Egba were defended by the
Christians who fought alongside them against the Dahomeans and other neighboring
enemies. Egbaland became prosperous and grew strong. The Christian church also
expanded and spread like wildfire. Many churches were planted both among the Egba
people as well as in other Yoruba areas. Nevertheless, the authenticity of these
conversions based on the Ifa oracle needs to be examined and reexamined, since such
association naturally leads to a kind of Christianity that is dual in nature, one that allows
for worship in the church on Sunday or Saturday but which sees nothing wrong in
visiting the shrines and actively participating in pagan festivals. Just as missionaries are
not the whole cause of today’s dual allegiance, so the Egba history is not the whole
story. To address today’s context requires the study of today’s Yoruba context.

122 Tippett, Introduction to Missiology, 50.
Biblical Perspectives on Dual Allegiance

In spite of the fact that God commanded the Israelites to worship him alone as the true God, their history is replete with unfaithfulness to this calling. Under the leadership of unfaithful kings, the people of God were led into idol worship when they served both Yahweh and the other deities of the people they had displaced from the land they inherited. God reacted swiftly to these failings of his people, and his reactions to these dual allegiances give powerful insight as to how the phenomenon should be viewed and treated in the church today. This section studies some of the experiences of the Israelites’ dual allegiance and other situations in the early Christian church.

Dual Allegiance in the Old Testament

There are several situations of dual allegiance in the life of God’s people in the Old Testament. Regardless of divine warnings against the worship of other gods in the Scriptures, the people of God followed the example of their rulers and the surrounding peoples and served other gods. Second Kings 17:41 captures the nature of dual allegiance among the Israelites: “Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols.”

Stories of dual allegiance in the Old Testament include the fabrication and worship of the golden calf in the wilderness by the children of Israel (Exod 32:1-9), the story of the secret nocturnal visit of Saul to the witch of Endor to consult a familiar spirit (1 Sam 28:24), the contest of Elijah with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:16-39), the erecting and worship of golden calves in Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam, which eventually became a trap for the children of Israel as they turned to worship them,
while not turning completely from the worship of Yahweh (1 Kgs 12:25-13:3), shrine prostitution (1 Kgs 14:24), and human sacrifices and witchcraft (2 Kgs 17:16-17). Some of these stories will be examined below.

**Jeroboam and the Two Golden Calves**

Solomon, the son of David who ruled Israel, died after ruling Israel for forty years. Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king. When the self-exiled Jeroboam heard that Solomon was dead, he returned to Israel and led all the congregation of Israel to meet Rehoboam at Shechem, where Rehoboam was to be anointed king over Israel. The people demanded that he reduce the burden that his father had placed upon them. And as foretold by the prophet Ahijah (1 Kgs 11:26-32), Israel was divided into two separate nations, the northern ten tribes, Israel, and the remaining tribes in the south called Judah. Jeroboam ruled over the northern tribes, while Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was king over the two southern tribes. Jeroboam then built a city, Shechem, at Mount Ephraim where he lived and from where he ruled the ten tribes.

Jeroboam had every reason to remain faithful and dependent on the almighty God, to love, to maintain allegiance to, and serve him alone. But unfortunately he sinned and caused the whole northern kingdom to sin against God. He also set a terrible precedence, by which so many other rulers who reigned after him fell and were condemned. Although he was established as king by divine design, he neglected and rejected God’s formula given to him at the beginning of his reign as the secret of his continual rulership over Israel. He fabricated other ways he thought his rule could be perpetuated. He desired to block the peoples’ pilgrimages to Jerusalem in order to stop their contact with Rehoboam by setting up an avenue of worship that was not acceptable to God. The Lord
gave him a conditional promise: “I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty and will give Israel to you” (1 Kgs 11:38).

The condition was to listen to all that God commanded. Unfortunately, Jeroboam sought other ways whereby he thought to secure his kingdom, eventually leading to dual allegiance. Jeroboam exercised an unnecessary fear of losing his kingdom to the house of David, which was based in Jerusalem, because the Israelites visited the temple of God in Jerusalem every year for the Passover and other celebrations. He feared that “if these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem; they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam” (1 Kgs 12:27).

Ellen G. White identified Jeroboam’s problem as his failure to trust in God to keep him on his throne. ¹²³ This lack of trust in God is also a main reason for dual allegiance among Christians today. Initially, Jeroboam set up the golden calves for political reasons. ¹²⁴ His quest to keep the throne to himself pushed him to knowingly take a course that led him away from God. He forsook the first commandment of God and disobeyed the second, making golden calves for God’s people and thus leading them into demon worship.

**Saul and the Witch of Endor**

The story of the life and demise of Saul, the first king of Israel, is a typical


example of dual allegiance in the Old Testament. He went to a medium and committed the abomination of divination—necromancy. According to the text (1 Sam 28), Saul had once acted in conjunction with the divine laws forbidding idolatry and divination. He had sent all those suspected of being mediums from the nation of Israel (1 Sam 28:9). So his visit to the witch of Endor was not one of ignorance of these laws of God. He was desperate, he had not stayed in good and regular standing with the Lord, and had through a series of wrong decisions proved unworthy of the authority and privileges entrusted him by God to be ruler of his people. Saul had become an apostate, and according to Scripture, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him and an evil spirit was already ruling his life.

There was an outbreak of war between Israel and their perpetual enemies, the Philistines. Saul was greatly distressed. “Dreams, Urim, and prophets all failed him; the only reply from God was silence. In desperation he turned to a source of information that he and all around him knew was not appropriate for those who were part of Yahweh’s covenant people.”

He disguised himself and went at night to consult the witch at Endor. This description matches Schreiter’s definition and understanding of the phenomenon of dual allegiance, whereby church members know it is wrong to engage in dual allegiance, but seem to have no other options, due to silence from the Christian God.

The God he knew appeared to have suddenly become distant with no information coming from him. Although God’s final decisions about the reign and life of Saul had

already been made known to him through Samuel the prophet while he was alive, the present crises pushed him to seek guidance from a witch. The impropriety of Saul’s action is emphasized by the need he felt to disguise himself and to seek this woman at night.\textsuperscript{126}

\textbf{The Contest on Mount Carmel}

The power encounter on Mount Carmel was a divine response to the dual allegiance in Israel. Israel had been led by their ruler to worship other gods—Baal and Asherah—but they had not completely abandoned the worship of Yahweh. The aim of the contest was to prove to Israel that there was no other god but Yahweh, and to reveal the evil of holding allegiance to other gods alongside the worship of the true God who had delivered them from the yoke of slavery and established them as a nation (1 Kgs 16:29; 18:16-40). After the death of Omri the king of Israel, his son Ahab became king, and he reigned in Samaria for twenty-two years. Under Ahab, Israel turned its back on God to combine the worship of Yahweh with that of Asherah and Baal. Archaeological artifacts dating to this period in the history of Israel attest to their dual allegiance.\textsuperscript{127} At the end of three and a half years, God sent Elijah the prophet to set up a contest between the prophets of Baal and Elijah. The goal was to heal Israel of its sickness of unfaithfulness and dual allegiance.

\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{126}Ibid.\end{flushright}

Archaeological Evidence

Archaeology deals with the historical reconstruction of the past based on the material evidence of human cultural development through time, while socio-cultural anthropology deals with the varying ways of life of contemporary people and the relatively recent aspect of their past.128 This section of the study examines the archaeological studies and findings concerning the life of the children of Israel in relationship with dual allegiance.

William G. Dever’s treatment of the daily religious life of the Israelites during the period between 925-586 B.C. reveals some polytheistic activities and syncretistic folk religious practices of a backslidden people. Although he appears to see these as a normal manifestation of Israelite religion, he was skeptical of the biblical writers’ assessment of this phenomenon in the land of Israel, for the Jewish prophets saw these activities as a deviation from the standard monotheistic religion of Yahweh that was so strongly advocated in the Scriptures. Dever writes from a critical, secular, and “nominal-Jew feminist framework.”129 McNeeley suggests that Dever is of the opinion that “the Bible is a revisionist construct and is therefore unreliable.”130

The discoveries of figurines and inscriptions that allude to the syncretistic religion of many Israelites seem to lend strength to Dever’s opinion of widespread syncretism.131


130 Ibid.
The archaeological evidence from Dan shows numerous tenth- and ninth-century B.C. female figurines of Asherah, the old Canaanite mother goddess; household shrines found in tenth-century Megiddo, the cultic remains which have come to light in Ta’anach; the ninth- to eighth-century tripartite temple; as well as the bronze lion and the pair of standing statues that “show that Asherah, the Lion lady was worshiped alongside with Yahweh at Arad.”

Further archaeological artifacts show that “many years before the reformation instituted by Josiah, Asherah worship appears to be very rampant and prevalent in Israel and seems to have become ‘assimilated into [the] Israelite cult, native to their belief and practice, i.e. associated with Yahweh or perhaps even his consort.’” Apart from the figurines of Asherah, at numerous sites in Israel certain inscriptions were found that also add to the evidence of dual allegiance. There are inscriptions at the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud site which seem to confirm the syncretistic association of Asherah with Yahweh. This inscription states, “May X be blessed by Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah.”

Amihai Mazar comments on these inscriptions and agrees with the idea of

---

131 Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know?* 183.

132 Ibid.


Dever as follows:

An analysis of the biblical sources as well as the archaeological remains shows that Israelite religion passed through several stages of development. The worship of Yahweh alongside a consort named Asherah is known from the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, a fortified citadel-like structure in the eastern Sinai desert dated to about 800 B.C.E. This unusual and remote site, located on the main highway between Gaza and the Red Sea, seems to have been used as a roadside station, but was also a place of religious activity. It seems to have been utilized by people from both Israel and Judah, as can be detected by pottery types that represent both kingdoms. Ink inscription paintings were found on the white plaster.

Another inscription at the Khirbet el-Qom near Hebron discovered by Dever and his team in 1968 reads: “Uriyahu, the prince; this is his inscription. May Uriyahu be blessed by Yahweh, for from his enemies he has saved him by his Asherah.”

In another book written by Dever, various archaeological finds demonstrate the prevalence of folk religion, hence dual allegiance in Israel between the twelfth- and seventh-centuries B.C. In the book, Dever documents many of the archaeological sites of local shrines or local holy places that served either a nuclear family or at most a small group of related families where folk religion was practiced, including a two-room installation of a twelfth-century B.C. domestic complex in the tiny village of Tell el-Wawiyat in lower Galilee in the Netofah valley near Nazareth. “Noteworthy are low ‘altars’ like stone platforms, and especially a unique, large multi-handled bowl with

\[\text{\textsuperscript{135}}\text{Mazar, “The Divided Monarchy,” 168, 175.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{136}}\text{Ibid., 186.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{137}}\text{William G. Dever, Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 100-175.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{138}}\text{Ibid., 113.}\]
bullhead spouts, probably for libation offerings.”\textsuperscript{139} Several other archaeological sites have been uncovered in Israel, which according to Dever have cultic objects characteristic of folk religions.

Another line of evidence that Dever points out in his book to show the presence of folk religion in ancient Israel includes the presence of various artifacts that underscore the existence and manifestations of the practice of magical arts and divinations.

“Demonology and exorcism, divination, oracles (prophetic or other), soothsaying, wise men, and wise women, magicians, medicine men, sorcerers, and witchcraft, interpreters of dreams, astrologers and priestly blessings and curses were all elements of the pre-empirico-logical or ‘mythopoeic’” worldviews of the ancient Israelites.\textsuperscript{140}

This is in contrast with the empirico-logical or modern scientific, rational thinking. From these and many other digs in various locations in Israel, Dever has arrived at certain interpretations and conclusions which, to a certain degree, can be seen to echo his critical positions on the Bible’s claim of inspiration. Most of his submissions appear as an attempt to discredit Scripture. According to his understanding of the presence of these various deities in Israel as demonstrated in the artifacts dug up from the various sites, Israel was not monotheistic, but worshiped various deities such as Baal, Asherah, Yahweh, Ashtoreth, and others. Dever claims that it was only later in their history that their religion evolved into monotheism during which the cult of Yahwehism became more dominant over the various other cults.\textsuperscript{141} He seems to suggest a conspiracy

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., 127.
on the part of biblical authors in “downplaying the remaining reference to the point of where many are scarcely intelligible.” He further says that by “reading in between the lines of the biblical text,” he can unravel the actual religious practice of the Israelites in the divided kingdom, which he terms “popular religion,” that is Judeo-paganism.

Denying the findings of archaeology in terms of the inscriptions, figurines, and other cultic objects found at various sites, which inform us more about how the nation of Israel responded to the promptings of God in unfaithful manners when they were backslidden, would be a denial of the facts of reality of God’s dealing with Israel. The canonized text also testifies to such periods in the life of God’s people when they turned their backs on God and worshiped idols or worshiped both Yahweh and their idols (2 Kgs 17:41). The biblical writers do not downplay this infamous period of Israel’s life.

Nevertheless, to describe Israel’s religion as one which gradually evolved from polytheism to the worship of Yahweh on the basis of one’s interpretation of figurines and inscriptions is uncalled for and has no support from the Bible. Such an interpretation seems to be an attempt to force the modern evolutionary paradigm of the origin and development of religion on Israel’s religion. But according to Scripture, Israel’s religion was a revealed religion from God and has always been monotheistic. Israel was delivered from Egypt where polytheism thrived, and the land they were given was also occupied by nations who were idol worshipers. Israel’s revealed monotheistic religion

---

141 Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know?* 186.

142 Ibid., 197.

143 Ibid., 195.
became polluted with dual allegiance as they sought to become like the other nations around them.

The biblical authors presented the ideal religious experience God expected from Israel in its pages, but they also talk about Israel’s inadequacies and the divine provision to save them. When Israel relied on themselves, they failed, and often turned to the worship of the gods of the surrounding people. The periods the cultic artifacts date to simply imply a massive, almost national, apostasy, when Israel’s religion became tainted with a dual allegiance, or multiple allegiances with the numerous deities of Canaan, against which Yahweh had warned them. This apostasy was responsible for the demise of the nation according to the divine penmen who wrote the accounts.

Rather than seeing a cover-up or misrepresentation of history on the part of the biblical narrators, these archaeological artifacts and inscriptions simply prove what Israel’s prophets claimed happened; that is, Israel backslid and apostatized with the consequent retribution which followed. The fact that the archaeological artifacts discovered in Dan and Beersheba date to the period of the reign of Jeroboam, who led the northern kingdom into paganism, and also to the period just prior to Josiah’s reforms, strengthen the biblical accounts. In summary, archaeological evidence recovered from different strata of digs in Israel confirms the phenomenon of dual allegiance when the Israelites followed a syncretistic religion and worshiped Yahweh, Asherah, Baal, Ashtoreth, and other foreign gods.

Dual Allegiance in the New Testament

In the New Testament times, the danger of syncretism [and dual allegiance] intensified. The Roman Empire was filled with religious interpretations and in numerous instances the early church faced religious imports into the faith. The
church itself was not completely free of these ideas, seen in the disciples’ declaration that Peter’s spirit was knocking at the door (possibly a type of spirit guardian double; Acts 12:15).  

Hebrews was written to a group of people who struggled with the temptation to return to the law, which would be a denial of the reality of the gospel (Heb 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39). Warnings against teachers, doctrines, and practices with syncretistic tendencies are sprinkled throughout the epistles (e.g., 1 Cor 10:20; 2 Cor 11:13-15; Gal 1:6-9; 3:1-6; Col 2:8-23; 1 Tim 1:3; 6:3; 2 Pet 2:1 and 1 John 4:1-6).

When the apostle Paul preached the gospel cross-culturally in Ephesus, there was a “power encounter” resulting in the destruction of sorcery, which eventually led to an open confession (Acts 19:18-20). In addition, “a number of them who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly” (v. 19). Divination and sorcery are forbidden by God. Acts 19:18-20 indicates that a genuine conversion among the Ephesians led them to forsake this evil practice, which involved a behavioral change, identified by Hiebert as the first level or the apparent phase of conversion.  

They then moved to another level, reflected in their outward demonstration of “burning the bridges” (which would keep them from returning to sorcery or that could keep them from mixing their newfound faith with their old belief systems), by burning their scrolls which contained magical formulas reminiscent of their pre-Christian lives.

144 Moreau, “Syncretism,” EDT, 1159-1161.


Simon Magus

In some situations, however, the record of conversion appears to portray a different picture, like the narrative of the conversion of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-24. In this situation, Simon’s conversion appeared to be less than genuine as reflected in his attempt to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit so he could also sell this power and make more money. While he and his followers were amazed by the powerful acts of the apostles and were baptized, Simon’s worldview was not changed. Before coming in contact with the gospel, he was a sorcerer who held the Samarians mesmerized with his magical arts until the arrival of Philip with the message and power of the gospel of Christ. Philip’s cross-cultural ministry was a fascinating adventure accompanied by great power encounters. He proclaimed the Messiah, cast out unclean spirits, healed the paralyzed and lame, and produced great joy in the city (Acts 8:7-8). Philip’s preaching, exorcism, and healings were mutually reinforcing: The signs were not random showcases of power, as was Simon’s magic, but affirmations of the word Philip preached.

The sorcerer himself became more intrigued as he watched the believers receive the power of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by the apostles. While he and his followers were amazed by the powerful acts of the apostles and were baptized, Simon’s worldview was not changed. In Simon’s view, the great ones in the religious world used their power and authority to exalt themselves in the eyes of others. The gospel, on the other hand, exalts Jesus Christ. The human agent is set

---


in the background. When Simon offers to buy the power of the apostles, he is forcefully rejected. The gospel is incompatible with self-centered aspirations to greatness.\textsuperscript{149}

Simon’s response to this new form of power contains the words “me,” “I,” and “my.” He seeks a power that he may own. He accepts a new form but gives it an old meaning: authentic spiritual power understood as magic. . . . Simon Magus misunderstood the distinctions between the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and the power of magic. . . . Money, magic, and religion make strange bedfellows. Simon attempted to mix these three into a strange brew in order to obtain power over others.\textsuperscript{150}

Using new forms with old meanings degenerates into dual allegiance and also reveals one of the shortcomings of spontaneity when converts are baptized into the church without proper instruction in the faith.

Dual allegiance is almost inevitable with hurried baptisms, since both the cultural and worldview parameters of the new converts remain untouched or unaddressed within so short a time. The following continuum allows for a further examination of areas where Christianity might slide into popular forms of magic:

Christianity is God-centered, popular magic is self-centered; Christianity is based on submission and prayerfulness, while magic seeks to control and devise formulas to address felt needs; in Christianity, there appears to be a period of trial before victory, that is the cross before resurrection; but popular magic seeks instant success; there is genuine personal and communal commitment, organic in composition and dependent upon God’s authority, while popular magic is impersonal, lacking commitment, mechanistic and based upon human charisma.\textsuperscript{151}

Popular forms of Christianity often move into the realm of magic when the basic tenets of Christianity are misinterpreted by bypassing the cross and moving directly into a

\textsuperscript{149}Paulien, “Dealing with Syncretism in Insider Movements,” 221.

\textsuperscript{150}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{151}Hertig, “The Magical Mystery Tour: Philip Encounters Magic and Materialism in Samaria,” 108.
resurrection experience of instant success. Peter pointed out that Simon’s heart was not right with God. In other words, Simon was not yet converted at the worldview level, though he was already baptized on the basis of his public confession of Jesus as Savior.

His allegiance was not yet completely surrendered to Christ; there was still a strong attachment to his pre-conversion practice of sorcery with the monetary gains derived from it, and he was looking to continue as a sorcerer even after a so-called conversion to Christianity.

Such conduct revealed the faulty character of his faith and showed the motives that still controlled him. Before his conversion, Simon had used sorcery to bewitch the people of Samaria, giving the impression that he was a great person (Acts 8:9). His request to buy power appears to be an echo of his pre-Christian life. He was unable to detach himself from wanting to control others. He did not desire the Holy Spirit as a spiritual gift to seal his baptism, but that he might use the power to dominate others, and subsequently derive fiscal gains from it. This is dual allegiance—a mixed allegiance to his newly found God and to the gods he served prior to the time of his conversion. His was a commitment based on miraculous signs and thus inferior to true commitment to Jesus.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{152}}\text{Ibid.}\]


\[\text{\textsuperscript{154}}\text{“The Evangelization of Samaria,” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 9:358.}\]
The Colossian Believers

Dual allegiance is as old as the time God started dealing with humans in the Garden of Eden and it continues until today, with Satan constantly adjusting and contextualizing his strategies and methods. The early church was not immune to these devices of Satan. The church in Colossae had to deal with their own pre-Christian cultural and religious practices and beliefs which sought to pollute the doctrines in this church. Paul’s letter to the Colossians reflects the presence of a fertile milieu for dual allegiance. He writes to the church that was predominantly Gentile (Col 1:21-22, 27; 3:5-7) in a part of Asia where pluralism, syncretism, and dual allegiance were woven into the very fabric of life of the majority of the populace.155

These believers were apparently under intense pressure to syncretize their new Christian faith by adding elements from other traditions and teachings, including their own past religious experience. . . . Paul’s response to this threat is twofold. Negatively, he confronts the syncretistic teaching and exposes the danger of submitting to it. Positively, Colossians affirms what is central to the gospel and offers a fresh contextualization of that gospel for a new life setting.156

Arnold itemizes six characteristic features of the pre-Christian local folk belief of the Colossians which provided the context for the rise of the Colossian philosophy, a form of dual allegiance among the Colossian Christians.157

1. There was a tendency toward henotheism: a trend in Roman Asia Minor during the imperial period to ascribe supremacy to a deity in a polytheistic environment.


156 Ibid., 214, 215.

157 Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, 236-238.
Zeus and Men Tyrannos were two of the deities lifted up above the rest.

2. Another feature was an emphasis on divine intermediaries. In addition to believing in the one supreme deity who was usually seen to be transcendent and at times so far removed from the daily lives of the people, there were many intermediate deities. “This partly explains the existence of many angelos inscriptions in Asia Minor.”

3. There was a strong belief in dangerous spirits and powers—*deisidemonia*.

These were malevolent gods, goddess, spirits, and *daimones* the Colossians so dreaded and sought several ways to appease. There was also the belief in the existence of various supernatural beings that could be called upon to effect curses against agriculture, cross roads, and many parts of life including spirits and ancestors and the untimely dead who haunted and could wreak terror. Even those who are thought to be benevolent and charitable could be offended by improper or inadequate worship. “These capricious and wicked powers brought sufficient reason for concern.”

4. There was an appeal to intermediaries for protection and deliverance (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15).

5. Magic played a prominent role in their daily life.

6. There were ecstatic forms of worship including the local folk belief, the “Lydian Phrygian spirit,” which provided the best framework for understanding and


---


160 Ibid., 54.
interpreting the “Colossian philosophy.” This also helps to explain the Colossian dual allegiance which mixed the prevailing local religious impulses with Christian beliefs and practices.

Flemming points out several other problems in the church at Colossae that were causes of dual allegiance.

1. There existed a Jewish orientation toward legal ordinances (Col 2:21), regulation about eating and drinking (Col 2:16), and ritual observance of festivals and special days, including some days also tagged Sabbath (Col 2:16).\textsuperscript{161}

2. There was a devaluing of the role of Christ, who may have been seen as an Intermediary spiritual being and therefore unable to offer full deliverance from the fearsome forces that threatened peoples’ daily lives. These factors can be seen undermining the power of the gospel in light of the local religious milieu.\textsuperscript{162}


\textsuperscript{162}Flemming, Contextualization in the New Testament, 216 cf. Wilson, “Colossians and Philemon,” 54. Wilson, elaborating on Arnold’s exposition on the Colossian syncretism, points out that “another new approach has been initiated by C. E. Arnold, taking up a suggestion made long ago by A. Lukyn Williams (\textit{JTS} 10, 1909, 432): ‘there is almost no evidence for the worship of them [angels] being recognized in early times by thoughtful Jews, save indeed in connexion with exorcism and magic.’ The ‘worship of angels’ in Colossians 2:18 refers essentially to magical invocation of angels, especially for apotropaic purposes’—but surprisingly, Williams reached this conclusion without ever referring to the magical papyri, the amulets, and the lead curse tablets (Arnold, \textit{Syncretism}, 10). . . . Arnold argues that the invocation of angels, for apotropaic purposes, for incantations and love spells or in cursing, and for revelatory magic, was widespread in popular circles in the ancient world, even in Judaism. People had a sense of being a prey to hostile forces, against whom mere human power could not prevail. . . . On this view, the Colossian error lay in the invocation of angels, and possibly local pagan deities, to assist them in the face of problems of their daily living. Over against this, the author asserts emphatically the complete sufficiency of Christ.” Ibid.
Christ was perceived in Colossae as little more than an angel who could be invoked to subdue certain demons, but who was powerless when it came to certain more powerful demons.\textsuperscript{163} This low Christology was certainly a dangerous understanding of Jesus’ ability and power as God among the Colossians—demoting Christ to the role of a mediator on par with angels.\textsuperscript{164} There was also the challenge of what was known as Christian “magical” texts which demonstrated that Christianity could take the “form of [a] folk religion with syncretistic interest in making use of ritualistic power for all sort of practical purposes.”\textsuperscript{165}

In order to allay the fear of demons and evil spirits, the Colossian Christians made and wore numerous protective amulets. They felt the need to acquire additional protection from demons through mechanisms that they were familiar with from the surrounding old religions.\textsuperscript{166} They also dabbled in several magical traditions such as one identified as “Solomonic.”\textsuperscript{167} These various features of the original folk religions of the Colossians found inroads into the Christian church.

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{166} Arnold, \textit{The Colossian Syncretism}, 241.

\textsuperscript{167} The Solomonic practices produced a stream of Christianity that practiced the kind of occultic arts that were condemned by other Christians and included a compilation of Jewish magical traditions put together probably by a Greek Christian author. Arnold, \textit{The Colossian Syncretism}, 239-240.
In particular, the Colossian syncretism assumed that trusting Christ alone was not enough to deal with the vise-grip that the cosmic powers held on people. The gospel of Christ needed to be supplemented with additional “wisdom” (Colossian 2:23), with rituals and ascetic practices, and with mystical experiences in order to help people survive in a world dominated by forces beyond their control. In effect, the rival teachers were trying to “cover all the bases by paying homage to both Christ and the powers.”

In other words, the essence of the Colossian dual allegiance rested in their worldview need for supernatural power to be able to overcome, appease, or be in tune with the elemental spirits of the cosmos. And since they thought this was not attained despite their conversion to Christianity, probably due to a lack of dramatic or ecstatic or charismatic phenomenon in their congregations, they thought to supplement their religion with their pre-Christian worldview provisions for such powers. “Although the Colossian Christians had received Christ, they were tempted to follow the elementary principles of the powers alongside with Christ.”

This syncretistic position damages and poses great danger to the life of the church. First, it exaggerates the control of the supernatural powers over the Colossian Christians, and second, it drastically diminishes Christ’s lordship and might over the cosmos and the scope of the salvation he offers to the church. The Colossian philosophy spoken of by Paul represents a combination of Phrygian folk beliefs, local folk Judaism, and Christianity. It also held beliefs and engaged in practices that could be

---


described as magic or a ritualistic quest for supernatural powers. “Paul saw this
syncretistic compromise as dangerous to the health of the church because it diminished
the person of Christ and the present role he has in the church.”

**Divine Responses to Dual Allegiance**

The above stories reveal several ways God responded to dual allegiance, four of
which will be mentioned here.

1. God sent prophets such as Elijah, the unknown prophet from Judah who was
sent to warn Jeroboam as he sacrificed to the idols he made at Bethel, Jeremiah, and
others to warn his people of the consequences of living a life of dual allegiance. Ellen
White[^172] describes the ministry of the prophet who was sent to Jeroboam in this way:
“The Lord designed that those who were taking rapid steps in apostasy should be checked
in their course before it should be too late. He sent His messenger to interrupt the
idolatrous proceedings and to reveal to king and people what the outworking of this
apostasy would be.” Dual allegiance in any form and magnitude is thus revealed as a sin
and an apostasy that must be abstained from. It is also a thing that must not be taken
lightly.

2. Israel’s experience in the exile was a result of their idolatrous life as they
served God but also secretly worshiped idols. God also punished Judah for their dual
allegiance, as the following verses of Scripture reveal: “I will stretch out my hand against
Judah and against all who live in Jerusalem. I will cut off from this place every remnant

[^171]: Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 244.

of Baal, the names of the pagan and the idolatrous priests, those who bow down on the roofs to worship the starry host, those who bow down and swear by the LORD and who also swear by Molech” (Zeph 1:4, 5). Judah is here found to be swearing by both the Lord and also by Molech, a pagan god. The passage says God will stretch out his hand against them for this dual allegiance. This can mean holding back rainfall, allowing enemy armies to attack them, taking them into captivity, and allowing pestilence to attack their cities and towns.

3. Biblical authors summed up Saul’s life in terms that connote a disapproval of his dual allegiance by God. “Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD; and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse” (1 Chr 10:13, 14). This text reiterates the fact that Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord, by not keeping or obeying the word of the Lord, and by abandoning the divine pathway for knowing God’s will, opting for necromancy. God disapproves of dual allegiance.

4. God condemns dual allegiance in the Scriptures. Dual allegiance occurred despite the fact that the Lord had forbidden the practice of divination, witchcraft, casting spells, or consulting the dead among his covenant people. God warned them saying:

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or cast spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. (Deut 18:9-14)
Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:31)

These two Bible passages declare the mind of God concerning consulting mediums, diviners, shaman, traditional priests, or sorcerers. Such activities are regarded as “detestable ways of the nations,” “detestable practices,” for which God will punish the people. The New Testament is also replete with divine warnings against worshiping idols and mammon while claiming to worship God. Jesus said that it is not right to worship God and mammon (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:11). Paul’s response to the dual allegiance in Colossae informs God’s people on how dual allegiance is to be viewed theologically and also affords the church today a standard of how to handle the phenomenon within its ranks (Col 1:15-20; 2:9-15; 3:1-4).

**Summary and Conclusion**

Dual allegiance is defined in this chapter as mixing two or more belief systems in theologically untenable ways. There are examples of dual allegiances in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible from which facts about the phenomenon were gleaned. Archaeology was also briefly looked into to see what the artifacts reveal about the dualistic nature of Israel’s religion. Dual allegiance was denounced and condemned by God, since it conflicts with both the first and second commandments of God.

Several factors account for the occurrence of the phenomenon in the church today. These include the failure to contextualize the Christian faith as it crossed into other cultures as well as the failure to contextualize it today, the sad history of slavery, the displacement of humans from their homelands, and their subsequent conscription into Christianity, which served only as a veneer to cover their deeply embedded and
untouched worldviews, the powerlessness of the gospel presented to the Yoruba, a pattern of which is still followed today, the misapplication of the Seventh-day Adventist theology of mission, and other cultural and worldview factors. In chapter 3, a closer look into the culture and worldview of the Yoruba will offer more insights on why some Yoruba Adventists engage in dual allegiance.
CHAPTER 3

YORUBA CULTURE AND WORLDVIEW AND ITS ENCOUNTER WITH CHRISTIAN MISSION

Introduction

Africa has been called one of the most religious continents on earth, even before the arrival of foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam. Within the continent, the Yoruba of West Nigeria are known to be highly religious.\(^1\) Prior to the arrival of European influences in Africa and the establishment of Christian missions, Africans had indigenous religions and a way of life that has been identified by anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert and others as folk religion and traditional science.\(^2\) These represented the people’s outlook on life through which they made sense of their life and surroundings. Their religion was also their survival or coping mechanism before the arrival of Islam or Christianity and modern science in the territory. Religion and interactions with supernatural spiritual powers underlie the African worldview.\(^3\)


\(^{2}\)Hiebert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 91.

According to A. A. Moemeka, in Africa, religion is the way of life. J. S. Mbiti is of the opinion that “religion permeates into all departments of life so fully that it is not easy to isolate.” Mbiti further argues that each of the 3,000 people groups in traditional African society have a religious system of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, and priests. Lamin Sanneh postulates the idea that the rapid spread of Christianity and Islam, as well as other foreign religions in West Africa, should be seen as a function of the people’s strong religious quest rather than as a result of spiritual or religious imperialism, and neither should it be seen as a result of spiritual or religious inferiority on the part of Africans.

It can also be stated that the entire attempt of Africans to worship amounted to a search for the unknown God (Acts 17:22-31), the Desire of Nations (Hag 2:7), and the Desire of Ages whom the missionaries eventually revealed to them. The Africans’ worship before the coming of these missionaries had become perverted, as in the other parts of the world, since they also had turned to worship the creatures instead of the


6Ibid.

Creator (Rom 1:19-25). From an understanding of the great controversy meta-narrative,\(^8\) it is obvious that Satan corrupted the well-meaning intentions to worship the Creator God. The apostle Paul points out that worshipping idols or trusting in other gods amounts to an abomination and a grievous sin in the sight of God and is really the worship of the devil and demons (Rom 10:19-21).

Religion, mythology, mysticism, and superstitions played a very important role in the survival techniques of the Yoruba both before and after the arrival of the missionaries and the modern science and technology introduced by them. Unlike the modern worldview which under the strong influence of the Enlightenment has become secularized, Yoruba people view life in a holistic manner whereby they see interconnectivity and coherence within creation. The spiritual is seen as connected with the physical and vice versa, and many physical phenomena are seen to have certain spiritual causes and implications. The visible world is greatly influenced by the invisible world of gods, spirits, and ancestors. It is observed that conversion to Christianity does not necessarily mean an abandonment of the African worldview which is deeply embedded in the psychic of the Yoruba and which still exerts a great influence on their outlook, judgments, and the decisions they make in life.

This chapter studies the essential features of the Yoruba worldview and their impact on the development of the Christian faith. It will also examine how the Yoruba handle stress and difficulties, which may in turn uncover the presence or absence of dual

\(^8\)The story of the war between God and Christ on one side and the powers of Satan the devil and the fallen angels on the other; of light and darkness, good and evil and the battle which exists between these supernatural forces as demonstrated in the daily experience of humans on earth.
allegiance in the Yoruba Christian and Yoruba Adventist experience.

The importance of examining the Yoruba worldview, conversion, and relation to dual allegiance cannot be overemphasized. Hiebert is strongly of the opinion that “underlying what it means to convert to and live as a Christian in human contexts we need to examine the relationship between the Gospel and human cultures. To do so, we understand the cultures and worldviews that underlie them and our theologies.”9

Knowing the cultural traits and worldview parameters of the Yoruba will allow for the innovation of an appropriate mission theology and contextualized strategies for establishing appropriate Christianity among them, devoid of dual allegiance that ensues from a lack of contextualization, or over-contextualization, which was the mark of the nineteenth-century missionary expedition. Many Western missionaries were overconfident of their cultural heritage and saddled with the assignment to “Christianize and civilize,” they failed to yield to the counsel of “taking off their shoes and treading carefully for what they approached was holy ground” in their socialization with the Yoruba culture. As they approached their mission fields they defiled many sacred arenas of the recipient cultures, promoted tabula rasa, and meddled unnecessarily with the people’s cultural heritage, which failed to die, thus leading to dual allegiance and various forms of syncretism.

The Yoruba outlook on life, which is based on their deeply rooted religious beliefs that still contain some pre-Christian perceptions, often finds its way to the surface in times of crisis for some Christians. Today, folk Adventist Christianity is present among some Yoruba. While appearing to have been displaced by the world religions of

---

Islam and Christianity, African Traditional Religion still thrives within both of them. Officially, some African indigenous Christian churches combine elements of the pre-Christian beliefs and practices with the faith and practices of the church. Unofficially, several aspects of the traditional religion are maintained in the church with a great degree of secrecy, because such syncretism or dual allegiance is seen as sinful.

In this chapter I will take a look at the pre-Christian Yoruba worldview, using Kraft’s insights on the meaning and various other parameters of worldview as a conceptual framework. This is done with several aims in mind. First, it will enable me to decipher the reasons for the appearance of dual allegiance among the Yoruba. Second, a meaningful cross-cultural Christian witness and the development of a relevant church require an investigation of pre-Christian beliefs and practices in order to be in touch with a people’s spiritual-power needs.\(^\text{10}\) Third, although much has been written on the Yoruba religious beliefs and practices, little or nothing has been considered regarding its influence on Adventist Christianity among the Yoruba people of West Nigeria.

Fourth, Yoruba religious beliefs and practices have spread to many parts of the world such as Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad,\(^\text{11}\) and both North and South America, either in their pure form as in the worship of Yoruba deities or in their syncretistic association with other religions such as Santeria in Cuba,\(^\text{12}\) and Macumba and Cadombe in other places in

\(^\text{10}\)M. Kraft, *Understanding Spiritual Power*, 11.


the world, which combine elements of both Christianity and Yoruba traditional religion. This study will focus on literature that deals with the worldview of the Yoruba people of West Nigeria.

**A Theoretical Framework for Examining Yoruba Worldview**

This section will examine the concept of worldview, types of worldview, worldview universals, a brief summary of the functions of worldview, and some themes in the Yoruba worldview, which will hopefully allow insight into some of the causes of dual allegiance among the Yoruba.

**The Concept of Worldview**

The idea of worldview is contained in a German word, *Weltanschauung*, introduced by Emmanuel Kant and used by writers such as Kierkegaard, Engels, and Dilethey. 13 Worldview means

the point of view on the world, a perspective on things, a way of looking at the cosmos from a particular vantage point. It therefore tends to carry the connotation of being personal, dated, and private, limited in validity by its historical conditions. Even when a worldview is collective (that is shared by everyone belonging to a given nation, class, or period), it nonetheless shares in the historical individuality of that particular nation or class or period. 14

In other words, worldview is the cultural lens through which human experience is viewed. 15


*Weltanschauung* refers to the deep enduring cultural patterns of a people. It is also defined as “the fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions a group of people make about the nature of reality and which they use to order their lives.”

These are the three human dimensions psychologists deem very important. The cognitive relates to the human mind, the seat of reason, knowledge, and cravings for truth, systematic organization of thought, ability to be taught, and the ability to learn. The second, the affective, is the emotive or emotional cravings, the feelings of being loved or hated, joy, sadness, expression of joyous songs, ecstasy, and zealousness. The evaluative dimension has to do with moral codification and judgment, ethics, and what is right and wrong.

There is a relationship between these three dimensions of worldview so they must be seen as one whole, because without one, the other two are strained and impaired. All exist in a proper delicate balance, the upsetting of which reduces a person to a sub-human being. Any imbalance between these three human dimensions may lead to dual allegiance in the sense that there are human longings to have each need satisfied at all cost for life to be bearable. And if the needs are not satisfied via a particular route, humans will always seek out various other ways to have them met, either through a mixture of outlooks or different sources of power.

Worldview serves as the foundation on which people construct their explicit

---

16 Ibid., 9.
18 Ibid.
belief and value systems and the social institutions within which they live their daily lives.\textsuperscript{19} Worldview is a popular term used in different ways: It has geographical perspectives, theological perspectives, philosophical perspectives, and cultural anthropological perspectives. Missiologists emphasize the cultural anthropological perspective, although there is some overlapping between these perspectives.

A worldview may be depicted schematically as shown in Figure 1.

A Person/Group $\rightarrow$ Making assumptions $\rightarrow$ Concerning reality and $\rightarrow$ Perspectives on organizing his/their 1. Categorization
2. Person/Group
3. Causality
4. Time/Event
5. Space/Material
6. Adapting


Worldview is the deeper level of culture, the distinctive way a people define the reality which shapes their cultural allegiances and provide interpretations of the world. A people’s worldview forms basic assumptions about reality which structure cultural beliefs and behavior.\textsuperscript{20} Michael Kearney sees the worldview of a people as their way of looking at reality and consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world. It is a


\textsuperscript{20}Van Rheenen, “Worldview and Syncretism.”
people’s set of images and assumptions about the world.  

Early anthropologists placed human societies on a scale from \textit{primitive} to \textit{civilized}, from pre-logical to logical. They saw humans as essentially the same, but some were backward and some developed.  

Through further studies and observations, however, anthropologists became aware that different societies had different sets of beliefs and practices, each of which makes sense to the people who live in them. The term \textit{culture} was adopted in place of civilization, which appeared quite arrogant.  

As anthropologists observed different cultures more deeply, they discovered that below the surface of speech and behavior are beliefs and values that generate what is said and done. In time, they became aware of still deeper levels of culture that shaped how beliefs are formed—the assumptions the people make about the true nature of things, the categories they use to think, and the logic that organizes the categories into a coherent understanding of reality. These assumptions, values, and allegiances anthropologists call worldview.  

Other words used to describe worldview include ‘ethos,’ ‘zeitgeist,’ ‘cosmology,’ ‘world event,’ ‘world metaphor,’ ‘world order,’ ‘world theory,’ ‘world hypothesis,’ ‘social life-world,’ ‘root paradigms,’ ‘collective unconscious (Durkheim),’ ‘cultural unconscious,’ ‘plausibility structure,’ and ‘worldview.’  

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
22Hiebert, \textit{Transforming Worldviews}, 15.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
23Ibid.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Kraft’s understanding of worldview is also built into his understanding of culture. He sees it as the second deeper set of assumptions upon which culture thrives. Culture’s complexity lies in two areas. First, according to Kraft, is the complex structuring of each of the vast array of components of which life is made up. Language to communicate, laws and rules to regulate relationships in the society, as well as a law enforcement agent to make sure the law is obeyed. The social customs also add to the complexity of these patterns. People eat, use clothing, need shelter and pattern techniques for obtaining and maintaining these necessities. These complex cultural essentials also apply to family relationships, economics, religion, art, education, and all other aspects of the human life and they are also interrelated with each other.26

Second, it has been observed that each of these areas of cultural design consists of surface-level behavior and deep-level assumptions. The latter—assumptions—are called worldview. “This is beneath the surface of culture, usually below the level of a people’s awareness and often difficult for outsiders to discover.”27 It is very essential to understand these deeper level assumptions and values on the basis of which people generate surface-level behavior if culture and worldview are to be correctly understood and their transformation achieved.

Worldview Types

There are different types of worldviews. Van Rheenen identifies four types28 including an animistic worldview, a secular worldview, a pantheistic worldview, and a theistic worldview. An animistic perspective of reality believes that personal spiritual

26C. H. Kraft, Christianity with Power, 182.

27Ibid.

28Van Rheenen, “Worldview and Syncretism.”
beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs. In this worldview, the supreme deity is Dei Remotus, that is, God is obscured while the other small deities or gods, or orishas as the Yoruba call them, are the messengers of the supreme Deity who run the day-to-day activities for him; they are dreaded and placated with sacrifices and offerings to appease and cajole them into doing what the worshipers want.

A further examination of this type of worldview reveals the fact that it is not limited to one society or a particular group of people because its manifestation can be seen in all the other types of worldviews. It is the degree of prevalence that differs. If a spectrum of worldview types is drawn, the animistic worldview will be seen to be tilted towards more of the belief in the manifestation of supernatural spirit beings and forces than in the other types of worldviews, though this belief can also be found in them.

A secular worldview divides the world into natural and supernatural realms and focuses almost exclusively on the natural realm. “God is considered to be either non-existent or irrelevant to human affairs.”

A pantheistic worldview perceives that an impersonal, all-pervading essence, sometimes defined as “god” fills the universe. “As droplets of water merge to become a stream, then a river, and finally an ocean, so individuals can become a change of consciousness called enlightenment.”

Lastly, according to Van Rheenen, is a theistic plausibility, which presupposes that God created the heavens and the earth and continues to care for the universe. Some theists follow God’s distinctive way of salvation through Jesus Christ while others focus

\[29\] Ibid.
on submission to and honoring of Allah.

Figure 2 shows Hiebert’s frame for the analysis of worldviews. Until the introduction of the Greek Aristotelian dualism in Western societies, the medieval worldview was one which was centered upon a theistic outlook, where God was seen as the supreme ultimate reality, dominant and eternal. This purview eventually changed, with the emergence of a modern secular worldview, leading to the decline of the theistic outlook.

The bringing in of neo-Aristotelian dualistic philosophy also had a bearing on the Western worldview and radically changed this view of reality. It divided reality into two greatly unrelated realms—supernatural and natural.

Nicholas Nash opines that,

in the seventeenth century, for the first time, the “super” . . . began to connote a realm of being, a territory of existence, “outside” the world we know. With “nature” now deemed single, homogenous and self-contained, we labeled “super” that “other” world inhabited (some said) by ghosts and poltergeists, by demons, angels, and such like extraterrestrials—and by God. . . . By the end of the seventeenth century, “believing in God” . . . had become a matter of supposing that there is, outside the world we know, a large and powerful entity called “God.”

This dichotomization eventually became fixed to the point of pushing God off of center stage as modern society became almost totally secularized.

__________________________

30Ibid.

31Ibid., 143, 144.


Figure 3 shows Hiebert’s concept of the “Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” and how a very important aspect of the non-Western worldview—the unseen dimension of this world, which had been excluded from the missionary’s worldview—was not addressed in the mission fields, leading to the creation of a cultural vacuum in the life of converts to Christianity. This in turn resulted in dual allegiance as these believers seek to meet their needs for spiritual powers through their pre-conversion methods, which are usually not in line with biblical methods, and often in conflict with them.
An Overview of the Functions of Worldview

In his article on “Transforming Worldview,” which later formed the basis of his recent publication by the same title, Hiebert identifies four functions of worldview. On the cognitive level, worldview gives a rational justification for our beliefs and integrates them into a more or less unified view of reality. Second, on the level of feelings, it provides emotional security. On the evaluative level, it validates the person’s deepest cultural norms, and finally, it monitors one’s responses to culture change. Kraft deals elaborately with the question of the functions of worldview in several of his anthropological studies and writings.

---

33 Hiebert, Transforming Worldviews, 29, 30.
In addition to Hiebert’s four functions of worldview, Kraft identifies six other functions of worldview. Worldview provides a pattern in terms of which people do the following kinds of things: (1) explains aspects of life according to socially approved ways of seeing reality, which Hiebert says is done at the level of the cognitive dimension and which Brian Walsh describes as “our plausibility structures that provide answers to our ultimate questions,”34 such as Who are we? Where we come from? What are we doing here? Where are we going? What is the purpose of life? and so many other life-searching questions, (2) validates common perceptions and behavior that is on the ethical level, (3) assigns commitment priorities that help people identify what to pledge allegiance to, (4) interprets things in ways that are consistent with the rest of the society, (5) pursues life in a reasonably integrated fashion, and (6) adapts to internal and external pressure for change. Worldview also helps integrate our culture and validates deep cultural norms, which are used to evaluate experiences and choose courses of actions.35

Kraft submits a chart in his book *Christianity with Power*, expressing and contrasting Western and Hebraic paradigms of worldview, on categorization, classification and logic, person/group dynamics, cause, power, time/event and space, as well as the material sphere.36 His understanding of cause/power will be reproduced here, and juxtaposed with the Yoruba worldview, bearing in mind the strong similarities


between the Hebraic and Yoruba worldviews, while also noting the differences between them, in these five parameters of worldview.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Worldview Universals}\textsuperscript{38}

Kraft identifies several very important areas of the human life which he propounds to be dependent factors of worldview, and which he terms worldview universals.\textsuperscript{39} These enable people to deal with five basic areas of life. These are enumerated below and will further serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the Yoruba worldview. These worldview universals are as follows:

1. Every worldview provides a structure or pattern for the way people categorize or classify their perceptions of reality. According to Kraft, a people’s language provides the most obvious clue to its system of categorization, though not infrequently the linguistic classification and the logic of a people will not correspond exactly.

2. Person-Group—All people relate to the various persons and groups in their lives on the basis of their worldview assumptions concerning how they should relate to them.

3. Causality—Due to the important nature of how the Yoruba and other people groups in the world view causality, and the important bearing this has on dual allegiance, this worldview universal will be more elaborately studied in this section. All people

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 204.

\textsuperscript{38}This section is adapted mostly from C. H. Kraft’s \textit{Christianity with Power}, 183ff.

explain and relate to the various things in life that cause other things to happen on the basis of their worldview assumptions. Kraft postulates that there are three causative spheres: natural world causality, human causality, and supernatural causality. The first includes such things as weather, physical laws such as the law of gravity, heat, cold, water power, leverage, speed, etc. The second deals with power expressed by humans over the natural world, over other humans, and also over spirit beings and forces, either through sacrifices or magical formulas used to force them to carry out their biddings.

The third area, supernatural causality, addresses the idea of Supreme cause, spiritual beings, spiritual forces, ancestors, etc. “Western people pay great attention to the natural world and little if any attention to the spirit world. In many non-Western societies, the proportions seemed to be reversed. Biblical societies were much like contemporary non-Western peoples than like Western societies in this regard.”40 The difference, though, is that the primary focus in biblical societies is God, while the spirits constitute the primary focus in the two-thirds world societies, thereby leading to bondage to satanic powers.41 This fact points out an important area needing change for many non-Western people who turn to Christ. Kraft further states that it is usually easier for non-Western people both to understand and to receive God’s message directly from the biblical accounts than from Westerners. The Bible is more on their wavelength than a Western interpretation of the Bible.42

40Ibid., 198.


42C. H. Kraft, Christianity with Power, 199.
4. Another worldview universal that needs to be examined is that of time-event orientation. All people structure time and events of their lives on the basis of their worldview assumptions. Kraft states that, in the non-Western world, not infrequently the worldview focus is on the quality of an event rather than on the quantity of time “consumed” by that event. People who seem to Westerners to “have no sense of time” are often basing their attitude on greater concern for the quality of an interaction—be it that of a conversation or a public meeting—than the amount of time it takes. From their point of view, it may not be appropriate for a meeting to start until the right people are there. Nor should it end if something significant is happening. We often refer to such a focus as an “event orientation” as opposed to our own ‘time orientation.’

Kraft also adds,

Unfortunately, we Evangelicals have tended to lessen the quality of our worship in the interest of keeping the time of our meetings short. Evangelicals have a lot to learn from Pentecostals and Charismatics in the area of spending quality time in worship. And there is often a direct relationship between the quality of worship and the effective exercise of spiritual power in a community of believers.

5. Space-Material relationships—all people conceive and arrange their relationship with space and material objects on the basis of their worldview assumptions. These universal worldview principles will be studied in a quest to understand the Yoruba worldview and its influence on dual allegiance.

Table 1 presents a comparative chart of the Western, the Yoruba, and the Hebraic worldviews. Notice the very close similarities that exist between the Yoruba and the Hebraic worldviews. These similarities should have influenced the easy understanding of the gospel message by the Yoruba, but as it has been shown in this chapter, the gospel was first processed through the Western worldview, before it was then translated to the

43Ibid., 200.
44Ibid., 201.
TABLE 1
A COMPARATIVE CHART OF WESTERN, YORUBA, AND HEBRAIC WORLDVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Worldview</th>
<th>Yoruba Worldview</th>
<th>Hebraic Worldview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Incredible faith is shown in “chance.” Cause-and-effect relationships are key and limit what can happen.</td>
<td>1. Theoretically, God causes everything; however, beings and forces such as ancestors, witches and wizards, the <em>orishas</em> and other benevolent and malevolent forces are actually causes of both mishaps and blessings.</td>
<td>1. God causes everything. Example: An evil spirit from the Lord was said to have entered and tormented the disobedient Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Sam 16:14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Humans are in charge of nature through science.</td>
<td>2. God is in control, but has left the day-to-day running of everything to the deities (the <em>Orishas</em>) who are numerous and must be appeased or palliated to render whatever assistance is required. Their abilities to be efficient also depend on the type of sacrifice rendered to them.</td>
<td>2. God is in charge of everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Scientific strategy and technique will give humans total power over all things.</td>
<td>3. Strategy and techniques in the spiritual realm are the source of whatever control people may achieve via techniques. Today, due to the influence of the Western worldview, this has been complemented by the scientific methods.</td>
<td>3. Strategy and technique in the spiritual realm are the source of whatever control may achieve via techniques and they are crucial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Power over others is achieved via business, politics, and other organizations.</td>
<td>4. Power over others is achieved naturally via the social patterns ordained by the age, such that the more elderly you are the more authoritative you are; supernaturally, this can also be achieved by joining cults, acquiring spiritual or supernatural powers, by sacrifice to the deities and through the use of charms, amulets, etc.</td>
<td>4. Power over others is structured by social patterns ordained by God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

125
Table 1 — Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Worldview</th>
<th>Yoruba Worldview</th>
<th>Hebraic Worldview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. There are no invisible beings in the universe.</td>
<td>5. The universe is full of invisible beings such as malevolent and benevolent spirits, spirits of ancestors, also known as the living dead, the unborn, deities, and witchcraft which exert a tremendous influence on the life of the Yoruba.</td>
<td>5. The universe is full of invisible beings that are very powerful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Yoruba environ. This digestion and regurgitation of the gospel through the Western worldview, before its presentation to the Yoruba, eventually led to the misplacement of some very vital components, thus leading to the great lack of answers to questions relating to the middle zone as expounded by Hiebert.

**Yoruba Culture and Worldview**

This section of the study takes a brief look at the ethno-history of the Yoruba and the characteristics of their culture and worldview.

Ethno-historical Investigation of the Yoruba

The Yoruba are said to be the descendants of *Odudua*. The Yoruba, who number over 30 million, live in the south-western part of Nigeria,\(^{45}\) in parts of Togo, and

in Benin, and are one of the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria. They are also the most studied group in Africa. Jacob Olupona affirms this by stating that “the prominence of Yoruba studies in scholarly work is underscored by the prominence of their arts, music, religion, and oral literature all of which have received adequate scholarly investigation.” There is an abundance of literature on the history, culture, and the religion of the Yoruba. The fascinating nature of their culture and especially their religion had attracted several anthropologists such as John Peel, John Pemberton III, Peter Morton-William, and William R. Bascom to undertake studies on these areas of their life.

The Yoruba rank among the leaders in economics, government, religion, and artistic achievement in West Africa. “The Yoruba are not a single group, but a series of diverse people bound together by common language, dress, ritual, political system, mythology, and history.” This statement is unwarranted for it portrays the divisive nature of literature on African history by foreigners, which at times have had a disastrous consequence on the unity of African people. What else can demonstrate the oneness or the singularity of a people, if not their culture, language, dress, ritual, mythology, religion and historical origin? Obviously there has been some evolution in the Yoruba language and even in their culture, which has led to several rich dialects, but this in no way suggests that they are not one people, from the same ancestor Oduduwa.

There are three conflicting stories of origin of the Yoruba. One legend based on

46Ibid.

the holy city of Ile-Ife attributes to the city the origin of not only the Yoruba, but also that of the whole world.\textsuperscript{48} Archaeological findings from Ile-Ife\textsuperscript{49} cast the spotlight on the Ife tradition of the origin of the Yoruba and the Yoruba cultural excellence, which has impressed the world of art since the early years of this century. “The Ife bronzes and pottery, which are found in museums in Europe and America and which continue to reward archaeological excavations still in process around Ile-Ife, are the pride of the Yoruba and a revelation of their history and cultural background.”\textsuperscript{50}

A second myth is what has been dubbed the “Oduduwa myth.” In the creation myth of the origin of the Yoruba, which involves Oduduwa, an orisa, and a bird (a hen or a dove), Adegbola recounted the story as told by elders and cult leaders in Yoruba land as follows:

Two particular traditions are outstanding though they have frequently been conflated into one. Of the two, one gave prominence to Oduduwa as the first man. The other gives pride to Orunmila. In either case, the first man came down from heaven with Obatala, the agent of Olodumare (God Almighty) in the creation of man and other living creatures. . . . The Oduduwa version is part of a mythological charter of tribes and clan heads. Oduduwa was a kind of crown prince in heaven. He was sent to carve a “kingdom” for himself out of the watery waste which was then the earth. He had sixteen divinities or personified heavenly beings (orisa) as his companions and servants. . . . A variant story has it that Oduduwa contrived to do this by carrying some laterite and some pieces of iron from heaven together with a hen. On descent, he placed the iron pieces on the water and put the laterite on the pieces of iron. Solid earth was made by the hen scratching the laterite, thus spreading it. Ile-Ife is literally “the place of the spreading,” and it is still today the name of the sacred town where


\textsuperscript{49}Ile-Ife is about seventy-five kilometers from Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo, State of Nigeria, where the headquarters of the West Nigeria Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is located.

\textsuperscript{50}Bascom, \textit{The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria}, 11.
the spreading which effected the creation of the earth took place. Thus was the creation of Ife accounted for.\textsuperscript{51}

There are some points of similarities in this creation story with the biblical creation story, though a lot of dissimilarities can also be cited. For one, both traditions subscribe to the surface of the earth as being covered with water in the beginning. God, identified as \textit{Olodumare} by the Yoruba, is said to have created the earth through his son \textit{Obatala}. He molded all creatures, while \textit{Olodumare} gave the enlivening breath. The Bible states that all things were made through Jesus Christ, the son of God (John 1:4, 5).

The third myth is the migration theory, whereby Oduduwa once resided on the bank of the lower Nile in Egypt and had to migrate from there to the region where his descendants now reside. The historical evidence for this theory has been shown in the similarities that exist in the Egyptian language and the Yoruba language. In addition, certain migrations that have been historically established like that of the Kisra, which took place in the seventh century A.D.\textsuperscript{52} when the Yoruba settled around Idah and in Ekiti (both in West Nigeria) and the subsequent migrations that eventually took them to Ile-Ife, from where they further spread to establish city states and kingdoms attest to this migration theory.

There are now eight states that are predominantly Yoruba in Nigeria. These are Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo states. Outside of Nigeria today, there are also large groups of Yoruba living in Togo and the Republic of Benin in West Africa. In Nigeria, the Itshekiri of Warri are Yoruba-speaking offshoots who have been

\textsuperscript{51} Idowu, \textit{Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs}, 22-23.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
strongly influenced by the Benin culture. Yoruba traders are also found in nearly all the major market towns of West Africa. Descendants of Yoruba slaves, some of whom can still speak the Yoruba language, are found in Sierra Leone where they are known as Aku, in Cuba, where they are known as Lucumi, and in Brazil where they are known as Nago.

During the four centuries of slave trade, when Yoruba territory was known as the Slave Coast, uncounted numbers of Yoruba were carried to the Americas where their descendants preserved Yoruba traditions. In several parts of the Caribbean and South America, Yoruba religion has combined with Christianity, resulting in Yoruba deities being identified with Catholic saints, in new religions such as Santeria, Macumba, etc.

Characteristics of Yoruba Worldview

The following are some of the characteristics of Yoruba worldview. They include the belief in supernatural beings and forces, their understanding of the human nature, causality, the quest to know the controlling power of their life through divination, the desire to acquire power to control life, their belief and understanding of angels and demons, and the perception of salvation, death, hell, and paradise.

Belief in Spiritual Beings and Forces

One of the presuppositions of the Yoruba worldview is the belief in the existence of supernatural spiritual beings and forces, as well as the existence and the interconnectivity of the seen and the unseen realities and worlds. There is an interface between the divine and human, the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular, the

53 Hollos, “Yoruba,” 593.
visible and the invisible. The Supreme Being, Olodumare or Olorun, gods and divinities, spirits, and ancestors, also referred to as the “living dead,” affect the living. Several religious scholars of African origin such as Idowu and Mbiti, and also non-African writers such as Parrinder, have written extensively on the nature and estate of Olodumare and the concept of the Supreme Being among the Yoruba people. These writers have been accused of wrongfully presenting Olodumare as the Christian God or the Muslim Allah. They have also presented Eshu as Satan or the devil. John A. I. Bewaji, in an article, identifies such attempts as “wrong and misleading.”

Nevertheless, he agrees with the submissions of these scholars about the existence and the belief in a Supreme Being, called Olodumare among the Yoruba people before the coming of missionaries. An indigenous Yoruba has a belief in the existence of a self-existent being who is believed to be responsible for creation and the sustenance of heaven and earth, of men and women. He also made the divinities and spirits who are believed to be his functionaries in the theocratic world as well as the intermediaries


55 Idowu, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs, vii.

56 Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, 36-38.


59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.
between mankind and the self-existing being.  

At the top of the Yoruba religious ranking is this Supreme Being *Olodumare.*

Next are the associates of God known as divinities, gods, or deities. A very important observation to be made about *Olodumare* is that while other Yoruba deities are represented with various images, the Supreme Being, or the “high God,” *Olodumare* has no such imagery or any visual representations and does not have shrines. This is because he is perceived to be too great and awesome to be pictured or formed in concrete terms. Scholars have identified some attributes of this Supreme Being that are similar to the Christian God including omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, benevolence, and creatorship. *Olodumare* is also considered to be a king and judge, immortal, and holy.

In Yoruba traditional beliefs, *Olodumare* has a son, called *Obatala* or *Orisa nla,* who himself is a god and who was given the authority and ability to co-create with

________________________

64 Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites,* 4.
66 Ibid.
67 Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs,* 38-47.
Olodumare. It is believed that only Olodumare has the ability to give life, but the role of Orisa nla was to mold the bodily structure of human beings. This idea of Olodumare having a son and who co-created with him sounds reminiscent of the biblical representation of God and his Son, Jesus Christ, who co-created with him.

In another work, Idowu identifies Olodumare as unique, real, controller, and One. According to Mbiti, Olodumare, in addition to those attributes listed by Idowu, has other attributes such as transcendence, immanence, self-existence, pre-eminence, greatness, causal powers, immateriality, mysteriousness, unity, eternity, plurality, mercifulness, kindness, love, faithfulness, and goodness. Awolalu opines that some foreign anthropologists have had and demonstrated a limited knowledge, if not outright ignorance, of the Yoruba perception of the Supreme Being, Olodumare. They have jumped to the conclusion that Olodumare is ultra transcendent, has withdrawn from the daily life of the Yoruba people after creating the heavens and the earth and humanity, and that he left the duty of maintenance and sustenance in the hands of the orisas.

This view appears to be similar to the deistic opinion that God is far away from his creation, has little or no interest in their well-being, except for the roles of the orisas.

---


69 Ibid., 22, 23.

70 Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 149-165.


72 Awolalu, Yoruba Beliefs, 5, 6.
But, 

far from Olodumare being a distant conception to the people, the average Yoruba uses the name, often in proverbs, prayers and wishes, promises, in planning for the future, in attempts to clear himself of accusations, in reminding his opponent of his duty to speak the truth, and the like. Indeed, for all general purposes, it is more natural to invoke the name of Olorun than that of orisa.\(^{73}\)

These attributes of Olodumare—derived from how the Yoruba perceived God or the Supreme Being and accessed by anthropologists—are reminiscent of the attributes of the God of the Bible, even though other perceptions of him might fall short of the Judeo-Christian understandings. Olodumare is not only just Deus remotus but very much “one essential factor by which the life and belief of the Yoruba cohere and have sustenance since he is so urgently real.”\(^{74}\) Several other names of God depict the various roles he is expected to perform or is perceived as performing in human lives.\(^{75}\) He is seen as Olorun, the owner of heavens, and Eleda, the creator. The title Alaaye, the living one, is why Yoruba say A ki igbo iku Olodumare (We never hear of the death of Olodumare). Other titles include Elemi, the owner of life, and Olojo oni, the owner or controller of this day or of daily happenings.\(^{76}\) The other spiritual beings, which are the orisas or the lesser gods who are seen by the Yoruba as the messengers of Olodumare and the functions they perform, underscore the existential nature of Yoruba religious beliefs, outlook, and practices. A summary of the role of the orisa will be developed later under causality as reflected in Yoruba worldview.

\(^{73}\)Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs*, 202.

\(^{74}\)Ibid.

\(^{75}\)Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 10-12.
Yoruba Understanding of Human Nature

According to the Yoruba traditional worldview, a human being is comprised of five components.\(^7\) Idowu, a prominent expositor of Yoruba religion and philosophy, agrees with this proposition, pointing out that these components are closely related but not identical.\(^8\) The first component is the *ara* (body), which is the physical frame of both bones and flesh and the skin that covers them, and which is shared with other animal life.

The second constituent part is *okan* (heart), the material heart that a human being has in common with lower animals. But this material *okan* is a real representation of another *okan* which is essentially immaterial and invisible.\(^9\) This, according to the Yoruba, is the seat of intelligence, thought, action, emotion, and psychic energy.\(^8\) “*Okan* is also used to denote that part of man called *iye* (mind, mentality or rationality).”\(^9\) The Yoruba use *okan* in the following ways: *Okan re ti lo* (He is buried in thought); *Okan mi so pe yio wa* (My mind tells me that he will come; I think he will come).

The third component is *emi* which is variously translated as life, spirit, or being.

\(^{76}\) Ibid.


\(^{78}\) Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs*, 169ff.

\(^{79}\) A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”

\(^{80}\) Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs*, 170.

\(^{81}\) A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”
It is the vital principle, the seat of life.\(^{82}\) According to traditional beliefs among the Yoruba, it is the Supreme Being, *Olodumare*, who gives *emi* to human beings. Hence he is called *Elemii*\(^{83}\) (Owner of life; Owner of spirit). The Yoruba use *emi* in the following ways to show that it can be translated “life” or “spirit”: *Mo fe gba emi re* (I want to take his life); *O pa adanu emi re* (He lost his life); *Emi gun un* (He is possessed by a spirit); *Emi buruku ba lee* (An evil spirit descended upon him).\(^{84}\)

The fourth element is *eemi* (breath). This is closely associated with *emi* (life).\(^{85}\) At death, when a person ceases to breathe, it means that his *emi* has gone.\(^{86}\) Idowu is of the opinion that “*emi* is closely associated with the breath and the whole mechanism of breathing is its most expressive manifestation. But although people breathe showing that *emi* is in them, the breath (*eemi*) is not *emi* (life). *Emi* is causative of breath and so it is the “breather,” that which breathes in man.”\(^{87}\)

The fifth component is the real essence of being, the personality-soul which is considered a complex concept in Yoruba philosophical construction and worldview. In Yoruba religious understanding, a person is made up of several components, each of which can exist independently of the other. This perception becomes clearer in the concept of *ori*, which appears to tally with the concept of the soul propounded by the

\(^{82}\) Awolalu and Dopamu, *West Africa Traditional Religion*, 178-180.

\(^{83}\) Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 11.

\(^{84}\) A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”

\(^{85}\) Ibid.

\(^{86}\) Awolalu and Dopamu, *West Africa Traditional Religion*, 181.
Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle.

**Causality in Yoruba Worldview**

A causal survey of ethno-medical literature confirms the place of religion in disease etiology among the Yoruba. In ethnographic accounts, divinities, witches, wizards, failure to offer sacrifice, and breaking of taboos are strong causal factors. The Yoruba believe in three types of causality: natural, emotional, and supernatural causality. These will be briefly presented with more emphasis on supernatural causality.

Natural causality

Naturally caused diseases and mishaps are explained in impersonal terms whereby harmful elements enter the human system through food, drink, and air. Western medicine also attributes diseases to pathogenic microbes such as bacteria, fungi, protozoa, viruses, and others. Before the advent of Western medicine among the Yoruba, they also gave naturalistic explanations for certain diseases, especially those that attacked their farmland and animals. Hence such sayings as, “kokoro to nje efo ara efo lowa,” meaning, the pathogen that causes diseases to the plant resides in the plant. This is a saying that actually implies that the enemies of a person are members of his house, but it is surely based on the Yoruba’s observation of their diseased crops on their farmland and

---

87 Idowu, *Olodumare*, 169.

their conclusion that crop diseases are caused by pathogens. In the same vein is the saying, “Epa n para re loun n paja,” which means that the parasites that inhabit the dog end up killing themselves. These sayings capture the reality of a parasitic or naturalistic causality among the Yoruba both before and after the coming of Western education.

It is contended that when all scientific methods of diagnosis fail and proper medical care has been given and nothing is found wrong despite the persistence of symptoms of ill health, the illness is considered to have a supernatural cause. At this point, anxiety, psychological, social, and economical imbalances ensue. It is also at this point that traditional medicine is more relevant in probing into the unknown world of the spirits in order to ascertain the causal factors of illness. When these types of situations occur in the life of a Christian, there is dual allegiance because this pathway for ascertaining the causes of such illnesses and solutions to them, which is through divination, is condemned by the God of the Bible. It also amounts to tapping into energy from the elemental spirits of the world instead of trusting and waiting on the Lord upon whom Christians are to depend.

Emotional causality

There are illnesses that affect human beings as a result of unpleasant events in one’s life leading to emotional stress, anxiety, depression, obesity, hypertension, hormonal imbalance, and others. Such problems can produce damage to some organs under the control of the endocrine and the body’s autoimmune systems. Certain life

89 Jegede, “From Disease Etiology to Disease Treatment,” 176.

90 Ibid., 177.
experiences such as divorce, unemployment, job loss, bereavement, and violence can lead to emotionally induced diseases.

Supernatural causality

These are diseases and misfortunes that are caused intentionally by the active intervention of an agent, such as a ghost, ancestor, evil spirit, a witch, a deity, or a powerful supernatural being.\textsuperscript{91} Abimbola, a Yoruba scholar, has shown that Yoruba cosmology is a profound and coherent thought system which is codified in the \textit{Ifa} literary corpus. The Yoruba cosmology, according to Abimbola, is full of good and evil supernatural powers that seek to influence the Yoruba life, both for good or for evil.

Abimbola stated that the good powers are the \textit{orisa} while the bad powers are the powers of \textit{Ajogun}. Though there are many types of evil in this world yet in the \textit{Ifa} divination system they are subsumed into only four, and are listed in order of severity: \textit{iku} (death), \textit{arun} (sickness), \textit{ofo} (loss), and \textit{ejo} (fighting or court cases).\textsuperscript{92}

Jegede gives examples of supernatural causality among the Yoruba as follows:

\textit{Ogun} the iron and strength divinity is believed to be for accident, cut, wounds which human suffers from the use of iron material. \ldots \textit{Soponna}, a particularly fearsome divinity in charge of smallpox and air is earth retribution which revolves into different forms of diseases. This divinity is believed to be one of the causal factors of sexually transmitted diseases such as: syphilis, gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS, as well as influenza, malaria, boils and malignant rashes. \ldots \textit{Egbe} (the spiritually or heavenly peer group) afflicts children with disease by flogging, sometimes the effect of flogging are seen on the child’s body. Most skin diseases including leprosy are believed to be caused by \textit{Oрисa}, the divinity of creation. \textit{Oрисa} can also afflict

\textsuperscript{91}Ibid., 171.

\textsuperscript{92}Wande Abimbola, \textit{An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1976), 120-123, quoted in Jegede, “From Disease Etiology to Disease Treatment,” 169, 170.
offenders with hunch back or paralysis. Among the female Orisa, Yemoja, Oya and Osun, prominent nature deities are pressing examples. Yemoja, a river goddess causes stomach ache, and Oya of the river Niger can afflict people with throat disease which may be fatal. Osun may kill by causing an offender to drown.93

The Yoruba lump misfortunes and diseases together. They are all dis-ease, or discomfort, something that upsets the idea and state of shalom within their essence. In Yoruba etiological categorization, human sickness or misfortune result from what Robert Voeks calls “human disequilibrium with the world of the spirit or dysfunctioning relationship between divinities and their mortal followers.”94 As has been presented in table 1, containing the comparative overview of the similarities and differences between the Western, Yoruba, and Hebraic worldviews, these divinities can cause conditions of instability when not worshiped in the prescribed ways, as a punishment.

Witchcraft. Another powerfully dreaded causality agent among the Yoruba are witches. In societies with an animistic worldview, such as traditional Africa worldviews including the Yoruba, people believe that there are personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces such as the evil forces of witchcraft, the evil eye, and magic which have a tremendous influence on individual and community life.95 This is similar to the biblical perception that there are good and evil beings and forces. The manipulation

93 Jegede, “From Disease Etiology to Disease Treatment,” 172.
95 Van Rheenen, Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts, 20.
of these spiritual powers or forces to achieve an end is described as magic. In a traditional African setting, magic is involved in all of human existence, sometimes in the routine transactions with the spirits that are part of life, and sometimes in applications such as healing and divination, but also as a force for evil and destruction. In this context, including among the Yoruba, the negative use of magic is usually called witchcraft.

According to the Yoruba understanding of witches, there are three kinds. These are white witches (Aje fun fun), black witches (Aje dudu), and good and bad witches (Ayunrin). According to odu Ifa (Ifa corpus)-Osa Meji, white witches exist purposely for good. They manipulate all the positive aspects of life to bring peace, prosperity, long life, and good health to humanity. Marvelous as this thought might be, these white witches are powerless in the presence of chaos, war, hunger, and disease in the world today. Aje dudu are the wicked malevolent witches who exist only to wreak havoc, pain, confusion, depression, and sorrows on humans. According to Jegede,

They can make women temporarily infertile or permanently barren, cause overdue pregnancy and miscarriage, make child delivery difficult, induce frightening dreams and sleeplessness and as well cause temporary or permanent sterility for man. They can also afflict their victims with cholera, stroke, hypertension, kwashiorkor, lack of progress in business and cause a person to dry up by draining his or her blood mysteriously.

---


97 Ibid.

98 Jegede, “From Disease Etiology to Disease Treatment,” 175.

99 Ibid.
Ayunrin, the good and bad witches, according to the Yoruba, are believed to have the ability to manipulate all positive and negative forces of life to bless husbands, children, friends, and relatives to make them enjoy life, but they can also do otherwise. They can be appeased through the use of sacrifice and medicine. I cannot disprove these submissions, since allusions are made to some of these kinds of experiences by interviewees in the course of my own research among Yoruba Adventists.

Among the Yoruba of West Africa like the Shona of South Africa, witches are mostly women flying about at night through birds, especially night jars. The definition given to a witch in the dictionary is “a woman who was supposed to have magic powers especially one who used them to do evil. Witches are said to be helped by devils and evil spirits.” This definition of a witch appears to be a skeptical representation of the phenomenon that is so widely believed among the Yoruba and among other African and non-African societies of the world.

The use of the words “supposed” and “are said” in the definition of a witch, according to the dictionary cited above, insinuates and indicates that the idea is a conjecture. This definition can be identified as a product of Enlightenment thinking and the secularization process that took place during the eighteenth century, and which

---


101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.
resulted in a worldview that demystified and demythologized beliefs in the supernatural through the development of a naturalistic outlook on issues of life. \(^{103}\)

However, Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou point out that it is counterproductive to begin with the question of whether witches exist. Observers from cultures that do not believe in witches may hold whatever theory they want, but to many people, witchcraft is a stark reality. \(^{104}\) In the Yoruba worldview, which is quite similar to that of the biblical worldview, there are evil spirits, demons, and their human agents—witches and wizards—which are dreaded and hated, and are quick to be lynched at the slightest indication of involvement in witchcraft. It is believed that both witches and sorcerers use spiritual power to inflict harm on others. \(^{105}\) A witchcraft attack or soul attack has a wide variety of symptoms: anxiety, which includes fear; the symptoms of a nervous breakdown; and even death. A study of Nigerian students studying in England who suffered from nervous breakdowns revealed that over 90 percent explained the cause of their illness as witchcraft. \(^{106}\)

Idowu, a Yoruba anthropologist, writes about witches:

Their main purpose is to work havoc on other human beings; and the operation of spirits upon spirits, that is, it is the ethereal bodies of the victims that are attacked, extracted, and devoured; and this is what is meant when it is said that witches have sucked the entire blood of the victim. Thus, in case of witches or their victims, spirits

\(^{103}\) C. H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 27.

\(^{104}\) Hiebert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 150.

\(^{105}\) Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ*, 162.

meet with spirits, spirits operate on spirits, while the actual bodies lie “asleep” in their homes.\(^\text{107}\)

This perception of what witches can do among the Yoruba drives the fear of both the known and the unknown, which often results in seeking out various means of protection, either through a devoted Christian life and faith and power encounters or through supplementing the Christian beliefs and practices with charms, amulets, and waistbands with the aim of warding off the evil powers of witches, wizards, and sorcerers who might want to inflict pain and sorrow upon them out of malice, jealousy, and hatred. Such a search for protection outside of the God of the Bible leads to dual allegiance.

**The concept of ori.** The term *ori* is complex in the Yoruba understanding of the nature of man.\(^\text{108}\) Idowu deduces that the Yoruba conceive of the human soul as the *ori*—the “inner person”—or the “personality soul.”\(^\text{109}\) Eric Morton sees *ori* in a slightly different way. It is the “inner spiritual head” in human beings or “personal destiny,” not mind or souls as these terms are used in the West. But *ori* can mean the enabling power that represents the potential that life contains.\(^\text{110}\) *Ori* is the Yoruba word for the physical “head.” To the Yoruba, however, the physical, visible *ori* is a symbol of *ori-inu*—“the

---


\(^{109}\)Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs*, 170.

internal head” or “the inner person.” This is seen as the very essence of personality. In the belief of the Yoruba, it is this ori that rules, controls, and guides the “life” and activities of the person.\textsuperscript{111} In some ways the ori, rather than the emi, is the seat of the intellect. Ori is also related to a person’s destiny as the element which predetermines success or failure in the world.\textsuperscript{112}

The relationship between ara, emi, and ori is illustrated in the Ifa verse in which the body is molded by Orisanla (Obatala), the emi is provided by Olorun, and the ori is provided by Ajala. Ajala the potter is said to be a careless and corrupt orisa. Those who pay him get a good ori and those who do not must take a chance, as many of the ori in his store are faulty. A man with a good ori is able to achieve success in the world provided he can ward off the dangers of witchcraft, sorcery, and other attacks by araiye.\textsuperscript{113}

The ori is thus given or chosen by an individual before his birth, creating limits within which success in the world can be expected, and within which emi is able to act.\textsuperscript{114} Scholars in the Yoruba traditional religion and worldview appear to hold to different opinions about the real essence of the ori or its source. Dopamu is of the view that the ori is given by Olodumare and equalizes it with the soul as projected in Plato and Aristotle’s philosophical constructions.\textsuperscript{115} Eric Morton denies this correlation, and

\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{111}] Idowu, \textit{Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs}, 170.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{114}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{115}] A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”
\end{enumerate}
perceives the *ori* as one’s personal destiny, the blueprint of what an individual lives out on earth.\textsuperscript{116}

Furthermore, the word *ori*, which is used to describe the personality soul, is also used to describe a person’s double (alter ego) over-soul or guardian spirit.\textsuperscript{117} Awolalu further elaborates on the meaning of this term (*ori*) in Yoruba daily life as follows:

When a Yoruba says *Ori mi ba mi se e* (my head has enabled me to do it) he is referring to the fact that it is the alter ego that has helped him. If a person miraculously escapes from harm, he will say *ori mi yo mi* (my ori has saved me). If on the other hand, a strong boy maltreats a weaker one, and the former, in an attempt to run away, dashes his toe against something, the latter will say ‘*ori mi lo mu e yen*’ (it is my head that has caught you). In other words it is my head that has passed judgment on you. If an enemy plans some mischief against a person, and the mischief is miscarried, people will say of the fortunate person, ‘*ori re ko gbabodi*’ (his ori does not compromise with the evil one; that is, his ori wards off evil).\textsuperscript{118}

From these statements it is obvious that *ori* refers to a different personality—a person’s double in human makeup that is capable of warding off evil, guiding and guarding a person, and retaliating where needed. Comparatively, biblical representations of the components of a human show wholeness, unity of entity and personality; no allusion is made to such a concept as a personality double. Genesis 2:7 states that God molded Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. The soul is the real person and there is no reference to a personality double in the Bible.

*Ayammo, the concept of predestination and causality.* The connection between

\textsuperscript{116}Morton, “Comparing Yoruba and Western Aesthetics.”

\textsuperscript{117}Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 9.

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid.
ori and causality rests in the idea of Ayanmo (ipin ori, kadara)\textsuperscript{119} which means destiny in Yoruba belief. This underscores the fatalistic nature of the Yoruba worldview. R. Hallgreen attests to this view, stating that the Yoruba believe that fate is determined by the person’s selection of his or her “head” (basic character) prior to birth and the irresistible interventions of God and the spirits.\textsuperscript{120} This is also well described within the Ifa spiritual ontology. The human ori is that part of the human inner makeup that contains the ayanmo or blueprint for their incarnation.\textsuperscript{121} Segun Gbadegesin describes the concept of ayanmo as follows:

An important Yoruba myth with a philosophical significance is the Ayanmo myth which indicates belief in predestination. The belief in predestination is expressed in the concept of ori, and it seems to suggest that the Yoruba have some anxiety about human helplessness in certain situations. However, it also expresses the people’s conviction that human existence has meaning; that human beings are not on a purposeless mission in this world; that they have a mission to fulfill, and a message to deliver—which is the meaning of their existence—and that this mission has been fully endorsed by the creator. Whatever is [or is not] done by them should therefore be explained by appeal to this original mission. The concept of ori expresses this idea.\textsuperscript{122}

In the formulations of this myth, the Yoruba have described three types or three stages of the process by which ayanmo is attained. It is believed that before a person is

\textsuperscript{119}A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”


born into the world, his/her ori will appear before Olodumare to choose a destiny. In the works of Idowu, Awolalu, and Dopamu and Awolalu, it is argued that a person obtains his destiny in one of three ways—Akunleyan (that which is chosen kneeling), Akunlegba (that which is received kneeling), or Ayanmo (that which is affixed to one).\textsuperscript{123} Idowu refers to this understanding among the Yoruba as the trimorphous conception of destiny—the sustaining motif that the person who is coming into the world must kneel before the High Almighty who is Olodumare for its conferment. Whatever is thus conferred is unalterable and becomes one’s portion throughout life and is what the person goes into the world to fulfill.\textsuperscript{124}

Looking at the expressions by which the reception of destiny is described among the Yoruba, it is reasonable to interpret them as three stages of one process. Dopamu suggests that if these expressions are explained as different ways of receiving destiny, it might create confusion in the process because an individual may choose one single way to the detriment of another.\textsuperscript{125} He explains the three steps as progressive stages in the same process of ayanmo. In the first stage, ori kneels before Olodumare and chooses his destiny. This is called akunleyan. The second stage is akunlegba, where ori receives that which has been chosen while kneeling. The third stage is ayanmo where that which

\textsuperscript{123}A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”

\textsuperscript{124}Idowu, \textit{Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs}, 174.

\textsuperscript{125}A. P. Dopamu, “Continuity and Change.”
has been chosen while kneeling and received while kneeling is affixed as one’s destiny to live out on earth.\textsuperscript{126}

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Yoruba have one of the most sophisticated African cultures south of the Sahara\textsuperscript{127} and one of the most coherent religious and philosophical constructions, which is very hard to remove from the Yoruba outlook on life even after their conversion to Christianity or Islam. This chapter has examined an aspect of their understanding of the nature of humanity which is made of several components, including the \textit{ara} (the body) and the \textit{emi} (the spirit). In addition to these two components, a person also has \textit{eemi}, the breath which is the evidence of the presence of the \textit{emi} in the \textit{ara}.

Finally, there is the \textit{ori}—a person’s \textit{enikeji} or the “personality double” or “counterpart”—also described as a semi-split entity or one’s “guardian angel.” It is this aspect which determines the trajectory or the destiny of one’s life. The importance of \textit{ori} among the Yoruba cannot be overemphasized, as it is reflected in their various conceptions; linguistic, proverbial constructions; and folk wisdom. It is the \textit{ori} that is the depository of the destiny chosen to be lived out on earth before one is born.

From literature, it is gathered that \textit{ori} is worshiped among the Yoruba. Furthermore, \textit{ori} could be considered as a personal god, a sort of guardian angel who will accompany each person for life, once chosen. This conception of the meaning of \textit{ori}, and its role in the life of the Yoruba as it relates to \textit{ayanmo} (destiny), has a strong bearing on

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{127} Hans Witte, \textit{Ifa and Esu: Iconography of Order and Disorder} (Soest, Holland: Kunsthandel Luttik, 1984), 5.
matters of dual allegiance after a person’s conversion to Christianity. *Ija* is believed to be *Eleri-Ipin*—witness of the destiny that is embedded in one’s *ori*. He was there in heaven when one’s *ayanmo* was being chosen kneeling (*akunleyan*), received kneeling (*akunlegba*), and when what had been chosen and received kneeling was affixed (*ayanmo*). People forgot all those processes during transit to the physical world. But *Ija* does not and therefore during critical times, when faced with problems and confusion, the diviner is sought to find out what is happening and how to resolve it. A traditional Yoruba would also take a newborn child to the diviner to find out what the child’s destiny is, so the parents can be appropriately informed about how to train and guide it in life.

**Controlling Powers and Divination**

Exploring the subject of Yoruba worldview without touching on *Ija* divination and the oracular corpus leaves the discussion incomplete. The use of oracles and divination was at the center of Yoruba religion and worldview before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. The term divination refers to a broad range of mechanical practices designed to show diviners the unknown. These include tossing sticks, looking at the reflection of candles in amber drops, gazing into crystal balls, reading tarot cards, looking at chicken entrails, watching ripples on water,\(^{128}\) and, among the Yoruba, tossing sacred palm nuts or cowries. There are several types of divination, depending on the various materials and techniques used for its practice. Some of these are aeromancy—divination by observing the ripples in water; alectryomancy—the observation of rosters

\(^{128}\)Hiëbert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 183.
in a circle; geomancy—reading cracks in dry mud; necromancy—communicating with the dead (1 Sam 28:7; Isa 8:19); and kleromancy—casting lots (Judg 20; Josh 7; 1 Sam 10:13, 23-24).  

The description of casting lots provided by Hiebert et al. is reminiscent of the techniques adopted among the Yoruba for Ifa divination, whereby cowries or sixteen sacred palm nuts are cast on a special board known as Opon Ifa to determine which section of the Odu Ifa or Ifa oracle to consult.  

S. A. Adewale describes Ifa as the geomantic form of divination connected with the cult of Orunmila, one of the major divinities of the Yoruba traditional religion. He either rightly or wrongfully compares it to the use of the Urim and Thummim in the Old Testament times through which the priests determined the will of God for the nation of Israel. He added that it was the Yoruba’s way of ascertaining the will of Olodumare before the arrival of Christianity or Islam to their nation.  

The subject of divination and how to relate to it as Christians seems to be unclear as one reads certain Bible passages. For example, Joseph in Genesis had a golden cup he used for divination (Gen 44:5); the disciples cast lots to know who was to replace Judas Iscariot among the apostles after he had betrayed the Lord and had killed himself (Acts 1:26). The following Bible passage adds another critical dimension to this ongoing discussion.

---

129 Ibid.


discussion on divination; Mic 3: 5-7, 11 says:

Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God. The head thereof judge for reward, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? None evil can come upon us.

Though the specific nature of Ifa oracles will not really be presented in this study, allusions will be made to its importance for the Yoruba worldview, both before the coming of Christianity to their territory, as well as among those who still claim to be purely traditionalists today and among those who have accepted other religions, but who still visit the babalawo (literally “father of secrets” or mysteries), as the diviners and traditional priests among Yoruba are known. Several comprehensive works have been done on the Ifa oracle corpus, such as the works of F. Sowande and William Bascom, to mention a couple of them. These works have reduced the Yoruba Ifa oral corpus to complete and comprehensive written texts.

Before the arrival of Christian and Muslim missionaries among the Yoruba, the Ifa priests and healers wielded a powerful influence over the Yoruba. They were consulted for several purposes and at different times. Staewen contends that many Yoruba, who are still walking in the traditional way of the Yoruba culture, visit the

---


babalawo regularly to consult Ifa, the oracle, which is believed to be the voice of the gods and ancestors.\textsuperscript{134} But Christians and Muslims are not left out in such visitations.\textsuperscript{135}

To underscore this idea, a website article is cited below as follows:

At the level of the individual, however, traditional beliefs are more tenacious. For many people, there is nothing inconsistent about combining traditional rites at home with church or mosque attendance, though Christian and Muslim leaders preach against it. The Ifa diviner or Babalawo is still an important source of help and advice, though he now shares his clientele with Muslim diviners and Christian Aladura prophets. The dividing line between “traditional” and Christian or Muslim beliefs and practices is often difficult to draw.\textsuperscript{136}

As stated above, many Christians and Muslims consult with the babalawo despite the fact that their leaders preach against such practices and often publicly denounce it. Evidence abounds in literature as well as in daily experiences where Christian leaders themselves are not free from mixing their faith with consultation with diviners. They do these things in search of power to perform miracles and wonders so they can attract more members and consequently more money and probably fame in the name of God.

**Reasons for Consultation with the Babalawo**

Several reasons are alluded to for the consultations with the babalawo. Kraft refers to the idea of “felt needs”\textsuperscript{137} in his book *Christianity with Power*. For example, when hungry, a person experiences the need for food. When unable to pay the bills, he or she desires money. When lonely, a person feels the need for companionship. Fear of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{134}Staewen, *Ifa: African God Speaks*, 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{135}Ibid., ix.
\end{itemize}
 losing power through some magical means is a major concern that may drive a person to the babalawo for consultations with Ifa. Witches and witchcraft play a very important role as the causes of misfortunes—sickness, diseases, poverty, and failure in life, which lead to fear, and a quest to seek for various ways to protect oneself from such attacks and misfortunes. This problem of fear occupies the minds within the Yoruba population, whether traditional or not. Everybody is also viewed as an enemy, both inside the family or outside, and everybody is able to harm the power of another person by the use of bad magical power. This eventually drives people to the babalawo in search of protection from the perceived and apparent threats to their life.

This unfortunately spills over into Christian life, depending on the way the gospel was presented to the Yoruba. Witchcraft can be thrown overboard, denied, or swept under the carpet, but this does not solve the problem. Also, some Christians are so fearful to the point of paralysis, thus living a faithless life, in spite of the claim to conversion. The appropriate stance, however, is not to deny or to be overtly exited and fearful of witchcraft, but to acknowledge the problem, identify what it really is—evil forces, agents of Satan—and also to claim the power of Jesus Christ who has overcome the world and has defeated these agencies.

As Staewen describes it, the Yoruba believe that everybody is capable of performing practices such as a malicious look, a curse, and cutting through footprints, for

---

137C. H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 34.

example. In these cases of “simple magic,” one uses one’s own power to disturb the power of an enemy. For a great magical attack one needs the help of a witch, and a witch uses the power of a spirit conjured up and begged to delegate part of its power. These bad works of magic, also called “bad medicine,” may provoke death or at least sickness, bad fortune, accident, or loss of money. The arsenal of magical “weapons” to hurt enemies is believed to be immense. Staewen also points out that every babalawo interviewed reports an increasing search for protection and security and is the main reason for the consultation of the Ifa.¹³⁹

Another very important reason for which Yoruba visit the diviner is to ascertain the future of a newly born child in order to know the will of Olodumare. The Yoruba believe that people’s fate is sealed by Olodumare before coming into the world. The people concerned do not remember what their allotted fate is on earth, but Orunmila who was present when the fate was allotted, according to Yoruba mythology, knows what the circumstances are and can therefore advise them how to rectify it whenever possible.¹⁴⁰ This is why Orunmila is called Eleri Ipin, meaning the “Witness of Destiny.”¹⁴¹ In addition, it is Orunmila through the Ifa who interprets the wishes of Olodumare to mankind and who decides what sacrifice to offer on any given occasion. This is usually the course taken in homes that still follow the traditional way of life. The herbalist or

¹³⁹Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁰Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, 23.

¹⁴¹Ibid.
diviner, through the arts of divination, helps to ascertain the Ifa oracle which should be checked and recited to be able to achieve this purpose.\textsuperscript{142}

In the same vein, Dopamu and Awolalu wrote:

There [at the gate between heaven and earth] the destiny is doubly and finally sealed, and man is born into the world. But he forgets everything about his destiny. It is his ori, guardian angel or counterpart that knows all about his destiny, and therefore guides him throughout life. But the Yoruba believes that there is always the oracle divinity, Orunmila, who is present when man’s destiny is sealed before the Deity. He also knows all about man’s destiny, and he can always put man in line with regard to his duties and obligations, what to do and what to avoid, so that all may be well with him.\textsuperscript{143}

This perception poses some very interesting questions when one examines this Yoruba belief and mythology in line with biblical interpretation. One cannot but wonder whether the practice is not syncretistic. Also the position of Ifa in the whole discussion also poses other questions. Why, for example, did the missionaries and the indigenous clerics who translated the Bible into the Yoruba language agree or accept Olodumare, the Yoruba’s supreme deity, as equivalent or the functional substitute for Yahweh, the Most High God, while the Yoruba method of accessing him was rejected as satanic? Could this biblical interpretation be justly accepted as contextualization and not syncretism or dual allegiance? Or should this not be viewed as an outstanding statement, a further confirmation of the idea that all nations of the earth had a revelation of the true God before the coming of Christian missionaries with their own version of the gospel? What are the implications of such an idea?


\textsuperscript{143}Awolalu and Dopamu, \textit{West Africa Traditional Religion,} 178.
This can be explained in two contradictory ways. One way suggests that
*Olodumare* is the same God who has been in touch with his creatures, including the
Yoruba, regardless of the ways people have used to identify his purposes and plan for
them. And as the author of Hebrews pointed out, this same God has spoken with
mankind through his Son Jesus Christ necessitating a discontinuity in the use of all other
previous channels. A second explanation is to see the *Ifa* revelations as satanic mind
tricks to delude people prior to the coming of the revelation of God through Judeo-
Christianity, and so must be rejected as altogether false.

Both ideas have positive and negative implications. If the first position is correct,
it would mean ascribing to the *Ifa* and such revelations that are rightfully theirs—the
Almighty God, Creator, and Sustainer of the universe has been in touch with the Yoruba
and has revealed his truth to them, while the Judeo-Christian revelation is the more
perfect and ultimate revelation of God, in the life, ministry, and redemptive death and
resurrection of Jesus Christ. This view would mean that the people who translated the
Bible into Yoruba, like Samuel Ajayi Crowther, had a truthful grasp of both the African
Traditional Religion as well as the Christian religious linguistic dynamics in their
translation and transmission of the Bible. On the other hand, if the *Ifa* revelation of the
Yoruba traditional religion, which has been shown to have prepared the Yoruba for the
acceptance of Christianity, is seen as completely satanic and an evil manipulation of
people by the devil, then the adoption of Yoruba terms for the names of God must be
seen as syncretistic and tending towards dual allegiance.

However, God has been active in the nations of the earth before the arrival of
Christianity (Rom 1; Heb 1:1). After the arrival of that fuller light, it would be pagan
leading to a split-level Christianity to return to that which was only a dim reflection of what has been clearly manifested. After the greater light it is necessary to remove and completely dissociate with whatever might be reminiscent of the worship of the elemental spirits of the world. The cultural vacuum thus created must of necessity be occupied with an appropriate functional substitute or another practice that is dynamically equivalent to the discarded one, otherwise, dual allegiance results.

A third reason for which the diviner is consulted is for various kinds of medicines prepared for good health, protection from evil, blessings, love portions, and prosperity. Staewen defines “medicine” as the materialized form of power, which can be made in the form of waistbands, amulets, necklaces, etc.\textsuperscript{144} This meaning of medicine allows a spirit, an orisha or Olorun himself, to delegate a part of his power into this material, a process which occurs during the performance of a prescribed sacrifice, as stipulated by Ifa. The incantations during preparation invoke the spirit or god. If Ifa agrees or accepts the sacrifice so rendered, the power of the addressee enters the ingredients or ashes of the burnt sacrifice. Now they are powerful and may be used for the treatment of a client of Ifa or of a sick person, or may be wrapped into a little package to carry as protection around the neck or on the arm or on the wrist.\textsuperscript{145}

The importance of the ongoing discussion cannot be overemphasized. For one thing, consultation with Ifa diviners constitutes one of the major forms that some Yoruba Adventists engage in, leading to dual allegiance. There is always the quest for a

\textsuperscript{144}Staewen, Ifa, 9.

\textsuperscript{145}Ibid.
knowledge of the cause of a mishap, a desire to know what lies ahead, a desire to know what steps to take, and the direction to follow in life as one travels into uncharted waters. Several situations in the Bible can attest to this quest, even among those chosen by God to be his people, both in the Old and New Testaments, thus underscoring the genuineness of these felt needs. The Urim and Thummim of the priestly vestures in the Old Testament served this purpose. When Isaac’s wife Rebecca was pregnant and was troubled, the Scriptures say she inquired of the Lord. She was told that there were two nations in her womb and that the senior would serve the junior. The question arises that since the priesthood was not yet established and this was at the beginning of the nation through which the true God revealed himself to the world, from whom did Rebecca inquire of the Lord? In the New Testament a replacement was sought for Judas Iscariot, the Scripture says that the disciples cast lots. How was this done?

The Yoruba are driven by several fears, both real and perceived, based on their worldview. They dread the power of witches and wizard as well as the wrath of ancestors. They also have various felt needs which they long to satisfy before they can have shalom and peace of mind. The traditionalists among them visit the diviner or Babalawo, as they are known among the Yoruba, regularly. When converted to Christianity, these worldview needs are not met in the kind of Christianity that was preached and is still being preached among Yoruba Adventists today, so many continue to visit the diviners and herbalists for directions and in search of solutions to various problems they encounter in life.

Many of these Christian patrons of the babalawo do not see anything wrong or inconsistent in such a dual allegiance. Others, who see and acknowledge the
contradictions, still visit the babalawo, due to the powerlessness they feel in the kind of Christianity they know. Adventists are not exempt from such situations. An understanding of the Yoruba cosmology may provide further enlightenment as to why, in spite of the claim of conversion to Christ, some Yoruba Adventists still consult with the diviners and use charms, enchantments, and amulets leading to dual allegiance.

**Power to Control Life**

Like all human beings, the Yoruba have felt needs that they long to have satisfied. Staewen presents an elaborate list and explanation of the Yoruba felt needs which appear to drive their quest in life for power.

Power is all important in life. Power is to be healthy and strong; power is the fertility of a woman to get many children, and sexual potency of a man to beget them. Power is realized in the fertility of the ground and the animals, too, but power is also the success in trading, the augmentation of riches. Power is to live in harmony with the larger family and one’s elders, “to have a good name” amongst one’s relatives. Power is to receive a chief-title in the community of the village or town. Finally power is to live in happiness here and in harmony with the ancestors and gods, and this will say: to live in harmony with the oracle of Ifa, too. To get power, to increase power, to experience power happily, to protect power against attacks of enemies and jealous people—all those are the intentions of a Yoruba man or woman during their lives.  

These intentions are necessary, according to the Yoruba, because power is not given to human beings in a quantity that stays the same during a lifetime. Power is given to all beings by Olodumare the Creator, but taking part in it is possible only in the order of creation. This implies that in the belief of Yoruba, power is given by Olodumare at first to the orisha, then by the orisha to the ancestors of the Yoruba families, and from the ancestors the power makes its way through the eldest of each large family into its

\[^{146}\text{Ibid., 5, 6.}\]
living members, “climbing down” from each generation to the one below, from parents to children, from each owner to his property, his farm, and his animals, and into the plants, trees, and fruit.\textsuperscript{147}

One of the ways the Yoruba seek to get power is to consult the \textit{Ifa} through the diviner, who eventually tells them what sacrifice to offer in order to acquire the power they so desperately covet for their survival. This is in addition to respecting elders and the order of the family by worshiping, by creating and developing his own small family, by performing a trade or other work well, by occupying oneself with the problems of the community, and by receiving honor and respect.\textsuperscript{148} Unfortunately, this authentic depiction of the Yoruba’s quest for power fails to be met by the kind of Christianity preached by Adventist witnesses. Secular solutions which fall short of satisfying these felt needs are proffered to them. Hence, there is the appearance of dual allegiance among Yoruba Christians, including Adventists, whether or not solutions are found to meet those needs. This calls for a more balanced and wholistic approach to mission among the Yoruba, so that divine solutions offered in God’s word will be resorted to instead of seeking after the elemental spirits of the earth.

\textbf{Angels and Demons: The Concept of the Messengers of \textit{Olodumare}}

Yoruba traditional religion has no conception of angels as messengers of \textit{Olodumare} similar to what is known in Christianity or Islam, but the \textit{orisas} are seen as deities or lesser gods carrying out the volitions of the High God and are seen to function

\textsuperscript{147}Ibid.
much like the angels of Christianity and Islam.\textsuperscript{149} For example, \textit{Obatala} is seen as the divinity sent by \textit{Olodumare} to create the world, as already discussed in an earlier part of this dissertation. \textit{Ogun}, another \textit{orisha} in Yoruba mythology, is seen as the master artist who puts finishing touches on the creative works of \textit{Obatala}, who is believed to mold the human features before the reception of the enlivening breath that comes from \textit{Olodumare}.\textsuperscript{150}

\textit{Eshu}, the most misunderstood divinity of the Yoruba (sometimes equated with the biblical devil or Satan), is well portrayed in Yoruba beliefs as the messenger of \textit{Olodumare} who is in charge of accepting sacrifices rendered to \textit{Olodumare}. Idowu equates \textit{Eshu} and his role, according to the Yoruba construction to the Satan of Job, where he is portrayed as a messenger of God and has the office of trying people’s sincerity and putting their religion to the proof.\textsuperscript{151} It is believed among the \textit{babalawos} that \textit{Eshu} was created to be the right-hand divinity to \textit{Orunmila}. It is \textit{Eshu}’s duty to run errands for \textit{Orunmila}; he must attend to him and act under his orders.\textsuperscript{152}

Idowu further describes the role of \textit{Eshu} as a messenger of \textit{Olodumare} in conjunction with the work of \textit{Orunmila} as follows:

\begin{quote}

\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{148}\textit{Ibid.}, 8.


\textsuperscript{150} Idowu, \textit{Olodumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs}, 87.

\textsuperscript{151}\textit{Ibid.}, 80.

\textsuperscript{152}\textit{Ibid.}
To Orunmila is assigned the duty of hearing the voice of Olodumare and declaring his will to the world; but whenever Orunmila’s declaration is not heeded, it is the duty of Esu to bring some calamities by way of punishment to the recalcitrant. In return for the services which Esu gives Orunmila, Orunmila feeds him. But whenever he is not satisfied with the feeding, he takes it upon himself to spoil the work of Orunmila.\(^{153}\)

As a minister of *Olodumare*, *Eshu* is said to be the inspector of worship and sacrifices, as well as the one who prescribes the type of sacrifices and rituals to be rendered by the devotees to the various *orishas* who oversee specific areas of life.\(^{154}\)

A very important observation which needs to be reiterated in the ongoing investigation is the fact that in the Yoruba worldview there is no such thing as a devil that is fixed on doing evil all the time,\(^{155}\) as is conceptualized in Christianity or Islam. In the Yoruba religion, there is no such dualism. There is not a strict separation between the good and the evil. This is because it is believed that nothing is definitely good or bad. No human being is definitely lost. All things and all human beings are able to change their quality. For that reason, the Yoruba family is much more tolerant and patient with a wayward member than is a European family.\(^{156}\)

This thought has great potential for mission among the Yoruba—the idea of the possibility of change. When appropriately ministered to and well directed from the truth of God’s word, the Yoruba can become truly converted and changed. Even power, the great gift of *Olodumare*, is not defined as good for every occasion for the same power

\(^{153}\)Ibid., 87.


\(^{156}\)Ibid.
can be used to produce both good and evil works. This appears very plausible, especially when examined in the light of passages where God is said to send plagues upon Egyptians or where “an evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul,” due to his disobedience to God’s commands (1 Sam 16:14; Exod 7). The weakness in such a perception is that it denies the obvious cosmological polarization and struggles that are evident in the world as well as the bitter rivalry in human life between light and darkness, God and Satan.

Perceptions of Salvation

Salvation is said to be the ultimate purpose of religions—a liberation that happens in the midst of daily life.\textsuperscript{157} Peter McKenzie in his book presents various observations documented in diaries of both indigenous as well as foreign missionaries as they worked among the Yoruba to spread Christianity. The descriptions of the encounters reveal how the missionaries perceived the Yoruba traditional religion and also how the Yoruba viewed and related to the advancing religion in their territory.

Paul Hiebert describes the various kinds of salvation for followers of folk religion in various societies.\textsuperscript{158} The Yoruba, as in other African societies, value a strong group sense, and the violation of relational norms leads to a sense of shame on the part of individuals and groups because they failed their community. In this view of morality, salvation is restoration of right relationships among members of the community—the living and the living dead. When the community sins, repentance, forgiveness, and


\textsuperscript{158}Hiebert et al., \textit{Understanding Folk Religion}, 201.
reconciliation must involve all members of the community and not just individuals.\textsuperscript{159} At times it is the theological norms of the society that have been broken, and in this situation, sin is defined not in social but in religious terms—as living in disobedience to the will and commands of God. Violation of divine commands often leads to a sense of fear. Salvation, in this context, is reconciliation with God and restoration of the cosmic moral order. Often this involves sacrifices and rites of submission to the divine law.

Among the Yoruba of the nineteenth century, and even among those who still adhere to the traditional way of life today, there is no formal soteriology.\textsuperscript{160} What the Olorisha (adherers of orishas or deities) regarded as saving or liberation comes out of concrete life instances. It is an existential approach to salvation, and also the raison d’être of all their sacrifices and supplications. McKenzie examines salvation among the Yoruba by taking cognizance of three main aspects of salvation: savior figures, benefits of salvation, and the way of salvation.

Salvation figures include Sango, Ifa-Orunmila, ori, and the Olugbala of the new religion.\textsuperscript{161} Sango and Orunmila are some of the divinities of the Yoruba who are seen as savior figures. Ori is the soul or “personality double” of the individual, and Olugbala means savior, and is reminiscent of the influence of Christianity on the traditionalists, to whom it would not be a strange thing to add to one’s pantheon due to one’s polytheistic inclinations.

---

\textsuperscript{159}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{160}McKenzie, \textit{Hail Orisha!} 525.

\textsuperscript{161}Ibid.
James White, an *Egba* (a subtribe of the Yoruba) pastor at Otta, a town in this subdivision, in 1868 reported the claim of a *babalawo* that the *Ifa* is the savior of the world and “the medium of communication between God and man.”\(^{162}\) In the same account *Sango* is praised by an *Olorisha* (one who worships *orisha*) for protection and who is acquainted with and feels for his poverty. It is also a common saying today among the Yoruba that *ori yo mi*, meaning that my “head” has saved me.

The benefits of salvation according to the Yoruba include good rainfall, fertility of their farmland and their animals, a sense of well-being, life, warding off of bad dreams, recovery from illness, protection of children, and help for their women in childbirth. In other words, if their ways are right with the *orishas*, it is obvious that the *orisha* will help them to be able to attain prosperity in all their endeavors. They will be protected from anyone or anything that could cause them harm. This is a major part of the Yoruba view of salvation. The way of salvation to the Yoruba traditionalists is by works. It is a religion of accumulation of merit in order to be acceptable to the *orishas* who are the representatives of *Olodumare*. Salvation is to carry out the requirements (mostly sacrifices) of the *orisha* through divination and possession of the *Olorisha* by the deity.\(^{163}\)

**Death, Heaven, and Hell**

To the Yoruba, death closes the door to the physical, visible, bodily existence of a person and opens another door to a new life. An aged one, therefore, does not face death

\(^{162}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{163}\) Idowu, *OloDumare, God in Yoruba Beliefs*, 80.
as a coward. His bravery is stalwart. In Yoruba belief, there are categories of death—both good death and bad death. A good death concerns those who live to a ripe old age, and full funerary rites are accorded such people. A bad death includes those caused by “anti-wickedness” divinities (that is, retributive deities such as Sango, the deity of thunder; Sopona, the deity of smallpox; and Ogun, the deity of iron), those who die young, and those who die childless.

To understand the Yoruba perception of heaven and hell, it is necessary to view their understanding of the phenomenon of death and what happens after death. According to Dopamu, the Yoruba believe that the human soul begins its journey in heaven, where it chooses its destiny on its knees in the front of Olodumare; it then inhabits the human body on earth and finally returns to Olodumare its Maker at death to give account of all that has been done on the earth, again kneeling before Olodumare. Awolalu and Dopamu, two popular names in the study of Yoruba traditional religion, have made this observation concerning death: “People believe that life on earth is not interminable. They hold the view that sooner or later, the inevitable phenomenon called death will come upon man, who is only a sojourner on God’s earth. No matter how long a person lives, death must come as a necessary end.”

The Yoruba, as with many societies of the world, believe in the immortality of the soul, which is conceptualized as the ori. At death, the ara (body) returns to the earth

---

164 A. P. Dopamu, “Change and Continuity.”
165 Ibid.
166 Awolalu, Yoruba Beliefs, 58.
from which it was made and the soul returns to *Olodumare*, the Maker, where it is judged and sent to the *orun rere* (good heaven) or the *orun apaadi* (the heaven of the potsherds) or the *orun buruku* (bad heaven or hell).\(^{168}\) The good heaven is also known as *orun baba eni* (the heaven of one’s father or of one’s ancestors). Hell is seen as the heaven of potsherd possibly because of the great fire which is used in burning pottery when pots and other cooking utensils are made from clay. This analogy is carried into the Yoruba’s construction of the teaching on the judgment that befalls those who have not lived rightly on earth, and is used to depict the magnitude of the sorrow and pain they may suffer in the world to come.

Those who have lived rightly and who have been acquitted by *Olodumare* have the opportunity of going to the heaven of the fathers, reuniting with one’s ancestors, and continuing another existence. According to Awolalu,

> The idea is that the heaven of the fathers is divided into various countries, towns, and villages where different groups of people live together as on earth. At the end of the post mortem judgment, the good person is allowed to go to the particular part occupied by his or her own people. Thus life goes on as it is here. They wear good clothes, eat good food and can be reincarnated and reborn into the family. . . . But if one is condemned, one goes to the heaven of potsherds where one suffers with the wicked. Such a soul is not allowed to reunite with the ancestors. When it is released at last, it does not have the chance of living the normal life, but is condemned to wander about in lonely places, to eat useless and inedible food and sometimes to be reincarnated in lower animals or birds.\(^{169}\)

Several familiar themes reminiscent of Platonism, Aristotle, Christianity, Buddhism, and even Hinduism can be seen in the above beliefs of the Yoruba conception.

\(^{167}\) Awolalu and Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, 229.

\(^{168}\) Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 58.

\(^{169}\) Ibid., 59.
of the eschaton of man’s life and the journey afterward. For one thing, the idea of the final judgment at death is accepted by many Christian denominations, even though others believe the soul sleeps at death and is resurrected for judgment at the second coming of Christ, when he comes with his rewards to give to every person according to his deeds on earth. The eastern religions—Hinduism and Buddhism—teach reincarnation as conceptualized by the Yoruba. The idea of suffering for a time in the heaven of potsherds after which one is released also sounds similar to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory before one’s subsequent admission into paradise.

There are also differences between what the Yoruba think about the nature of the afterlife and the biblical revelation on the subject. The Bible reveals a universal family life in which there will not be any boundaries and all people will live together as one universal family of love under the reign of Christ the Lord and Savior. In summary, the Yoruba understand life as both change and continuity whereby the dead are not actually dead, but move to the rank and status of ancestors if they have lived rightly, well and old enough on earth to become such. They become ancestors on the basis of the merits accumulated or good works done on earth.\textsuperscript{170}

**Dynamism and Adaptability**

A people’s culture and worldview change as they come in contact and interact with other cultures. One of the characteristics of the Yoruba worldview is its strong adaptive properties. This underscores the dynamic and progressive nature of worldviews, which can change by adding one value or another to its essence and removing others in

\textsuperscript{170}Ibid., 58.
the course of its emergence. Wole Soyinka, a prominent Yoruba author and Nobel Laureate in Literature who remains a traditionalist, opines that

traditional religion is not only accommodating, it is liberating, and this seems logical, because whenever a new phenomenon impinged on the consciousness of the Yoruba – whether a historical event, a technological or scientific encounter – they do not bring down the barriers – close the doors. They say: Let us look at this phenomenon and see what we have that corresponds to it in our own tradition that is a kind of analogue to this experience. And sure enough, they go to Ifa and they examine the corpus of proverbs and sayings; and they look even into their, let’s say, agricultural practices or the observation of their calendar. Somewhere within that religion they will find some kind of approximate interpretation of that event. They do not consider it a hostile experience. That is why the corpus of Ifa is constantly reinforced and augmented, even from the history of other religions with which Ifa comes into contact. You have Ifa verses which deal with Islam; you have Ifa verses which deal with Christianity. Yoruba religion attunes itself and accommodates the unknown very readily; unlike Islam, because they did not see this in the Koran – therefore it does not exist. The last prophet was Mohammed, anybody who comes after this is a fake. And Christianity! The Roman Catholics: until today do not cope with the experience and reality of abortion! They just shut the wall firmly against it. They fail to address the real problems of it; they refuse to adjust any of their tenets.

It is in light of this constant augmentation and reinforcement that the various concepts, such as that of Ela, a soteriological personification of the son of Olodumare as found in its traditional folk stories, and oral tradition, such as those in the Ifa corpus, can be understood. The nineteenth-century missionaries met this mythology at the inception of their missionary endeavor among the Yoruba. The story of Ela the son of Olodumare is reminiscent of the story of Christ and suggests a starting point in an effective African presentation of Jesus’ messianic conception.  


Thus far in this chapter, a strong conceptual framework has been established for understanding the phenomenon of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. Dual allegiance was explored and its ramifications defined in chapter 2 of the dissertation. The first part of this chapter has provided an in-depth study of the Yoruba culture and worldview, which allows further understanding of dual allegiance among those who converted to the Adventist faith. In the next section, I will investigate the historical encounter of the Yoruba with Christian mission, how they encountered with the Christian faith, and how conversion occurred among them.

Yoruba Encounter with Christian Mission

The investigation of how the Yoruba came into contact and socialized with Christianity serves the purpose of answering the first research question that was asked to guide the research. “How was Christianity first presented to the Yoruba?” The section on conversion and worldview change presented later in this chapter lays the foundation for understanding and answering the second research question, “How do the Yoruba experience conversion from African Traditional Religion to Christianity? The third research question is, “In what ways do contemporary Yoruba Adventists describe and address the challenges they face in moving from traditional religion to a Christian experience that is biblically faithful and culturally appropriate? This question will be answered through data gathered from field research.

First Encounter with Missionaries

Tracing the historical trajectory of the encounter of the Yoruba with Christianity can be appropriately done by examining the overall encounter of Africans as a whole
with the religion and its European promulgators. In this connection, three stages of meetings can be identified. The first encounter of Africans with Christianity is what has been termed Christian Antiquity in the northern half of Africa (A.D. 62-1500). During this period, Christianity was limited to the countries north of the Sahara including the Horn of Africa that is North Africa, Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia. Even before this time, however, the Gospel of Matthew indicates that the parents of Jesus escaped to Egypt for the safety of Jesus who was being hunted down by Herod the Roman governor.

The first known African to come into contact with Jesus in his adult life was Simon from Cyrene (according to the Gospel of Mark). After Jesus’ trial he was led to the place of crucifixion. On the way, Simon was compelled to bear Jesus’ cross behind him. Cyrenia was a Roman province in Libya.

In Acts 8:25-40, Luke tells the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch who held great authority in the palace of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. The eunuch “had charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem to worship” (Acts 8:27). Lamin Sanneh opines that the official was probably from the renowned kingdom of Meroe. “According to a tradition presented by the church historian Eusebius, writing in the early fourth century, the name of this ‘Ethiopian’ official was Judich.” According to the story in Acts, Philip was directed to meet Judich on the way to Gaza as he returned home.

---


174 Ibid., 21.


after worshiping in Jerusalem. Philip found him reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet, a passage which expounded on the experience of the suffering Messiah. Philip explained the passage to him and, due to his conviction, Judich was baptized and went on his way, while Philip was miraculously taken from his presence.

Although no document exists today to inform us about the role Judich may have played in introducing Christianity to Africa, history tells us that Meroe grew to be a prosperous and flourishing Christian kingdom in the Upper Nile valley, lasting several centuries.\textsuperscript{177} Another interesting fact is that many, perhaps most, of the seminal theologians of the first Christian centuries, such as Origen, the first Christian theologian in the modern sense of the word and the founder of systematic theology, and three African lawyers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, who laid the foundations for Western theology with Roman law belonged to the African continent.\textsuperscript{178}

Possible Encounter in Egypt

This segment of the history of the Christian Church in Egypt and North Africa has been included in this study because one of the theories of Yoruba origin is tied to Egypt. According to this theory, Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba, migrated from Egypt to flee the Islamic persecution, probably in the seventh century, to settle in Ile-Ife. Many educated Yoruba accept this view, which is also supported by theories relating to the similarities in the languages of the two peoples.\textsuperscript{179} This tradition holds that Lamurudu,

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{178} Walls, \textit{The Cross-Cultural Process}, 87.

the grandfather or probably the great grandfather (many generations removed) of Oduduwa, lived in Egypt and worshiped idols until the Jihad and that he was killed during one such encounter with the jihadists. Instead of converting to Islam, Oduduwa decided to migrate to Ile-Ife, in West Nigeria, from where his descendants spread to occupy most of west Nigeria and other parts of West Africa.

There are three distinguishable stages in Egyptian Christianity in which each of the three different ethnic groups played a dominant role: Jews (A.D. 100), Hellenists (A.D. 200), and Coptic (A.D. 300).\textsuperscript{180} The most likely of these three groups to have influenced Oduduwa would have been the Coptic. This is because by the seventh century (precisely by A.D. 640), Egypt had been conquered by the Arabic jihadists and in the chaos of this invasion “the Greek and Hellenized Christians fled with their Patriarch, backed by the Emperor, some went to the side of the invaders, or were conscripted into Islam, while some resisted with great perseverance.”\textsuperscript{181}

A strong Hellenistic influence, especially the Platoic philosophy of the immortality of the soul, the concept of the spirit world, ensoulment, and the idea of destiny\textsuperscript{182} can all be clearly identified in the Yoruba Ifa divination corpus, with Ifa or Orunmila featuring prominently as Eleri Ipin or the “witness of destiny,” who knows what destiny all have chosen and is believed to be able to disclose this when consulted.

\textsuperscript{180}Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, 21.


through the babalawo-Ifa diviners. This is one of the main reasons why the Yoruba, including some Adventists, visit the diviner to ascertain what their choice of destiny was and to rectify mishaps in their life. The traditional Yoruba also visit the diviner on the eighth day after a child is born to enquire about its destiny.

During this period of suspected encounter of the Yoruba with Christianity, there is no historical account of any direct contact between Oduduwa and his Yoruba descendants with Christianity. Nevertheless, a very important Ifa corpus tells about a salvific personality that is surprisingly reminiscent of the christological essence called Ela. Ela in Yoruba means Savior, or one who saves. According to Abogunrin, this Yoruba salvific figure was the only son of Olodumare—the Deity. When Satan polluted the six planets above the earth, it was Ela who pleaded with Olodumare to give Satan a last chance to repent by allowing him to live on earth, the last of the seven planets created by God. But Satan polluted the earth, as he did with the other six. Olodumare then sent Ela to the world to rescue it from Satan. Ela went about doing good. But Satan connived with men to lay false charges against Ela and Ela was consequently killed on Friday. He rose on Sunday, the third day. God threw down a chain and Ela rode triumphantly back to heaven, the seventh planet. The Ifa priests believe that the earth will not know peace until Ela returns.

He further adds:

The concept of Ela among the Yoruba is also close to the idea of the Logos in John’s gospel. One of the 256 chapters of Ifa, the sacred [oral], scriptures of the Yoruba is devoted to Ela. This has been there for centuries before the advent of Christianity in the 19th century. In fact three of the seven week days; ojo Eti (Friday), which literally means, the day of blockage or being locked, reminiscent of death and being buried; ojo Abameta (Saturday) or literally the day of the three fathers, or the three


184 Ibid.
resolutions; and ojo Aiku (Sunday) or literally the day of resurrection or the day of immortality, are named after this event.\textsuperscript{185}

Since the \textit{Ifa} chapter \textit{Ela} had been one of the 256 chapters of \textit{Ifa} corpus for centuries before the arrival of Christian missionaries to Yoruba land, a plausible explanation for this is Oduduwa’s encounter with the Christian gospel, either through Jewish, Greek, or Coptic Christianity while in Egypt before his migration to where his Yoruba descendants are concentrated today. Though it has been stated that \textit{Ela} cannot completely be said to match with the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth,\textsuperscript{186} there are a lot of similarities in both their lives, personalities, ministries, deaths, the concept of resurrection, ascension, and subsequent return to the earth in the end. Islamic Jihadists eventually brought an end to the vitality of the Christian church in North Africa, thereby ending the hope of evangelizing the hinterland through missionaries from there.

Second Encounter with Missionaries

A second possible encounter of the Yoruba with Christianity was during the era of Christianity in the ancient African kingdoms (1400-1800).\textsuperscript{187} Sanneh places this encounter between 1471-1703 and calls it the period of frustration because the close European identity with the gospel posed a serious barrier to its spread and acceptance among the peoples of West Africa, including the Yoruba.\textsuperscript{188} Also, the encounter during

\textsuperscript{185}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{186}Eunice Oluwaseun Abogunrin, “An Analogous Study of the Atoning Death of Jesus Christ and Deaths of African Heroes,” in Abogunrin et al., 103-104.

\textsuperscript{187}Baur, \textit{2000 Years of Christianity in Africa}, 8.

\textsuperscript{188}Sanneh, \textit{West African Christianity}, 53.
this period was driven both by commercial and military impulses. If there was any
encounter between the Yoruba during this period with Christian mission, it was most
likely to have been an indirect encounter, since no historical document exists to show that
missionaries of any denomination or order worked among them during this time.
Nevertheless, there are a lot of historical data showing the encounters of missionaries
with other West African people with whom the Yoruba were constantly in contact, either
as enemies or as allies.

A. F. C. Ryder of the department of History at the University of Ibadan describes
some of the features of Christian mission during this period:

The Christianity the Portuguese sought to propagate was the Catholic variety,
developed in the culture of Western Europe. More particularly—especially from the
time of the reformation—it embodied the cultural values of the Iberian peninsula
(Spain and Portugal), in many respects the most dynamic and dogmatic in sixteenth
century Europe. Not only did a Portuguese believe implicitly in the universal value
and relevance of his faith, he also visualized that faith exclusively in terms of his own
society. Conversion meant more than the acceptance of certain articles of faith; it
implied too the adoption of a particular pattern of daily life. Thus, the task which the
rulers of Portugal and their missionary agents set themselves was to transform great
areas of the African world into faithful copies of their own.189

According to Ryder, the Portuguese decided to present a Christianity which would
be indifferent to the prevailing culture and customs of the hosts, and make sure that the
Christianity transported to the area would be one patterned after their own in their
homeland. Such a resolution and practice naturally ensued from the concept of tabula
rasa, which sees nothing worth considering in the recipient cultures as a starting point for
the planting of the gospel seeds. This attitude started a chain reaction, resulting in the

creation of the cultural vacuum, and subsequently, dual allegiance during crisis.

And so, when the Portuguese arrived in the mission lands, Ryder further submits that

Portuguese missionary endeavor scored its most lasting successes in those regions where Portuguese settlement and administration provided a solid foundation. This achievement is seen most clearly in the Atlantic islands: Cape Verde Islands, Sao Tome, and Principe. . . . Portuguese cultural traits remained dominant. In settlements such as these, Christianity appeared not as an isolated phenomenon, but as an integral part of Western European culture transplanted whole to its new habitat. The most influential class in the community was of Christian European origin, and political power rested securely in the hands of the Portuguese government. Therefore there was every incentive for non-Christians to conform in religion to Portuguese ways and wishes. And authority, religious and secular, was there to encourage, coerce and watch him.¹⁹⁰

During this period of mission in the regions adjacent to the Yoruba, Christianity was associated with high social status and prestige. The Portuguese were in power both in the secular and religious sphere of the colonies, and to become a Christian for several reasons apart from genuine faith was fashionable. A quest for economic privileges, prestige, political power, and other flimsy reasons motivated many Africans to accept the Portuguese way of life, rather than a desire to become a follower of Christ. Conversion, according to Ryder, during this period “implied too the adoption of a particular pattern of daily life,” the European lifestyle, which unfortunately bordered on tabula rasa, which did not contextualize the Christian faith to the cultural specificities of the hosts.

Two groups of people who were very close neighbors and who may have had distant relationships with the Yoruba had direct encounters with Christian missionaries during this era. These were the people of the little Itshekiri kingdom of Warri and the

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 2.
Edos of the Benin kingdom. The Itshekiri speak a dialect of Yoruba. Christianity was introduced into the kingdom of Benin by a group of Augustinian monks led by Francisco a Mater Dei, who acquired great authority there. This is thought to have occurred between 1571 and 1574. The Oba (sovereign ruler) of Benin and his people, however, rejected Christianity at that point.

Baur points out that “while the kings of Benin City remained strongly adherents to their indigenous religion and rejected any missionary attempt, the young dynasty of Warri tried to assert its independence through contacts with the Portuguese.” In 1570 the Olu (king) of Warri invited Augustinian missionaries from Sao Tome and had his crown prince baptized Sebastiao. During his own reign, Sebastiao personally instructed his people. He instituted solemn processions that were still going on in the nineteenth century. He sent his son Domingos to be educated in Portugal, from where he returned with a European wife instead of becoming a priest according to his father’s wish. Thus the Catholic tradition of the rulers of Warri was established and continued with a few interruptions until 1807. But the new religion did not spread beyond the court. In 1620 the bishop of Sao Tome remarked that “true Christianity is almost wholly confirmed to the king and the prince; the rest call themselves Christians to please the king. They take their children to baptism with the greatest reluctance, believing that a baptized child will die immediately.”


193 Ibid.
From these historical submissions, conversion to Christianity during this period was not due to spiritual conviction but was entered into for political and economic reasons. The *Olu* of Warri, for example, sought connections with the Augustinian missionaries so as to assert his independence from the surrounding kingdoms such as Benin and Oyo, which were more powerful. With this union he was assured of gun powder and the military support via logistics training and other needed support. Such conversions were usually incomplete, and the Christian faith, if there was any, was held side by side with the old pagan outlook and worship. The old practices were usually done in secret, hidden from the view of the European missionaries. In some cases, such dual allegiance was openly observed where pagan sculptures and rituals are boldly incorporated into the worship structure of the church.195

Missionary work during this period was almost a total failure and it never reached the Yoruba. Neither did it make a lasting impression upon the Edos or the Itshekiris, two groups the Yoruba were directly in contact with. Several reasons contributed to the frustrations mission witnessed during the period. Sanneh suggests the idea that “the slowness in creating an African clergy, a logical next step after the sending of missions to baptize converts, impeded the growth of the church and undermined the justification for embarking on mission at all.”196 This resulted from the superiority complex on the part of the European Caucasian missionaries and colonizers, who in their initial contact with

194Ibid., 76.


Africans had seen them mainly as a source of the physical labor they could render. Any religious ethics about their souls were not allowed to interfere with economic considerations, which allowed them to be bought and sold at will.

Consequently, although a few Africans were ordained as priests, they occupied an inferior place in the church. Instead the Portuguese seem to have encouraged Mulatto population to take a lead, but ironically they saw the Mulatto as a barrier between themselves and the Africans. The Mulatto clergy, offered the chance to avenge their sense of racial inferiority vis-a-vis the whites, took the opportunity to despise the African, especially their African fellow-clergy.

Another reason for the failure of Christian mission was slavery and the inhuman trafficking of Africans under the most deplorable conditions a person could ever be subjected to, and that was totally inconsistent with the loving message of the gospel of Christ. It was during this period that the enslavement of many Africans began. This concept was developed under slavery as one of the reasons for the development of dual allegiance in the previous chapter. But it is still appropriate to cite it here as one of the reasons for the failure of mission in the region during this time.

A very important observation that needs to be made about mission during this period is that it took place during a time when the attitude of the Portuguese gave a despicably evil representation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was not a time of genuine Christian mission work. For one thing, the Portuguese, Dutch, and the English traders in African slaves were more interested in trade than in preaching the gospel. The French Capuchins founded a mission in the area in 1644, but were expelled by a populace incited by English and Dutch traders. This was because they feared that the conversion of the

---

197 Ibid., 35, 36.
198 Ibid.
people and their chiefs would spoil their trade.\textsuperscript{199}

Trade included various kinds of goods and, sadly, the trade in slaves so needed for sugar plantations and to support the colonial economy. The inhumane trafficking of Africans that dehumanized people should never have been perpetrated by people wielding the Bible while raiding homes and stealing men, women, and children, putting them in chains and stashing them like sardines in the most deplorable conditions humans have known, and transporting them to strange lands, where they were abused and misused.

Missionaries of that time were not innocent or unaware of what happened. The Portuguese missionaries worked in collaboration with the Portuguese king and were by agreement under his supervision.\textsuperscript{200} They saw themselves as agents of the king. There is no mention of any resistant movement against these atrocities against humanity among these early missionaries until British sailors such as William Wilberforce\textsuperscript{201} protested and fought against the slave trade. It has been insinuated that missionaries were sent as preachers and pacifiers, while the colonizers followed with gun barrels and powder, robbing the Africans of their gold, diamonds, silver, spices, and food, and unfortunately, also robbing Africa of its children. One wonders what really is in the gospel that still attracts and keeps Africans so loyal to it today, especially in the face of all these atrocities perpetrated by the so called missionaries of that era.

\textsuperscript{199}Isichei, \textit{A History of Christianity in Africa}, 60.

\textsuperscript{200}Walls, \textit{The Cross-Cultural Process}, 92.

Ironically, several centuries later after the work of such men as William Wilberforce\textsuperscript{202} and others who fought for the abolition of the slave trade, several descendants of Africa who were taken as slaves accepted the gospel and came back to their motherland with the gospel. This is a testimony to the power of the gospel itself, for the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. A positive reading of this experience of captivity and slavery is that of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther:

Crowther saw “his enslavement as both ‘unhappy’ and as ‘blessed’ at the same time. His sufferings were fearful, but he was on a journey from ‘the land of heathenism superstition and vice’ to ‘a place where the gospel is preached.’ His translation from Yorubaland to Sierra Leone as a result of being picked up on the high-seas by a British cruiser signified for him an inner migration out of traditional religion into the all-absorbing context of mission education and teaching which followed his adoption of the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{203}

Unfortunately, though, due to this kind of experience with mission during this period, some African elites such as the late Tai Solarin and Wole Soyinka, a Nobel Laureate, detest even the mention of the gospel. They find succor in either the religious traditions of their forefathers or in atheism, which constitute a negative witness to mission.

Third Encounter with Missionaries

A third encounter or phase is also identified as the era of promise between 1792

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

and 1992, an era when “the historical circumstances and social forces created a hospitable environment for the diffusion of Christianity between 1787 and 1893.”

During this period, the religious map of Africa was permanently changed as the new religion was carried into numerous communities by the activities of African agents.

Sanneh postulates that

the basis of this expansion was the notion of a Christian settlement into which freed slaves would be concentrated under Christian nurture and from which Christianity would emerge as an attractive religion. Because it would share the distinctive character of its African setting it would not therefore be an alienating force. Its foremost proponents would be Africans, and it would be supported by the labors and contributions of those who possessed it. In this way Christianity would encourage the habits of useful industry and self-reliance, shedding along the way its repelling European identity.

One of the reasons why the form of Christianity initially introduced to Africa by the Europeans was not widely accepted is quite obvious. The sad chapter of slavery in the history of Black Africa was still fresh in the consciousness of the African extended family. The distinction between those Europeans who took them at gunpoint from their homeland and subjected them to the most inhumane conditions of life and those who said they were bringing them the good news was not clear at all. There was little apparent difference. They looked alike, talked alike; they were the same people. While the priests among them opened a book and spoke from it, teaching them to close their eyes to pray, the missionaries’ friends and protectors stole their women, children, and men and took

---

204 Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, 103.

205 Sanneh, West African Christianity, 53.

206 Ibid.
them into slavery under very harsh and at times fatal conditions.

By the nineteenth century, mission work was carried out mostly from Sierra Leone by freed slaves, who were trained after the Western form of education and with the primary purpose of taking the gospel to their own people. This worked, since the people became more receptive to the message and Christianity was firmly established among African people, including the Yoruba.

Another very important factor that contributed to the acceptance of Christianity among the Yoruba but was also one of the causes of dual allegiance among the Yoruba Christians, including Yoruba Adventist, during this period was the role of *Ifa*, the Yoruba deity of wisdom and divination. This topic will not be repeated here, other than the brief remark that ironically as it may sound, *Ifa Orunmila* a Yoruba pre-Christian deity prepared the Egba, a Yoruba sub-tribe for the reception of the gospel of Jesus. This experience made them more receptive and accommodating towards the missionaries and the gospel they brought to the Yoruba.

An examination of the qualities and the qualifications of the early missionaries to the Yoruba during this period portrays an interesting picture. None of the missionaries, dedicated as they were in bringing the gospel of Christ to Africa, were trained in cross-cultural communication skills. The content of the message they took to the mission field was not a unified message, since they came from different missionary organizations with different theological persuasions and many times without theological education.

Isichei describes the nature and profession of most of the first Christian missionaries who brought the gospel message during this period as follows:
Missionaries have been self-selected. . . . Missionaries are chosen, not by the . . . Church but by themselves. Such men and women go out to Africa in intense enthusiasm, regarded by their friends and sometimes by themselves, as heroes. . . . Someone, possibly deeply stirred at a missionary meeting . . . feels constrained to offer for overseas service. Almost inevitably this ‘offering’ comes to be regarded as a ‘holy call’ to a sacrificial vocation. The whole idea becomes wrapped in a veil of romantic splendor. . . . Many may know that mentally, physically, or spiritually, the candidate is unsuitable for missionary service. 208

It is further observed that there was, at first, a great dichotomy between the prosperous advocates and patrons of foreign missions, and those who actually travelled to the mission fields in Africa. “The first English CMS missionaries included a joiner, a blanket maker, and two shoe makers.” 209 “Until 1830, 34 per cent of the LMS’s missionaries, and 31 per cent of the CMS’s were artisans or retailers. Most missionaries, wrote East African big game hunter, Sir John Willoughby, were manufactured out of traders, clerks, and mechanics.” 210

According to Isichei, most of these early missionaries were uneducated, but some of them overcame this barrier by becoming self-educated:

In most cases, lack of education reflected a lack of opportunity, and some artisan missionaries, including Carey were remarkable autodidacts. In a sense, the mission field gave them careers that England would have denied them. Both Robert Moffat and Thomas Birch Freeman [Freeman worked among the Egba, a Yoruba sub-tribe in Abeokuta] for instance, were gardener’s sons, and started life as gardeners. By


becoming missionaries they became community leaders, authors and figures of international eminence.  

As Max Warren puts it,

The missionary movement was an expression of a far wider development—the social emancipation of the underprivileged classes. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the great bulk of missionary recruits came from ‘aristocracy of labour’ and petite bourgeoisie, those emerging classes for whom a missionary career certified a change in status towards ‘that middle class.’

The facile identification of Christianity with material progress, which they so often saw as a panacea for Africans, was an extrapolation from the realities of their own lives.

Despite this humble estate and beginnings of the missionaries, there was the problem of their superiority complex when they got to the mission fields. They came with the aim in mind to civilize and then Christianize, with the perception of *tabula rasa* as a strong underlying principle, as reflected in the following: “However anxious a missionary may be to appreciate and retain indigenous social and moral values, in the case of religion, he has to be ruthless. . . . He must admit and even emphasize that the religion he teaches is opposed to the existing one and the one has to cede to the other.”

Such a position obviously would not allow for any appreciation of any cultural heritage of the Yoruba at this period of their encounter with the West and with Christianity.

---


From the literature it can be deduced that the actual encounter between Christian missionaries and the Yoruba took place between the eighteenth and twentieth century. This was when Yoruba culture and its religious worldview encountered and socialized Christianity. During this period, most of the missionaries were self-literate, untrained, and in some cases illiterate artisans who were used by God to spread the gospel. The host culture and worldview were not understood or addressed appropriately, thus many practices went underground, only to resurface during critical life experiences and eventually resulting in dual allegiance.

Conversion and Worldview Change

Conversion is defined in various ways by different investigators of the psychology and sociology of religion. Most classical psychologically oriented investigators view conversion as a radical transformation of self, and even sociologically oriented investigators tend to define conversion in terms that imply radical change in self, even if conversion is empirically assessed by other indicators. Conversion is seen as “a radical reorganization of identity, meaning, and life.” Max Heirich defines conversion as the process of changing one’s sense of root reality or of one’s sense of ultimate grounding. The concept of “root reality” or “ultimate grounding” used by Heirich here


is reminiscent of the idea of the deeply embedded fundamental life principles that give meaning, quintessence, identity, purpose, and lens by which one views life and relates with it. Conversion leads to the reorganization of this ontological essence of a person.

Contemporarily, conversion is viewed in a different way. The classical rendering of conversion in a religious context is seen to be capable only of a variety of operational indicators.\textsuperscript{218} Empirically, there is no study that assesses the interrelationship among various operational measures of conversion. According to Hood et al., there is the need for “additional conceptual refinements so that variations in closely related phenomena can be distinguished.”\textsuperscript{219} Hood et al. identify five such additional conceptual refinements, to which a sixth can be added. These are apostasy, de-conversion, and intensification, switching, and cycling.\textsuperscript{220} I opine that dual allegiance can be added to this list.

Paul Hiebert\textsuperscript{221} describes three stages in the historical progression of the church’s understanding of the conversion process. First, conversion is at the level of behavior and rituals. This, according to him, was true of the nineteenth century, when many missionaries took putting on of clothes, giving up of alcohol, tobacco, and gambling, taking baptism and communion, and attending church regularly for evidence that people

\textsuperscript{217}Heirich Max, “Change of Heart: A Test of Some Widely Held Theories of Religious Conversion,” ASR 83, no. 3 (1977): 674.

\textsuperscript{218}Hood et al., The Psychology of Religion, 345.

\textsuperscript{219}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{220}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{221}Hiebert, “Transforming Worldviews,” 10, 11.
were truly converted. However, such outward behavior “does not mean that the underlying beliefs had changed. People could adapt their behavior to get jobs, win status, and gain power without abandoning their old beliefs. They could give Christian names to pagan gods and spirits, and so Christianize their traditional religions,”\textsuperscript{222} or even add Jesus Christ to their polytheistic view as one of their gods.\textsuperscript{223} This was observed among the Yoruba during the nineteenth-century missionary work when some Ifa priests were noticed to simply add Jesus Christ to a conglomeration of deities and power they worshiped.\textsuperscript{224}

Second, in the twentieth century, Protestant missionaries began to stress the need for the transformation of people’s beliefs. In order to be saved, people had to believe in the virgin birth, in Jesus’ death on the cross, his burial, resurrection, ascension, second coming, and several other teachings that are specific to the different denominations who were engaged in the missionary venture.

The third level is conversion at the worldview level. If conversion does not happen at the worldview level and only stops at the level of behavior, rituals, and beliefs, in the long run the gospel can be subverted and the result is a syncretistic Christo-paganism or dual allegiance which has the form of Christianity but not the essence.\textsuperscript{225} Unfortunately, the religious worldviews of many African societies, including the Yoruba, were not addressed and dealt with appropriately in their initial encounter with Christian

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{222}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{223}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{224}McKenzie, \textit{Inter-religious Encounter}, 19.
  \item \textsuperscript{225}Hiebert, “Transforming Worldviews,” 11.
\end{itemize}

190
mission. Such worldview issues include how to obtain the power of God to replace their charms in which they had trusted before conversion to Christianity; how to deal with the fear of the causal agencies such as witchcraft, ancestors, divination, destiny, the *ori*; how to understand the biblical principles of prosperity; how to worship; what traditional musical instruments have on Christian worship; and what forms from the Yoruba culture can be used in worship.

**Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter examined some of the components of the Yoruba religious and philosophical worldview in order to comprehend its essential character and nature and see how it affects dual allegiance. The Yoruba today have one of the most coherent religious outlooks or worldviews, which has not only survived but has also been accommodated into other religious traditions such as found in Santeria—the syncretistic form of Catholicism in which most of its saints are the Christianized forms of Yoruba deities, such as *Sango, Oya, Yemoja, Eshu,* and *Iku.*

The Yoruba claim that their religion is monotheistic, but they also worship other deities who are seen as messengers of the Supreme deity. So in reality their worship is polytheistic by combining the worship of *Olodumare* the Supreme God with several other deities who are worshipped and venerated. Arguments put forward by such scholars as Idowu, Dopamu, and Awolalu, to the effect that the Yoruba religion is monotheistic and that the *orishas* are only the messengers of *Olodumare* or *Olorun,* were explored. There is no conception of angels in the Yoruba religion, but, as stated above, the *orishas* function as the messengers of *Olodumare.*
Before the beginning of missionary work among the Yoruba, the *babalawos* (diviners) were the custodians of Yoruba mysteries and were the priests of the deity of divination known as *Orunmila*. Several factors drive the Yoruba to consult these diviners. The quest for the satisfaction of felt needs such as power, the ability to have many children, to be healthy in life, to have productive crops, to enjoy happiness, to have harmony with the ancestors and the gods, and harmony with the oracle of *Ifa* are some of the reasons why the *babalawo* are consulted. People also visit the diviners to ascertain the trajectory of the life of a newborn baby so that it will be in line or in tune with its destiny as chosen before *Olodumare* before it was born into the world. There are also many stories of Christian ministers who consult diviners in order to gain power to perform miracles, albeit in the name of Jesus Christ, and also to attract crowds to their meetings, but which also increases their financial support and influence.

There are also many fears which bother the Yoruba and threaten their experience of shalom, which they had resolved before the arrival of the missionaries through their dependence on the diviners. The *Ifa* priest played a key role in allaying those fears by providing concrete solutions to the problems, especially through prescriptions of one kind of sacrifice or another.

The Yoruba believe strongly in destiny *ayanmo*, which is said to be received in three stages—the stage of *akunleyan* (that which is chosen kneeling), *akunlegba* (that which is received kneeling), and *ayanmo* (that which is affixed). The Yoruba have this saying, *Akunleyan, ohun ni adayeba; adaye tan oju nkan gbogbo wa, ohun ti Oluwa yo se ko fi han enikankan*, which means that “all humans have chosen their destiny before coming to the world. On getting to the world every one of us becomes impatient. Yet the
Lord has not shown what he will do to anyone.” Nevertheless, it is believed among the Yoruba that there is a *Eleri ipin*, the witness to human destiny—the Yoruba deity of divination—*Orunmila* who when consulted through *Ijá* will reveal a person’s destiny. This is engraved in the Yoruba consciousness and is largely responsible for their quest for knowledge that only *Orunmila* can give them, hence their consultation of the *babalawo*, the priests of *Ijá*, even after conversion to Christianity.

The Yoruba perception of the ancestral world also has a tremendous influence on their consciousness during times of crisis. When things get tough they might say, *Bába mí mo sun l’orun o*, which means “my father do not sleep in heaven.” This is a cry for help, in which those who pray in this way are calling on their ancestor not to sleep in heaven, but to come to their rescue and help them out of whatever predicament they may find themselves. The dead are not really seen as dead, but are believed to be in the world of the living dead, which is conceived to be similar to the one in which they were in before their death. These pre-Christian beliefs also occur in the Adventist consciousness during critical times and have a strong bearing on whether they engage in a dual allegiance or not, depending on their personal commitment and devotion to Christ. Commitment to Christ also depends on the nature and the power of the ministry of their pastor, parental beliefs, the influence of their spouse, and whether their worldview has been impacted by biblical principles.

The core Yoruba worldview values cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet during the process of conversion to Christianity. Each worldview component must be appropriately addressed and placed in its proper perspective in the course of mission work among the Yoruba. The great dangers of dual allegiance and syncretism abound if
this is not carefully done. To prevent present Adventists from returning to the religion of their forefathers and the entanglements to the elemental spirits of nature worship as well as ancestral deification, Adventist mission must address each worldview issue and must address the cognitive, evaluative, and affective needs of would-be converts. This is best accomplished through the various encounters—truth, power, and allegiance, which are needed for an appropriate Christianity to develop. In other words, mission work must be thorough, holistic, and contextualized.
CHAPTER 4

FIELD RESEARCH ON DUAL ALLEGIANCE AMONG
YORUBA ADVENTISTS

The purpose of this dissertation was to do a missiological study and description of the phenomenon of dual allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Through field research I examined how Yoruba Adventists handle misfortunes in their lives to understand their perceptions of the causes of misfortunes, and the various options that are available to them to resolve these challenges. I wanted to establish whether Yoruba Adventists engage in dual allegiance and, if so, the form(s) it takes among them. This aim was achieved through gathering data from purposively selected participants whom I interviewed. The analysis of the data from the field research is reflected in this chapter of the dissertation.

I interviewed a total of 12 Yoruba Adventists, three Adventist laymen, two Adventist women, and four Adventist ministers of different ages and educational backgrounds, and two serving presidents, one at the union and the other from one of the two conferences overseeing the Adventist work among the Yoruba of Nigeria. Another administrator who was a retired president of the former West Nigeria Mission was also interviewed. Data from the field research consisted of direct responses to exploratory questions that were prepared in advance, as well as other questions which developed in the process of the interviews, either to seek clarification of the thoughts, opinions,
feelings, and knowledge of the topic as expressed by the interviewees or as follow-up questions to further clarify my understandings of the participants’ responses. I analyzed the data by using Glasser and Strauss’s constant comparative method and by comparing ideas and emerging themes both within an interview as well as between interviews.

**Emergent Themes**

In the process of the ethnographic study the following themes emerged as I interviewed the participants: definitions of dual allegiance, the perceived prevalence of the phenomenon, forms and features of dual allegiance, the causes of dual allegiance, and suggested solutions to the challenge of the dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. These themes are used as an outline for the following discussion of the topic of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists.

**Definitions of Dual Allegiance**

Several definitions of dual allegiance emerged in the course of this study and are described in this analysis. This dissertation used Schreiter’s definition and description of dual allegiance as a conceptual framework. It is the situation whereby Christianity is practiced in its integrity, and selected elements from another system [that is from the Yoruba traditional religious system] are also practiced. Often those elements are perceived by Christian leaders [and most members] as incompatible and even contradictory to Christianity. Thus, Christians in West Africa often will maintain sacrifices at a shrine to a local spirit or deity. In time of distress, this dual practice becomes especially evident. There are not prayers made to the Christian deity [only], but recourse to local priests and healers for their intercession with local deities as well. It is as though people wish to exhaust all possible channels of mediation. While the dual practices appear clearly contradictory to the Christian leadership, local members do not see the contradictions.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\)Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 146, 147.
Some of the interviewees, however, defined dual allegiance in a broader way to include a demonstration of selfishness, impatience, and a lack of total trust in God to minister to one’s needs. This selfishness and lack of trust are demonstrated in refusing to return a faithful tithe as well as a refusal to participate appropriately in the things of the Lord, such as evangelism and mission for lack of time. It also means worshiping self and Christ at the same time. Saworo referred to another study done among the Yoruba, where only 5 percent of the people surveyed faithfully return tithe. He also pointed out that Ellen G. White stated during her time that only one in twenty Adventists is a faithful member, and that the statement is still valid today among Yoruba Adventists.

In his own assessments of Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists, based on this idea of faithfulness in returning tithes and offerings, Saworo opines that about 95 percent of church members are engaged in dual allegiance. That is, if dual allegiance is defined as 50 percent allegiance to self and 50 percent allegiance to Christ, only 5 percent of the members are fully committed to Christ. Saworo further stated that “out of the ninety-five percent who are not fully committed in the issue of tithe and offerings, when tempted to engage in dual allegiance, they may not see the reason for them not to participate.” It was also suggested that this situation of dual allegiance is reminiscent of the Colossian dual allegiance, whereby the sufficiency of Christ is doubted and other powers are sought by individuals to supplement the work of Jesus (Col 2:8-23).

Another participant, Ide, added that reversion to traditional religious beliefs and

---

2Pseudonyms were given to all the participants in the field research for this study for confidentiality’s sake. The others are: Ide, Olooto, Drumai, Tai, Inudun, Taylor, Presley, Otun, Kuye, Ike, and Idu. These were real people who shared their experiences and perceptions on dual allegiance in interviews held with them during the field research.
practices occurs when new converts are not deeply rooted in the new religion; they occasionally fall back into the old ways of their fathers. As a support to this idea, Presley, another interviewee, suggested that old beliefs die hard, if they ever die, and may resurface even after conversion, thus leading to dual allegiance.

Several concepts such as impatience and the inability to wait upon God, and the secrecy with which dual allegiance is shrouded, featured prominently in the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon. The idea of patiently waiting upon God is viewed as a virtue among Yoruba Adventist believers; therefore the lack of it portrays a weakness in one’s faith. Some of the participants cited Scriptures, such as Isa 8:17-20, whereby the faithful are encouraged to “wait upon the Lord,” which they translated to mean to trust in the Lord instead of looking for immediate answers from mediums and spiritists. When the interviewees talked about an inability to wait for God to work, it was taken as a denunciation of those members of the church who engage in dual allegiance.

Most of the participants perceived secretly visiting diviners as dealing with Satan, and that despite this knowledge, they still engage in dual allegiance. In other words, most of the participants in this study signified that the Yoruba Adventists who engage in dual allegiance do it in secret, hidden from the view of their ministers or other church members because they know that what they are doing is wrong or inappropriate from their Adventist Christian point of view.

Another very important component of the definition of dual allegiance among the participants in this research was their perception of the nature of the spiritual power that is in operation in traditional religion. Olooto and Ide believed the power on which the diviners depend was of the devil. It is the devil who empowers them to perform some
very wonderful miracles and signs, but which can fail when you most need him to act on your behalf. There is a general consensus on the diabolical nature of the power on which the diviner relies. Saworo agrees, adding that the power demonstrated by diviners leads to spiritual enslavement and bondage. Christ’s power on the other hand does not enslave but liberates those who are converted to him.

So when some Yoruba Adventists visit the diviners or some pastors or prophets of certain other Christian denominations, they are consulting the devil who is the master of disguise and deceptions, because some of these pastors depend on the power of enchantments and divination to operate their ministries. Ide stated that “it will be unfortunate for you to go and kneel before somebody to request for prayer . . . because the disease you have may be taken away from you, but another more worse given in replacement.” Despite this perception of what it might mean to consult diviners and pastors of other denominations, Ide’s assessment of reverting to traditional religions sounded pretty liberal that almost reduces it to a non-biblical or missiological issue. According to his assessment, stress and difficulties of life are global experiences, and everybody has different ways of handling stress. The Yoruba are a very religious and loving people. They love and serve God and no other tribe is as loving in their relationship with God. They have God first in their mind, either through Islam, Traditional Religion, or through Christianity. There has never been a vacuum in the Yoruba’s life.

Occasionally, when those who embrace Christianity have stress, probably because they are not deeply rooted in Christ, they fall back into the ways of their fathers. However, Ide sees this falling back as of little or no consequence because, in the final
analysis, they still believe that they are calling on God. They call on God, but of course the Europeans and Americans who brought Christianity to them believed they were worshiping idols. Ide further suggested that the missionaries condemned anything they could not understand when they came to Africa. Most of the missionaries used the *tabula rasa* approach. What they could not understand, they erased completely, and that has actually affected the propagation of the gospel in a negative way. Ide also opined that it is only some of the members who go back to seek help from diviners and not many people. “Of course, in recent times, instead of going back to their idols and diviners,” Ide added, “they have modern-day churches to which they go.”

In summary, to make sure the participants understood the term dual allegiance, as used in this dissertation, they were given Schreiter’s brief, but comprehensive definition of the concept as quoted above. Most of the time, Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists are actually aware of the contradictions involved in their dual religiosity, but since their faith has not addressed certain important needs in their life, as Ide pointed out above, they secretly seek help from the traditional diviners or certain Christian prophets who have found ways to blend traditional religious methods of solving life problems with Christianity. The diviners diagnose their problems, and in turn prescribe remedies, usually a sacrifice or ritual. In other words, dual allegiance results when Christians revert to their pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices and depend on the powers of local deities, spirit beings, charms, enchantments, sorcery, witchcraft, amulets, and other such religious paraphernalia and powers while not abandoning their Christian faith entirely. Their knowledge that traditional diviners may be using diabolical powers to solve the problem does not deter them from such activity.
Prevalence of Dual Allegiance

Idu responded to a question on whether dual allegiance exists among Yoruba Adventists, saying that it would be either hypocritical or myopic of him to deny that some members of the church visit diviners or other denominations for help in time of pressing needs, because Seventh-day Adventists are human. The Yoruba have grown up in a specific cultural milieu. Culture and traditions die hard, especially for those who were brought up in the traditional way before their conversion to the Adventist faith. Due to that reason there is the possibility of a relapse to their pre-Christian outlook, especially after trying the Christian way when their problems persisted. The reasoning is that they are not doing any harm to their fellow human beings but using only traditional, culture-based methods to help themselves, so there is nothing wrong with it.

The secrecy with which dual allegiance is enshrouded makes it very difficult to accurately determine its magnitude among any people group. All twelve participants in this study affirm the fact that dual allegiance exists among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists, but determining its prevalence with precision is problematic. For example, Saworo, who gave the definition of dual allegiance that includes a demonstration of a lack of trust in divine provision, which causes many members to hoard their tithe, suggested that over 95 percent of Adventists generally would be involved in dual allegiance. Nevertheless, going by Schreiter’s definition of the phenomenon, many of the interviewees estimated that only about 1 to 2 percent of Adventists are involved. Justifying this percentage is very difficult and may simply reflect the fact that activities associated with dual allegiance are shrouded in secrecy.

In addition, descriptive expressions such as “Yes, it is there but minimal,” or
“very very minimal,” “the case of [visiting] diviners or other things exists but not very much,” “some of them go back but not many people,” and “a few, [a] very infinitesimal few may be involved,” were used by different participants in the study to describe the prevalence of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. However, the obscurity that surrounds dual allegiance makes it very difficult to know precisely who is involved, how many members and ministers are involved, or the level of involvement. The important concern, according to several of the participants, is not how many members are involved in dual allegiance but the fact that it exists at all in the church, since its existence implies accommodating both Christ and Satan, which the apostle Paul stated must not be (1 Cor 10:19-22).

Olooto states, “It is not with everybody, it is not a general thing. But as I said, you can’t draw a line between those who do it and those who don’t, but it is obvious that some are having dual allegiance in the church. Others are just plain minded and one way with Christ and with God.” He also said, “So today, when things don’t work, some members will sneak to diviners, like Saul of old who went to seek help from the witch of Endor. You cannot prevent that. But it is not a common thing. I know some people today who will say I would rather die than seek help from traditional religionists.”

Some of the influences that impact the prevalence of dual allegiance within the Yoruba Adventists include the level of the stability and faith of the spouse, parental beliefs and familial pressure, the level of Western education, and generational influences. These will be discussed in the next section of the dissertation.

**Level of the Stability and Faith of Spouse**

The spiritual stability of the spouse has a tremendous influence on whether or not
dual allegiance is practiced. This is because if one spouse is not very committed or if they do not belong to the same religion or denomination, there is a greater chance for one to influence the other to engage in dual allegiance in times of crisis. Idu cited a work situation that took place some time ago. It pertains to a prominent member of the church who was married to a non-Adventist. The wife had no objections against the use of African traditional methods to assist one to achieve success. The Yoruba Adventist in question was the manager at his government office. It was rumored that his boss was considering bringing in a younger man to manage his department and that he would become a subordinate to the new manager.

This was something the wife could not deal with when she heard about the plan. She encouraged her husband to do something about it, such as visiting a diviner to carry out some rituals which would avert the plan of the government to impose someone else on him, but he decided to depend totally on the Lord. Nevertheless, the wife secured the assistance of a known diviner in the town to make sure the government’s plan to replace her husband was thwarted. In the end, the plan was changed and the husband remained in his position. While the man gave testimony in the church and thanked God for helping him keep his job, the wife was sure it was her effort in employing the service of the diviner which made it possible for him to keep his position.

Drumai stated that “there are instances of both parties in marriage being Adventists, yet seeking for alternative means to a problem, even pastors’ kids are involved.” Due to the emotional bonds that exist between spouses, they may influence one another or even carry out some activities of dual allegiance without the knowledge of one on the behalf of the other. Without a total commitment to Christ, one spouse can
influence the other into dual allegiance.

**Parental Beliefs and Familial Pressure**

Parents and relations also can put pressure on their converted sons or daughters to follow the old ways. Most of the interviewees strongly agreed with this opinion. Tai cited a hypothetical situation which is reminiscent of how parents may influence their children to engage in dual allegiance, without their own physical participation. A young Adventist convert may decide to keep the Sabbath, which may obstruct his work schedule and which may eventually cause him to lose his job. But before this happens, the parents and relatives, who may have been receiving assistance from their son when he was employed, fearing this may stop if he loses his job, may persuade and encourage him not to allow Sabbath worship to obstruct his job. If he decides to stand firm for his newfound faith, the parents may visit a diviner to “straighten” him up so that he will listen to them. In other words, to “help” him to stay focused on his job and abandon the idea of observing the Sabbath, they may visit a diviner without his knowledge.

In addition, Tai expresses the deep emotional affection parents have for their children as a likely motivating factor for them to seek assistance from a diviner to help resolve whatever problems their children may have. The diviner is the main method they knew of resolving problems, especially when they are unconverted. Tai specifically cited the problem of childlessness as an example of what often motivates parents and relatives to encourage their children to engage in dual allegiance. In such a situation, parents are quick to suggest to their son to either take another wife or seek the assistance of a diviner so the problem of infertility can be cured, especially after the attempts to find solutions to the problem in a Western hospital may have failed.
However, some of the participants stated that their dedication to the faith and their determination not to be involved in dual allegiance resulted from their observation of the faith of their parents. Olooto cited a situation in his own life that shows in reality the influence the parents and familial connections can have on whether a Seventh-day Adventist member will become involved in dual allegiance or not. He stated that were he not a pastor, some of his relatives would probably have prevailed and forced him to seek help from a diviner after five years of marriage without any sign of a child in his home. He and his wife had tried to get help from Western medical practice and various fertility clinics, all to no avail. They were encouraged by relatives to visit traditional diviners to seek help in finding out what and who was responsible for their childlessness and the remedies they needed to take to resolve the problem, but they refused because, according to him, they were an Adventist pastoral couple and knew they should not be involved in such activities.

However, their relatives were not willing to give up so easily on trying to persuade them, and further reasoned with them saying, “You people think because you are Christians, you cannot use traditional ways of solving your problems. We get children through traditional ways and we raise them as Christians.” These Adventist relatives were surprised that Olooto and his wife did not agree to visit the herbalist/diviner, since even they used the assistance of diviners to get their children when their yearning for children was not met through praying to the Christian God.

Traditional Yoruba say *Olorun o ko ajo*, which means God does not forbid trying other spiritual means to help yourself out of your troubles in life. This implies you can consult the diviner to diagnose the problems of your life, and the diviner subsequently
may prescribe solutions, using divination, sacrifices, idolatry, ancestral veneration, and spirit worship. It takes faith, patience, and a strong determination to reject such overwhelming persuasion and pressure from relatives and parents to dabble in dual allegiance. Were he not a pastor, Olooto stated he probably would have succumbed to the immense pressure from relatives and friends who suggested there was nothing wrong in trying alternative ways to solving their childlessness.

Olooto further identified certain ways to know whether or not a Yoruba Adventist couple is influenced by their parents and familial connections to dabble with dual allegiance. “When they have a little problem, you often hear them say, ‘We went to our parents.’ When you hear this, they must have gone to their parents in the village to find a solution from [the] traditional diviner.”

Inudun on the other hand recalled how strongly the influence of his parents’ faith had encouraged him never to engage in dual allegiance. His parents believed that God is able to do all things, if it is his will. Even when his father became sick and was about to die, he told Inudun that if it was God’s will that he should die it would happen. Inudun also learned the importance of fasting and praying from his parents and cited two testimonies that established his faith because his parents stressed the idea that God answers prayers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because of his parents’ example, he sees no reason to engage in dual allegiance.

Inudun had experienced the premature death of his new-born babies. But to the glory of God, this eventually stopped. He now has four lovely children, a son and three girls. Another time he thought he had lost his brother, whom he had sent to another city to carry out some business. When he did not hear from him for several days he called on
the elders of the church, who then gathered and prayed for his safe return. His brother then resurfaced. Inudun cannot forget these two miracles that God gave him, as a direct response to prayers.

The positive influence of parents on the faith of their children, which helps them abstain from dual allegiance, was corroborated by Ide. Ide stated that in Nigeria, one’s father and mother have a lot of influences on their children, and that it is considered a taboo or a misfortune to the parents if their children leave the family faith.

Taylor’s experience as a Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist further supports how strong parental influence and that of friends can be on whether or not a Yoruba Adventist will engage in dual allegiance. According to him, his dabbling in dual allegiance was not because of pressure from his parents. In fact, as he talked with me, he lamented saying, “This use of charms that I became involved with was strange to me by the time it was introduced to me by an outsider. As I grew up, I did not see any such things with my father or mother.” He was introduced to dual allegiance by an elderly Yoruba Adventist who wanted to do him good by introducing him to means that could make his business prosper.

The influence of parents, family members, and friends can be overwhelming in the life of the Yoruba Adventist, either to engage in dual allegiance or to maintain a faith that will not flinch or compromise in the time of crises. There is usually a strong emotional tie between parents and children. Concerned unconverted parents may do all they know and can to help resolve the problems in the life of their children. On the other hand, the Christian faith of the parents may strongly help to strengthen the persistence and consistency of children’s faith in Christ.
Level of Western Education

Almost all of the participants stated that Western education makes little or no difference on whether a Yoruba Adventist consults the diviner or not. Both the educated and the illiterate are involved in dual allegiance, although the illiterate seems to be a little more involved than the educated. To underscore this position, one of the participants, Saworo, cited a situation in one of the church’s tertiary institutions in Yoruba land which is filled with highly trained professionals and professors, doctors, and others educated in the ways of the West.

Saworo told how the institution due to the economic crunch decided to let go about five hundred workers whose work was redundant. As soon as this was known on campus, the signs of ritualistic sacrifices began to surface on the compound, at the crossroads in the school, in some offices, on the roads leading to the institution, and at various other places. These sacrifices included food cooked in the local way and placed in a broken pot, animal blood sacrifices placed on cloths of different colors, and sacrificial materials placed on the doorway leading to some of the staff members.

Several explanations were offered by Saworo for the appearance of these ritualistic offerings on the campus. He mentioned that the campus administrators felt they were placed there by some of the employees who suspected their names were on the list of the five hundred or more staff to be laid off. Others believed some administrators themselves may have been responsible in an attempt to solve the dire, stressful, and chaotic situation at the institution. This is because, at the same time, several articles critical of the school were published in some scandal magazines and newspapers about the credentials and the professional qualifications of the head of the institution and his
wife. Therefore, some thought some of the leaders of the institution may have been involved in the ritualistic events on campus. Whatever the source of the sacrifices and rituals, Saworo believed such sacrifices on a Christian campus are blotches on the name and the image of Jesus Christ for whom the institution is set up to represent and glorify.

Ide mockingly pointed out that even if a Yoruba Adventist lives in the United States of America, which is highly secularized, and despite an education to the doctorate level, if a person believes in the existence of spirits and that such spirits can cause harm, dual allegiance is inevitable. Academic degrees do not change one’s inner core beliefs easily. On the other hand, Tai pointed out that illiteracy and ignorance are largely responsible for dual allegiance, but added the idea that Western education does not stop the Yoruba from dual allegiance.

However, some of the other participants strongly felt that Western education affects the way Yoruba Adventists think, but in the long run it still does not deter them from consulting diviners to get help. They suggested that Western education allows people to become enlightened and refined in their approaches to life so that may deter Christians from any involvement in fetishism. But in reality, according the participants, both the literate and the illiterate do visit diviners. The only difference is that more of the illiterate members of the church have a greater tendency to consult the diviner than the literate members.

In short, it was gathered from the participants in the study that Western education has really done much to enlighten the Yoruba Adventists, which in turn has led to the improvement of their standard of life. Nevertheless, education cannot change the belief system grounded in their cultural and worldview specificities. Both Western educated
Yoruba Adventists, even those with doctoral degrees, as well as illiterates are said to be involved in dual allegiance.

**Generational Influences**

One of the interview questions this research sought answers for was to identify whether earlier generations of Yoruba Adventists were more prone to engage in dual allegiance than later generations. There was a lack of consensus on the influence of generational differences on dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. The field research found that first-generation Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists may still believe that their problems are caused by witches or wizards or some other supernatural agents, but the solutions to this perception differed depending on the level of faith and commitment of the individual believer. According to Presley, the incidence of dual allegiance is reduced in the second generation of Adventists and even farther reduced in the third generation. The farther removed a generation of Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists is from the first generation, which had a direct experience with traditional religion, the easier it is to resist engaging in dual allegiance. The reason for this situation rests in the idea that the first generation of Yoruba Adventists has just come out of the traditional religion. Therefore, the rituals, rites, and sacrifices, as well as the belief systems and their worldview are still intact, so the possibilities of sneaking back to the comforts of the old ways is much more an option than for those of the second, third, or fourth generation.

Nevertheless, Olooto insisted on the idea of complete and total negation, which suggests that due to conversion, there is a concerted effort on the part of traditionalists to negate all their previous experiences, including their religious heritage and pagan practices in a quest to differentiate their new experiences from the old. Olooto further
sang the lyrics of a popular Yoruba ditty that underscores this point of change that naturally occurs due to conversion to Christianity: “Esu o le duro ti Jesu x2, bo ba duro ao mu, Esu ole duro ti Jesu. Bowo mi ba te Psalmu ayanga si ologun.” This means the devil cannot stand or remain where Jesus is, if he stands/remains, we will catch him/arrest him; the devil cannot remain with Jesus. If I grab the Psalms, an end comes to the enchanter/diviner/charmer.

According to Olooto, in the days of their fathers, who were probably first-generation converts to the Adventist faith, immediately after baptism, there was a sharp discontinuity with their traditional religion. “In fact,” he said, “once you are baptized, you cannot eat with your unconverted family members anymore.” In such a situation, all their religious symbols, paraphernalia, beliefs, and other outward practices which could remind them of their previous religion were discarded. And since the foreign and indigenous missionaries who worked among them did not see anything good in the local culture, and castigated it as diabolical, a cultural vacuum was created. This act of castigation eventually led the people to become isolated from their own cultural heritage. This extreme position may have had some benefits, but it appears to have also led to dual allegiance.

Another reason for dual allegiance may be that subsequent generations of Yoruba Adventists are not as committed to the new-found faith as their fathers and may experience a relapse and fall back to the pre-conversion beliefs and religious lifestyle of their parents after the parents’ demise. Taylor admitted to engaging in dual allegiance once because of an invitation from an older Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist. He stated that he did not observe his parents’ involvement in any of the dual religious activities he
was engaged in. His parents had followed the faith as given to them by the first missionary pioneers who planted the Adventist Church in Nigeria.

In summary, Yoruba Adventists who are first-generation converts, as well as second- and third-generation converts may lapse into dual allegiance. Nevertheless, the sharp discontinuity that occurred within the first generation of converts seems to have created a potential for constancy which sustained the new believer’s faith and integrity and which helped them to totally dissociate themselves from dual allegiance.

**Forms and Features of Dual Allegiance**

Another theme from the field research on dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists is the various forms it takes. The forms of dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists include secret visitations to spiritual and Pentecostal churches; secret visitations to diviners for charms, medicines, and enchantments; church members dabbling in the occult; members’ involvement in idolatry and ritualistic sacrifice; and the league between Christian pastors and traditional diviners. In this section, these manifestations of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists will be described.

### Secret Visitations to Spiritual and Pentecostal Churches

Some Seventh-day Adventist church members are frequent visitors to the various brands of Aladura church, such as the Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, Christ Apostolic

---

3It was discovered during the field research that some of the interviewees believe that some Pentecostal church pastors depend on diabolical occult power to perform miracles and signs and wonders to attract multitudes to their meetings, and from that gain more resources to their coffers.
Church, as well as Pentecostal churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, the Synagogue Church of All Nations, the Living Faith Church, the Christ Embassy Church, and several others that are not so well known. These churches worship on Sunday and hold retreats and healing ceremonies which attract Christians from many denominations.

From the interviews it became apparent that a reason for such inter-denominational worship and visits is that the spiritual needs of the members, such as special prayer sessions to address their various needs for good health, help for their financial needs, relational needs, and help needed to cope with the uncertainties of the future, are not being met in the Adventist Church. Other interviewees, especially the Adventist ministers, think the inter-denominational visitations may be due to impatience and a lack of contentment or genuine faith on the part of those Yoruba Adventists who engage in such activities.

Olooto told a story that involved a prominent Seventh-day Adventist member who went to a prophet in search of directions about his wife’s stolen car. He wanted to know where the expensive car he had just bought for his wife was taken and whether or not he was going to find and recover it. When he got to the church, he saw three Adventist

\[\text{Aladura}\]

The term Aladura is a Yoruba word and is used to describe a brand of indigenous churches that is essentially African which have successfully blended certain features of Yoruba or African Traditional Religion with a form of Christianity. Adura means prayer in Yoruba. The prefix Al- implies someone, so that Al-adura comes to mean “one who prays.” Features of these churches include visions and dreams, which come to pass at times, the use of garments of different colors, and the use of features which belong to the traditional religion, such as ritualistic bathing and cleansing, and the magical use of the book of Psalms.
women from his local church whom he knew and who had also come to consult the
prophet for help. When he had the opportunity to speak with the women, he tried to give
them the impression that he was like a church spy who had followed them to discover
what they do outside of the church’s jurisdiction. He threatened to report them to the
church, albeit this was to cover up his own dual allegiance and his feelings of guilt and
shame that he had been seen by church members in the house of a pastor of another
denomination. Later when this Adventist member went to this prophet’s church, the
prophet threatened those in attendance with additional problems should they stop
attending his church. The Adventist man eventually had a stroke when he returned home
and subsequently died. Olooto said he heard the story from the man himself when he
went to visit him just before he died.

Many Yoruba Adventists do not see anything wrong in visiting other churches,
mostly Pentecostal, or the Aladura churches, unaware of the fact that some of these
churches have blended traditional religion and a form of Christianity. It is very difficult
to know the genuineness or falsehood of these religious movements. According to
Olooto, many of the pastors of other denominations who profess powers to help members
have been shown to be in league with diviners who make sacrifices and charms for them
at the inception of their churches, charms that will attract multitudes, charms that will
empower them to perform miracles, signs, and wonders. Such pastors seek power from
diviners that can enable them to see beyond the natural realm deep into the causes of
calamities and power to identify solutions to peoples’ problems. Olooto mockingly
referred to how one of these pastors and his diviner friend had a conflict which eventually
led to a disgraceful public exposure of themselves on the public media.
Another participant, Idu, when asked whether he knows about any Yoruba Adventist who due to a life crisis had turned to the diviners for assistance, stated that most Adventists would not visit a diviner, but they would go and visit pastors of other denominations, or visit specific mountains identified and set aside for prayers, “feeling that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not hot enough.”

Inudun, who was born into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, used to think that his church was very cold spiritually. His spiritual needs were not appropriately met and so decided to join the Deeper Life Bible Church where all the members visibly pray together for the needs of one another. However, he decided to return permanently to the Adventist Church when, one day, a pastor in the Deeper Life Bible Church publicly acknowledged the genuineness and truthfulness of the Seventh-day Adventist message, while lamenting their unfaithfulness and insincerity to the message they preach. When he heard this statement, he asked himself, “Does it mean that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a good church?” So he returned to the church of his childhood. When he returned, he placed some requests before God, and through faith in the Bible, had his beliefs in the Adventist messages confirmed.

Taylor became involved in dual allegiance by first visiting the prophets and seers of some African Indigenous Churches. According to him, he was tired of how sluggish his business and life had become. This troubled him so much that he decided to attend church that Sabbath morning to pour out his heart to the Lord. But as he was preparing to go to church, a friend came to him and invited him to join him as he was going to seek out the reasons for his calamities in life, as well as the remedies to them. So together with his friend, also a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, they went in search
of one of the many Aladura prophets in their town.

The first prophet they went to was able to tell his friend about his future and the remedies he had to take for his path in life to improve. However, the prophet was unable to say anything about Taylor’s future. He could not see anything as he checked again and again. The prophet sounded so worried about him and interpreted his inability to see his future as the activities of the agencies of Satan, probably witches and wizards in his life. Taylor left the prophet more depressed, fearful, and confused than when he went to him.

The two friends were not satisfied with the revelation they received from this first prophet, so they decided to visit another one.

As the seer checked and queried about Taylor’s future from the Lord, which is normally done during a prayer session, the prophet seemed to confirm what the first one said. The second prophet also could not discern the trajectory of life for Taylor. All he could see was a bright light. The prophet’s interpretation of the vision was nevertheless more positive. The prophet encouraged him to abstain from any evil and that if he had been keeping any charms he should get rid of them from his home and burn them. The bright light he saw before him meant the purity God intended to give him, but because of the charms and medicines he was harboring in his home, this had not been possible.

When he got home, he took out all his charms and traditional medicines he had acquired through another elderly Seventh-day Adventist and through other means and burned them. Taylor decided to follow God alone no matter what happened in his life and on the basis of his encounter that day, became a more dedicated Adventist. The sad thing is that he could not achieve freedom from charms in his local Seventh-day Adventist church, because, according to him, there had never been any sound message in
his local church that warned or condemned acquiring and using charms and traditional medicine. None of his Adventist ministers had spoken about the uselessness and evil of charms. He claimed he did not know it was wrong to engage in such practices. This seems to be one area the Yoruba Adventist pastoral ministry has not dealt with yet. Taylor also faults his local church’s pastoral ministry for not producing appropriate spiritual food for the members, with the consequence that many church members resort to visiting other churches’ prayer meetings and night vigils.

According to Idu, this form of dual allegiance is widespread among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists who engage in dual allegiance. There appears to be a level of dissatisfaction with the pastoral ministry the members of the church are receiving, and so they step out to augment what they get in the Adventist church by going to other denominations for prayer and other spiritual services. However, this is dangerous, because as Olooto mentioned above, his friend had a stroke and died after the pastor of the spiritual church he went to threatened to compound his problems should he cease to attend the church. Some of these non-Adventist pastors enter into league with herbalists and diviners. They use diabolical and magical powers and charms for various reasons, including attracting and keeping members for monetary and other purposes.

Secret Visitations to Diviners for Charms, Medicines, and Enchantments

Another form of dual allegiance among some Yoruba Adventists is the nocturnal or secret visitations to diviners, also known as the traditional witch doctors or herbalists (the babalawo) who divine the causes of peoples’ problems, as well as prescribe solutions for them. Solutions usually involve sacrifices to appease the gods or the ancestors or to
counteract the spells of diabolical agents such as witches, wizards, sorcerers, and other malignant spirits who are perceived to be responsible for the calamities of life.

Taylor told how he was introduced to this form of dual allegiance by a more elderly Yoruba Adventist. At first, Taylor, as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church, resisted the idea of visiting the herbalist for awure, but with a little persuasion from the more elderly Yoruba Adventist, he succumbed to the temptation and followed him. Awure is a Yoruba charm or medicine for prosperity, which is supposed to allow prosperity. Taylor strongly believed that there were witches in his local church who were responsible for the failure of his business and the other problems in his life, and so in an attempt to find out exactly what the causes were and to overcome spells of the perceived enemies, he followed the elderly man. The babalawo they went to prepared some awure for him. According to him, the charms he was given worked and his business prospered for awhile, but while he was using the charms he had no peace of mind. Taylor continued to get more charms over a long period while still attending church as an Adventist.

It was observed that all the participants in this study agreed that consulting diviners who make oogun (charms) and use ofo (enchantments) constitutes playing on the devil’s playground, yet Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists who engage in dual allegiance are still able to seek for help from the old power sources during critical times in life.

Another incident happened in a Seventh-day Adventist church in Yoruba land some time ago which further underscores this form of dual allegiance. I interviewed Tai who was in the church the day it happened. When a brawl broke out in the church, the pastor slipped his hand into his pocket and threatened to hit the elder who was fighting
with him with a charm if he did not keep silent. The specifics of the misunderstandings could no longer be remembered. According to Tai, the elders of the church called, discussed, and resolved the misunderstandings between the pastor and their fellow church elder and warned all in the meeting and in that church that no one should notify the conference headquarters about the threat to use charms on the opponent by the church pastor.

Tai was of the opinion that this threat from the pastor could have been an empty one, due to his fear of being attacked in a spiritual way by the church elder. But it could have reflected reality. This story illustrates how strong the influence of the environment is and the continuing influence it can have upon the church and its congregation even after the claim of conversion. The town where this took place is known for its use of charms and enchantments. One of their songs says, “If charms do not work, then the descendants of Surefun⁵ are doomed or if charms and medicines fail, we will return to Surefun for a more powerful charm.”

Several other examples of this form of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists were mentioned during the field research. Kuye who is a minister recalled having to reprimand a member of the church who had charms hanging on his roof to protect his family from evil. According to him, the member appeared to see nothing wrong in hanging charms on the ceiling of his house.

However, Inudun told how he was able to overcome the temptation of getting involved in the use of charms to accomplish a task he was given by his community. He was asked to visit the governor of his state to request electric power for the community.

⁵Pseudonym of the town this incident took place.
Two different kinds of charms were offered to him to use for this purpose. One was called *agadangodo* and the other *moyihun* or *mopahunda*. *Agadangodo* literally meaning padlock, when drenched in some ritualistic sacrifices, it is believed to be so potent that it will cause the person it is used on to respond positively to whatever is requested.

The second type of charm works in the same way. *Moyinhun* or *mopahunda* literally means “do not change my voice or words.” These two kinds of charms are based on homeopathic magic which is based on the assumption that if some form of action is performed on something, it will have the same impact as if it were done to the person being cursed. So if the padlock is locked or the *moyinhun* is used against a person, whatever is required from that person is sealed, and the person will not be able to change the words of the one placing the curse.

All Inudun had to do was to lock the padlock as he went to visit the governor after making some additional enchantments, or touching his lips with the *moyinhun* and reciting some incantations. Then after exchanging the regular pleasantries with the governor, whatever he requested concerning his village would be granted by the governor. Inudun further stated that such ritualistic padlocks can also be used for other purposes. It is believed that the progress of a person’s life can also be placed under a lock by enemies and that such a life so locked becomes stagnant in all endeavors or becomes incapacitated to be able to accomplish anything in life unless the curse is broken by the power of Jesus Christ.

In this story Inudun refused to accept or use any of the charms brought to him. His reasons, however, were not based on his faith relationship with Christ. He repeatedly alluded to being afraid of the people who brought the charms, as being the main reason
for refusing them. He did not trust them that they would not try to harm him in a
different way with the charms. “What if the charm was meant for something else,” he
asked, “and they were only trying to get rid of me so they could take my position as the
community leader.” He went to the governor’s office, after praying to God for favor.
His village was eventually electrified, without his use of the proffered charms and
enchantments.

Church Members in the Occult

There are different occult groups in Yoruba land, prominent among which is the
Ogboni fraternity. It is a despicable thing to hear that a member of the church belongs to
any kind of cult, since evil and devil worship are thought to be perpetrated by members
of such groups. Some of the participants in this study told stories of how members who
were discovered to be members of the occult were treated. Just like every other
manifestation of dual allegiance, membership in the occult among church members is
always shrouded in great secrecy in the Adventist Church, although it is an open practice
in some other Christian denominations in Yoruba land. Tai stated that church members
avoid being members of the occult because of the fear of being disfellowshipped. Tai
further said that there may be people who are in the occult secretly, without the
knowledge of anyone else, although he did not think there were many in the church.

Another participant, Otun, told the story about a very prominent Seventh-day
Adventist church member who was not known to be a member of the occult until his
death. As the members and pastors showed up to bury the man, the cult members also
came to carry out their last rites. Otun was at the scene of the incident, and he mentioned
the great difficulties the church had to secure the body and carry out the funeral.
Kuye also told his experience about another prominent member who was in the occult. His story was a positive testimony of the church’s stance against members who are in the occult. Compared with other denominations like the Anglican Church in the area, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is known to be very strict when it comes to their members belonging to such societies. Participation is not tolerated, although not much is done or said from the pulpit to discourage it. Kuye told how the member’s membership in the occult became known when he decided to run for a political office in the state. Then several insignia of the occult began to surface on his compound. He was confronted by the church leadership and encouraged to leave the secret society, but he was unwilling to follow the guidelines of the church and was disfellowshipped.

In summary, due to several reasons such as a desire to be recognized in society or in search of political position, a small number of Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists may join the occult. This is another manifestation of dual allegiance, whereby members do not see the availability of the power they need to function appropriately in their society, but think that they must combine faith in Christ with the power of the occult for an effective and fruitful life.

**Idolatry and Ritualistic Sacrifices**

Idolatry and ritualistic sacrifices are another form of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists. Saworo who is a church administrator recalled a situation in which a female Adventist member approached him and confessed to bowing down to a family idol. She was having a tough time in life and was told to bow to the family idol if she really wanted things to improve in life. So, she did it. She knew it was wrong and that it would mean denying Christ, but she did it all the same. She was very desperate and at
that time it was difficult for her to see any way out of her situation. Saworo told her that she should pray and God would forgive her.

Another sister, Ike, remembered how during her college years she almost fell into this same form of dual allegiance. She was having problems trying to pass her examinations. It was not that she did not understand what she was doing at school, but when examination time arrived, she became frightened to the point of paralysis and became unable to write her examinations. So she decided to find a solution to her problem. She was invited to talk with an Aladura church pastor by some friends. After explaining her situation to the pastor, he prayed in the name of Jesus, for which she was glad at that point that Jesus was called upon to help her.

But as she was about to leave the pastor’s house, the man told her that she was to carry out some sacrifices. She was to buy all the pens and papers she was going to use for her coming examinations, two coconuts, and some African black soap, and bring them to the pastor’s church. Then both of them would go to a forest nearby at night where there are palm trees. He would make a concoction in the coconut, into which the pens would be soaked. She would take the second coconut and walking backward, she would break it by throwing it against the tree. Then without looking back, she would return to him to collect the pen. She was also to fast for several days before the beginning of the examination. If she could not fast for whatever reason, he would do it on her behalf for a fee. When she heard all that the prophet had told her to do, she became scared and refused to go back to him. She had thought that the church depended only on the power of prayer without the application of such fetishistic paraphernalia.

Adventist members under pressure by the difficulties of life may be enticed to try
other methods of meeting their needs, such as the worship of family idols. They may be unconsciously tied to these idols through birth, from which deliverance may be needed through a special Christian deliverance ministry. In most cases, it is not that they wish to deny their faith, but since they see no visible option out of their predicaments, doubt, misunderstandings, unpreparedness to face trials, and temptations of life, and other seemingly legitimate reasons may lead them to explore other possible solutions to their life problems, including idolatry.

Christian Pastors and Prophets in a League with Diviners

Although this form of dual allegiance, whereby Christian pastors and prophets sign agreements with the diviners who make charms to pull crowds to their congregation for monetary and other gains, may not exist in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is rampant in other denominations. Participants made constant reference to how a pastor teamed up with diviners at the inception of his church. During this research, several scandalous stories were told of how several Pentecostal and African Independent Church pastors enter into association with diviners with the purpose of making powerful charms and ritualistic sacrifices in order to attract multitudes to their meetings and to increase the offerings and the popularity of their churches. In addition to aworo, a Yoruba charm used for gathering crowds, special ritualistic formulas and sacrifices are known to empower pastors and church founders to be able to perform miracles, signs, and wonders, with the aim of attracting more people to these churches. According to Olooto, the news media often report scandalous stories of churches that kept fresh human skulls under the podium. Recently, one such pastor was apprehended and taken to court, tried, found
guilty, and sent to jail.

In summary, dual allegiance among Seventh-day Adventists in Yoruba land takes the form of secret visitations to spiritual and Pentecostal churches; secret visits to diviners for charms, medicines, and enchantments; church members in the occult; church members’ involvement in idolatry and ritualistic sacrifices; and church pastors and prophets’ alliance with diviners for various reasons.

**Causes of Dual Allegiance**

Drumai suggested a number of possible reasons why a Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist may engage in dual allegiance, including a “complete lack of faith,” “confusion of mind,” “lack of absolute trust in God to deliver and settle as he has promised,” “the need for apparent quick results,” “the need for so-called ‘helping God’ for things to happen quickly,” “doubts,” “lack of understanding,” “Satan working behind the scenes,” “upholding family traditions and practice,” “keeping up a vow or covenant,” and “the quest for position, power and authority.”

Other participants in the research alluded to cultural and worldview influences, inadequate Adventist pastoral responses to Yoruba cultural issues, imbalances in the three encounters—power, truth, and allegiance—and incomplete or lack of genuine conversion as some of the causes of dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists. These latter four points will be used as an outline in the presentation of the findings of the field research about the causes of dual allegiance among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists.

**Cultural and Worldview Influences**

Several components of Yoruba culture and worldview were mentioned by some
of the interviewees as being responsible for dual allegiance. From the conceptual framework established to study Yoruba culture and worldview, parameters such as causation, the concepts of space and material, time and event, issues involving posterity, the unborn, the living dead or the ancestors, interpersonal and group relationships, as well as categorization of life experiences were observed to be components of culture and worldview that can cause dual allegiance. In addition to these, the belief system, such as belief in the deities, their specialized domains and spheres of influence and activities, and the Yoruba belief in a pre-earthly life, after-life, and judgment, all contribute to the cause of dual allegiance.

During the field research, it was observed that causation, interpersonal, and group relationships, perception of God and his relationship with the orisas, posterity, rites of passage, and the after-life were some of the areas of Yoruba culture and worldview that contributed to dual allegiance. The Yoruba Adventist perceptions on causation, when misfortunes and calamities strike, are strongly influenced by the general Yoruba cultural outlook on this issue. Where does calamity come from? Or, who or what is responsible for it?

Yoruba Adventists, like other Yoruba people, understand calamities or diseases to have two causes—natural causation and supernatural causation. In most cases, however, the supernatural causation is the most preferred explanation for the calamities of life. It is believed that most of life’s problems are caused by the gods, witches, wizards, the angered ancestors, and curses from parents, or by destiny. Olooto stated, “Generally speaking there is nothing happening that has no cause.” That is the general belief of Yoruba people. Anything that happens to anyone has a reason or a cause and has
someone behind it. Olooto further pointed out that what is believed in society concerning causation also features prominently in the church.

He further observed that the Yoruba never believe that anyone dies of natural causes, even if one has cancer or AIDS, for people still believe it is caused by witches, wizards, an angry ancestor, or destiny. And even when there is an overwhelming and convincing proof of pathogenic causation, the Yoruba look for “who puts the pathogen or virus in the system?” The plausible answer from their worldview is still witchcraft. This was repeatedly corroborated by all of the participants in this research. The fear of this kind of causation drives some Yoruba Adventists to the diviner.

To further establish the Yoruba Adventist understanding of causation, Inudun’s experience regarding childbirth, coupled with other comments from him, shows some of the psychological trauma and perplexities such an experience can cause in the life of the believer. His wife had been pregnant several times but each time their child died. Both he and his wife had gone to the hospital and were told they had no medical conditions that were responsible for the death of their children. But they still wanted to know what was responsible for their plight. Some of their friends and relatives suggested that their problem may have come from one of his former girlfriends whom he did not marry.

In other words, Inudun’s friends knew of the possibility that one of his former girlfriends could have used witchcraft or some other kind of charm to keep his wife from having a child. But he quickly dismissed the idea because he had offered to marry these girls but all of them had turned him down. This is a worldview issue, that someone may have the ability to cause pain and calamities to the person through the use of witchcraft.

Idu shared the story of his experience when his family had a terrible accident. His
wife and her friend from her place of work had paid a dealer for two cars, one for each of them. But the dealer had duped them. He brought only one car instead of two. Idu encouraged his wife to return the car since the dealer had not fulfilled his part of the bargain. But she did not. So there were still certain unresolved issues about the ownership of the car when she decided to travel with it. He had warned her not to use the new car. But she did not listen and without his consent, she travelled in the car with his two daughters together with a young man from their neighborhood, who she had begged to drive the car for them on the journey. As they travelled, they had a ghastly accident in which the person who drove them died.

After hearing about the accident, Idu travelled with his pastor and some other members to visit his severely injured wife and children in the town where they were hospitalized. As they travelled, they talked about the Yoruba and Yoruba Adventist understanding of the causes of calamities. It was rumored that the accident site was either possessed or that a construction error may be responsible for the accident, because several other fatal accidents had occurred at the same spot. When they reached the spot of the accident, the car in front of them suddenly stopped almost causing another accident. They watched as the driver of the other car opened the hood and out jumped a very big cat. Idu asked those travelling with him, “Did you see what I just saw?” They all responded that they saw a big black cat jump out of the engine space of the car.

In a situation like this the Yoruba would say, *ejo lowo ninu*, meaning that it is ominous, and that the accidents or the incidents on that spot of the road are not natural, and that some supernatural forces or beings may be involved in the calamities happening in that area of the road. Idu, however, could have also believed that the accident was
caused by diabolical forces because of the conditions surrounding the purchase of the vehicle. He could have subscribed to the suggestions that someone somewhere was responsible for their plight. The other woman who did not get a car could have been an easy target of such accusations. But he refused to believe that line of reasoning. According to him, he preferred the natural explanation which saw the cause as a mechanical failure. He said, “But for once I didn’t want to have that view [the view that the accident must have been caused by some diabolical forces] because I knew from what happened, it was a mechanical failure. A vehicle stopped suddenly [in front of them and] the brakes did not work at top speed, so the driver had to hit [run into] a towing vehicle made of steel.”

Curses are another cause of calamities or failure in life alluded to during the field research. Inudun sees curses as pronouncements which may come from parents or others who may have been offended, and which are believed to be potent enough to cause confusion, misfortune, and chaos in the life of those cursed. Such curses are a reality. Inudun stated that it is like when Balak invited Balaam to do to the children of Israel as they camped beside the River Jordan above its entrance into the Dead Sea (Num 22). According to the biblical accounts, Balak sent emissaries to Balaam to curse Israel, so he would be able to overcome them in battle and drive them from his land. Balaam was perceived to possess the supernatural ability to bless as well as curse, and whatever he said would come to fulfillment. Scriptures also say that the power of life and death is in the tongue (Prov 18:21).

According to Inudun, when his family was having difficulty having children, many of his fellow Yoruba Adventists suggested he was probably cursed as a child by his
parents. They identified the possibility of parental curses as a possible cause of his misfortunes. Inudun said, “Curses that may be from the parents or grandparents, like some of the parents will say, ‘oni sorire’ (meaning you will not prosper), ‘omo re oni sorire.’ You see all those curses are there and may cause misfortunes later in the life of the individual. During my experience, I prayed that should there be any curse on me and my wife that God should neutralize any such curses.” A little later his wife became pregnant and bore their first daughter, who they intended to call Oluwagbadura, meaning “the Lord hears and answers prayers,” but who they eventually named Oluwafunmilayo, “the Lord has given me joy.”

The issue of posterity is a cultural and a worldview concern that can lead to dual allegiance. Nothing is more important to a Yoruba family than having children to carry on the family name and honor. Like the Hebrews, the Yoruba value and treat the issue of posterity and childbearing as extremely important. The Scriptures speak of children in glorious and valuable terms. Psalm 127:3, 4 states, “Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.” Yoruba proverbs and eulogies also speak of the children in similar and glorious terms.

Barrenness is a very deeply embedded issue in the consciousness of the Yoruba, for which even those who are converted might not mind to seek for help from a diviner. Olooto stated that if he were not a pastor, his relatives would probably have prevailed and forced him to seek help from a diviner after five years of marriage without any sign of a child in his home. The question that came to mind from this conversation was, “Does
that mean that members would naturally visit the diviner after waiting for some time for children?”

Ancestors are also dreaded and thought to be able to inflict calamities on their posterity, especially if they forget to render the required sacrifices to their departed spirits. The Yoruba see life as a cyclical journey, and death is just a part of that journey, albeit, a journey of no return, although it is believed some may return in rebirth, hence the naming of their children babatunde (father has returned) and iyabo, or Yetunde (mother has returned). I remember as a child the burial of a member of my community who was buried with his belongings. It was believed that the dead were not actually dead, but had only experienced a change of environment. They are believed to be a part of this world’s unseen realm of the spirits. The Adventists’ belief differs markedly from this view. But, unfortunately, the traditional view of the ancestors creeps back into the Yoruba Adventist Church from time to time, creating tension and ambiguity in their beliefs.

Saworo was quick to point out that such ancestral beliefs indicate a dual allegiance. He told how during a burial ceremony in one of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Yoruba land that as the choir sang, a line in their lyrics, mojokun, mojekolo sugbon onti nwon baje ni o bawon je, meaning “when you get to heaven or to the world of the ancestors, do not eat millipedes or earthworms, but whatever they eat there.” Saworo adds that such thoughts and verbal ejaculations as baba mi ma sun l’orun o, meaning “my father, please do not sleep in heaven,” or oku olomo ki sun, “that is the ancestors never sleep,” feature prominently in the Yoruba worldview and also may unknowingly slip out of the mouth of Yoruba Adventists in a time of crisis. This again
illustrates how deeply the Yoruba worldview is embedded in the Yoruba Adventist subconscious.

The culture and worldview of the Yoruba were identified by the participants as some of the reasons for dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists; because not all cultural or worldview issues were addressed during the early Adventist missionary work, neither are they being addressed today.

Inadequate Adventist Pastoral Approaches

Some Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist pastoral approaches leave unmet needs among parishioners that can lead to dual allegiance. Inappropriate pastoral approach may include the failure to present the availability of divine power so the members can rest on God in times of crisis. It would also include silence and an unwillingness to address the problems of dual allegiance with the church members.

Several of the respondents answered negatively and seemed frustrated as they described imbalances in the ministry of the Yoruba Adventist pastorate. Ironically, Olooto, a Yoruba Adventist minister in leadership at the Union level, said that it was not until four or five years ago, when another fundamental belief was added to the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church that pastors received training to learn how to educate the members on how to dissociate themselves from evil practices. Saworo, a minister at the Division level and a Yoruba, responded to this question in a similar way. He further stated that Yoruba Adventist pastors have their own weaknesses that might contribute to the causes of dual allegiance. He opined that the ministers ought to allow God to demonstrate his power through them more than it is done. He further pointed out that pastors in the Division are already talking about this as well as working hard so that
church members see more of the demonstration of Christ’s power in them. This would encourage and strengthen their faith in Christ Jesus, “and will be an antidote to dual allegiance.”

Ike told how she developed some mysterious sores on her thighs, which were later discovered to have resulted from a spiritual attack. The sores, known as *ata* from the Yoruba traditional perspectives, normally begin with boil-like appearances on the skin, which then burst open to release pus, with excruciating pain and pepperish discomfort. The Adventist ministers who were invited to pray for her prayed, but the problem persisted and even grew worse. Then one day a Pentecostal minister knocked at her door and stated that God had directed him to come and pray with her and to reveal to her that her medical condition was the result of a direct spiritual attack. This minister prayed and continued to pray and fast with her until she was totally delivered and healed. She showed me the massive scars from her wounds.

There were several responses given to the question asked about the effectiveness of the Yoruba Adventist pastoral ministry. Presley felt there was an unpreparedness of the Yoruba Adventist pastoral ministry to handle issues that have to do with the supernatural powers of darkness and demon possession in the church. In a situation that occurred at the early stage of his ministry, Presley had an encounter in which a newly baptized member of the church was provided accommodation in the church building but suffered from satanic attacks and demonic possession afterwards. The brother had been hired to make benches for the church’s outreach program. Through this contact he eventually became a member of the church. The interesting thing is that until his conversion he was very healthy psychologically and had experienced no demonic attacks.
After the bench project was concluded, he became the janitor of the church. A little while later, he began to complain that he did not want to reside in the church compound anymore and started manifesting some behaviors that were inconsistent with a normal person. One day, when Presley happened to be at the district headquarters in Lagos, the brother came in to see the district pastor. As he entered the office, it was clear that something was wrong. He had a red piece of cloth tied around his head, another piece around his body; he was holding a ¾-inch rod about six feet long in one hand, and some dust or sand in the other hand. He was encouraged to throw away the dust in his hand. It seemed that he was not aware that he had sand in his hand. He threw away the sand, but refused to let go of the iron bar.

He requested to talk with the pastor. The pastor spoke with him and asked him what was wrong. But his entire attempt to respond to the pastor’s question was muted. He could not speak. He was able to respond to some other questions, but he became mute whenever he was asked to say what was wrong or what happened to him. Presley and the pastor began to pray and sing, and read from Scripture. They continued to ask what happened to him for several hours and still there was no any change in his condition.

The district pastor, who was also a trained psychologist, thought that the brother was at an early stage of lunacy, but Presley thought it was more than just lunacy, that some spiritual and supernatural dynamics were present. They continued to pray. Eventually, the district pastor became uncomfortable because they were in an office in his house and his wife and children were at home. He then phoned a member of the church who was a captain in the Nigerian Army to send some help. When the sick brother heard
the conversation on the phone, he became suspicious and agitated and asked whether the pastor was calling the police on him. He became furious, but as they sang, he calmed down.

Some other assignments took the district pastor away from direct involvement with the situation so Presley had to take over the deliverance ministry. At that point it began raining and the brother went into the rain. All effort to get him back in the office proved futile. Presley stood at the door of the house, talking to him, but the man threatened that should anyone come closer to him, he would harm them. He became more fierce and wild. At some point it occurred to Presley to move toward him and claim the authority that is in the name of Jesus. He said, “I am coming to you in the name of the Lord Jesus,” as he stepped into the rain toward him. He kept saying this and moving toward him until he finally got to him. Presley was able to lead him back into the office. By this time, two or three soldiers from Captain Bateson had arrived and the demonized man was not feeling comfortable. But they cajoled him, explaining that they were just there visiting. Just as the pastor started talking to the man again, the two soldiers rushed at him, but they could not hold him. He rushed out of the office into the street and that was the last time they saw him.

Presley further analyzed the incident in the pastor’s office that day. It was obvious that these ministers had a case of demon possession on their hands. The district pastor had a degree in clinical psychology. He thought the man was at an early stage of lunacy. This realization should have given the pastors greater determination and compassion to enter into the spiritual battle for the life of the Christian believer under the attack of Satan and his agents. Also, the unpreparedness and the naivety with which the
situation was handled became obvious when they sent for the Captain who later sent two soldiers to overpower the man who was in need of spiritual help. The case ended in disgrace and chaos.

Presley’s assessment of the incident reflected guilt, shame, and defeat in the way the situation was handled and reveals a very important lapse in the state of the current Yoruba Adventist pastoral ministry. He further stated that he was so ashamed to say that that was the last time he ever saw the young man. They were not equipped to handle such situations. What they did was by trial and error. Yoruba Adventist pastors have not been well equipped to handle supernatural manifestations. Presley lamented at not being able to help the young man who was in need of deliverance. He was sure that the manifestations they observed that day were more than mental illness.

The tongue tying, which he experienced, as this young man tried to tell them what led to his condition was a signal that some supernatural force and agent might be involved in his plight. He would sing with them, and he would be calm when they were reading the Bible. Sometimes he would wake up as if he were hearing those things for the first time. Afterward, his mind would be calmed by what was being read; he would also answer questions, all kinds of questions, but when he was asked what was wrong or how he became sick, he would be tongue-tied. This went on for many hours. Later, a member of the church from the man’s part of the country pointed out that children born in that region were normally sold to the devil at birth, which helped explain what was wrong with the brother. Whatever the case may have been, Presley lamented the fact that current Yoruba Adventist pastoral ministry is not well equipped to handle situations involving demon possession and the deliverance ministry.
Presley further pointed out that the new doctrine called “Growing Up in Christ,” which was added to the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church in 2005, goes a long way to explain and teach how having a sustained growth in Christ will bring complete victory over the fear of evil spiritual forces. This doctrine discusses and addresses, among other issues, the believers’ challenges with the spiritual battle. The Church’s position expressed in the doctrine would really help the Yoruba Adventists in knowing what to do in cases that involve witchcraft, demonization, and other such spiritual battles they may face in life. However, this doctrine is coined in a Western philological construct, needing further contextualization among the Yoruba and other people groups with similar worldviews.

Idu portrayed the same line of thought, though he appeared pretty lenient with the ministers. He felt that pastors cannot and should not be blamed, because they are also human. He also indicted that church members who engage in dual allegiance demonstrate a lack of faith. “I think they are not well grounded in the doctrines of the church. They do not really know who they believe [in] and that might be the reason they deviate into dual allegiance.”

Taylor stated that the reason he went to join another denomination’s prayer meeting was because his felt needs were not met in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He expects that a pastor of the church ought to be close to the members, to know their problems, what they need, and must be praying for the members. Pastors should be someone the members can go to when they have a problem. But he complained that he was not ministered to by any of his Adventist pastors, “but I did from pastors outside of my church.”
The other denominational pastors prayed with him and gave him the idea that it is only God who can provide for him. Also, in the Adventist Church, he never learned anything about fasting. It was not talked about and or practiced in his local congregation. He did not know that fasting and prayer can work. He began to fast only after he joined another church prayer group.

From the description given by Taylor, it can be observed that his cognitive, affective, and other needs that should be satisfied through fellowship with other Christians, pastoral care, and love were not met, so he moved to another denomination where eventually these needs were satisfied. There are also times when one becomes overwhelmed with the challenges of life and there is a need for someone, especially a pastor, to offer spiritual help. When this desire is not satisfied, the door is open to find help elsewhere. Eventually, a diviner or pastor of another denomination may become the answer to the problem.

Participants in this study, both ministers and members, expressed dissatisfaction in how a majority of Seventh-day Adventist ministers interacted with their members. They felt that this may have contributed to the dual allegiance among the members in the church. For one thing, Yoruba, with their spiritual power orientation, find this great need unsatisfied after conversion to Adventism. Hence they visit a diviner or pastor of another denomination as a way of seeking and acquiring help. The incidence Presley narrated about their confusion, helplessness, and perplexity over an attempt to deliver a possessed man shows how unprepared the Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist pastoral ministers are to handle situations involving supernatural forces.
Lack of Balance between Power, Truth, and Allegiance Encounters

Almost all the participants in this study agree that there is a lack of balance in the three essential encounters of the Christian experience—power, truth, and allegiance—among Yoruba Adventists. There is especially a lack of emphasis on divine power. Some of them called it a “powerless gospel,” in which the availability of divine power with which to maintain a daily Christian life is not talked about enough. As a result, believers struggle to remain faithful or to patiently wait during times of crisis. Most of the members interviewed as well as many of the ministers fault this imbalance of power, truth, and allegiance as one of the reasons for dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists.

To battle and ward off evil forces, the Yoruba feel a great need for the power of charms or medicine. As has been shown in this dissertation, power is of primary importance to the Yoruba. To own it, protect it, use it, and acquire more of it is one of their main goals in life. As most of the interviewees admitted, this felt need for power among Yoruba Adventists was not addressed by the missionaries and neither is it now being addressed by the indigenous ministers. Saworo expressed remorse and a sense of helplessness while answering the question on whether the current Adventist pastoral ministry appropriately addresses this need for spiritual power. You could sense the feeling of seriousness and great concern in his response.

Saworo postulated that Adventist ministers have not been up to the task as they should be. He suggested that the pastors are partially at fault when their members participate in dual allegiance, and if they would allow God to demonstrate his power through them, most members would not engage in dual allegiance. Saworo mentioned that Adventist leaders at the Division level are encouraging a greater demonstration of
Christ’s power that should encourage and strengthen the members’ faith in Christ Jesus, and which should also be an antidote to dual allegiance.

Inudun stated with deep sincerity and as an elder of the church that there are a lot of areas the church is avoiding and not dealing with appropriately. He suggested several possible reasons that might be responsible for the ministers not preaching boldly about the power of God. He felt that the pastors are assuming a lot about the members, and that they really do not know the needs of their members or how to address those needs. He also thinks that the ministers are probably lazy or that they are overburdened by the number of churches that they have to pastor. There is also the problem of imbalance in their ministry. Some of them, according to Inudun, focus on music, others on Bible truth, but little attention is rendered to building faith. The power of faith is not developed. They are experts on Revelation seminars, Daniel seminars, knowing about the Sabbath, but talking about faith is not common.

Ide faulted the idea of presenting anything enough, whether truth or power, when asked to assess the adequacy of Adventist pastoral ministry, and that there is no church which can lay claims to that. No Christian or church can say, “I have arrived.” We are all still pressing on the upward way. However, that is the purpose of prayer meetings and Bible studies, which are to draw people closer to God. But unfortunately, not many members attend the prayer meetings of the church! In other words, both church members and pastors lack the dedication and commitment that it takes to be totally committed to God. Adventists boast of having the truth the world needs, but they do not emphasize the divine power of the Holy Spirit who gives the power to obey and follow that truth.

Presley was born and grew up in an Adventist pastor’s home. He reflected on
some of his experiences and on the great imbalance in the Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist Church between truth, power, and allegiance. This had been a problem to him as a younger member of the church. And though he is now a president to one of the local conferences in Yoruba land, not much has changed. He mentioned that there is a focus on the commandments. Christ’s power is mentioned in passing, but he did not really understand or come to know his power of forgiveness or his power to overcome the agencies of darkness that seem to constantly seek to lure the Christian away from their Savior. All he knew as a teenager was the commandments he had to observe, which were good, but during that time he struggled so hard to keep them. As a result, he felt guilty most of the time and lacked the victorious Christian life promised in the Bible.

He also remembered many other young people who attended the same baptismal class with him, and who were baptized into the church, but who had found Christ in other denominations and are now out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Fortunately, he discovered the power and meaning of forgiveness, and was liberated. He further said that there is an imbalance in how the Yoruba Adventist Church deals with truth, power, and allegiance that needs correction if dual allegiance is to be dealt with. According to him, what the church needs most today is to help the members understand Christ and the power that is inherent in him, power not only to save from sin, but also to minister to all of their needs, for provision, protection, and deliverance.

Presley pointed out that correcting this imbalance will not be easy to carry out. The members are so focused on truth and doctrines and keeping of the commandments. Unfortunately many think this is the way of salvation. Right now, in his Conference, an effort is being made to re-teach and re-structure as to lift up Jesus Christ before both
ministers and members. Tai also confirmed the recent effort of the Conference to reeducate ministers and members on the need of the balance that is so essential between truth, power, and allegiance and to encourage the members to rest and trust only in Christ rather than in the diabolical powers of the traditional religion.

In summary, this field research discovered that there is a great imbalance in the three essential encounters that are necessary for an appropriate Christianity to evolve and develop among any given people. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba, there is a focus on doctrines through which the truth of God’s word is manifested, and on allegiance to the truth. But there is an almost total silence on the third essential encounter of power, so needed to enable believers to be genuinely dependent and to maintain allegiance to the revealed truth. Both the ministers and the members interviewed in this study agreed on this, but some also stated that steps are already being taken to rectify this imbalance.

The Conversion Experience

Another cause of dual allegiance alluded to during this study involved the irregularities in many conversion experiences among Yoruba Adventists. Saworo categorically defined “conversion as a change of worldview, a radical change in one’s worldview. So where this has not taken place, you will see that people will still live by their old worldview,” thus resulting in dual allegiance in the life of Christians. Saworo was of the opinion that those Yoruba Adventists who still visit the diviner and depend on the use of charms during the critical periods of life do so because they are not genuinely converted. This position may sound harsh and unfair when looking at the faith of those Yoruba Adventists who engage in dual allegiance. But the more important question is,
Who is responsible for this lack of genuine conversion? As has been shown above, many of the interviewees, both ministers and members, feel that the current Seventh-day Adventist ministry among Yoruba Adventists falls short of meeting the members’ need for the power of God in their life, hence the quest for other power to supplement what is received from the pulpit and from the insufficient pastoral care they receive.

When the question of conversion was further probed, Saworo suggested that the worldview change needed by Yoruba Adventists should include knowing that Jesus is Lord. “Jesus has defeated Satan and this is the new worldview that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. You see if one has accepted that, I believe a radical change of worldview has taken place.” But where that has not taken place and one is still afraid of the powers, forces, witches, and wizards, such people will be driven to seek power and help in time of need. Scripture encourages us to approach the throne of grace boldly to receive help in times of need.

Olooto’s description of his conversion from both paganism and Islam to Adventism tended to suggest that conversion is taken to mean the acceptance of certain doctrines like the Sabbath, or the right understanding of the state of the dead, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. When such a definition of conversion is common, Saworo suggested that many expectations are not met and dual allegiance may thrive in such a situation. When the culture and worldview of the believer are not transformed, many are in danger of returning to their pre-Christian methods of addressing their needs.

Conversion can be genuine or faulty. Idu opined that people convert for many different reasons and different motives. When people hear the gospel and the gospel seed finds fertile soil in the heart, germination that may eventually lead to genuine conversion
may occur. However, in some instances, many are converted for reasons such as to upgrade their status in the society, to get better jobs or better education, or even to receive monetary benefits. In other situations, conversion may occur as a result of a traumatic experience in one’s life like a ghastly accident, loss of health, or loss of employment. Most of the time, conversion leads to a conflict with prior beliefs and practices. No matter what might be the reason or the motive for one’s conversion, if it does not take place at the worldview level, as Saworo opined, those Christians are not completely severed from their previous beliefs, nor is their worldview changed. In such cases it is just a matter of time before dual allegiance will surface.

He cited the example of the burial of a member of the church where he officiated in one of the churches in Yoruba land. As the choir sang during the program, a portion of the lyrics went like this, *mojokun, mojekolo, ohun won banje ni o bawon je*. This means “do not eat millipede or earthworm when you get to the world beyond, but whatever they eat there.” This greatly undermined the Adventist doctrine of the state of the dead that postulates that the dead are unconscious. In the same vein goes the Yoruba saying that *oku olomo kisun*, “meaning that the ancestors never sleep,” making such sayings as, *Baba mi, iya mi mo sun l’orun*, that is “please my father, and my mother, do not sleep in heaven,” which is a call on the ancestors to come to their aid when faced with difficult life situations. Nevertheless, this is a worldview issue, which needs to be transformed by the truth of the gospel. The choir members obviously have their old worldview about the state of the dead still untouched, untransformed, and unchanged.

Saworo’s conversion from Islam to the Christian faith occurred in a Christian school. He was a devout Muslim, who prayed five times a day and kept all the rites and
rituals of his faith until he arrived at the Christian school. There, he could not worship the way he used to, because he could not combine his studies with praying five times a day. So he joined the Christian student group to worship, believing that any method of worship was acceptable to God at that particular stage of his life. But God spoke to his mind; he genuinely accepted Christ and was converted. From his definition of conversion, his worldview was changed. He believed that Christ in Saworo was greater than the devil who is in the world, and that no power of Satan or his agents can have any effect upon him. Saworo strongly believes that this is the kind of conversion that can withstand the temptation to revert to dual allegiance.

Suggested Solutions

During the field research, participants were asked whether they believe it would be possible to end dual allegiance and what they would suggest could be done to obviate the phenomenon in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba. Their answer to the first question was really surprising. There seemed to be a consensus on the answer they gave. Three of them used almost the same words, “We cannot totally eradicate dual allegiance from the church.” Another church leader was of the opinion that it would not be possible to stop people from going to diviners or prophets. Nobody can control the minds of people. Everybody has the freedom to do what they want to do, but as long as diviners are around, somebody will lead somebody to them.

This position baffled me for it seemed to indicate a defeatist attitude. But another interviewee mentioned Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares growing together in the field until the harvest. So when Jesus comes, there will still be wheat and tares on earth.
But what about in the church? One would have expected that by the time Jesus comes, much of the field would have been weeded and prepared for translation.

In spite of this position, several participants suggested that dual allegiance could be reduced through a genuine Christian conversion, a dedicated prayer life, a dedicated study of the Bible, sharing the gospel with others, a Holy Ghost-filled Christian life, and a pastoral ministry that addresses the existential needs of the church members. Inudun responded that he was happy the question about what could be done to overcome dual allegiance was asked. His response was focused on the role of the pastoral ministry.

According to him, and probably based on his experience with the pastors they have had in that local congregation, Inudun was of the opinion that the pastorate should be given a new orientation on the power associated with prayer. So much is done and said about the truth of the Bible, but this must be balanced with miracles that come from God. He then quoted Matt 28, where Jesus promised that great miracles will follow those who believe him, and quickly asked, “Does it mean that our pastors do not believe?” “So,” he concluded, “if this Scripture is fulfilled among us, this dual or double allegiance will be erased.”

Inudun wanted to see Adventist pastors perform miracles. He felt they needed to change their orientations from just preaching truth and doing Revelation or Daniel seminars alone. He wanted them to be able to go to someone who is barren and pray in the name of Jesus and commit themselves to fasting and ask God to bless families with children. According to him, our pastor’s inability to work miracles in the name of Jesus is because they are lazy about seeking the face of God on behalf of the members, and because they have a wrong orientation when it comes to ministry. Everything seems to
be based on preaching the truth and on Daniel and Revelation seminars, but there is also a need for the demonstration of the power of God in their ministry.

Kuye seemed to reiterate Inudun’s ideas when he gave a rundown of what he thinks needs to be done to reduce and one day obviate dual allegiance from the rank and file of church membership. He said that there is the need for complete submission by the leaders of the church to God, a need to disciple the church members, a need for pastoral counseling, the presentation of messages that will address dual allegiance, a dedicated life of faith and power that will also educate members about the power of God and the manifestation of divine power in the church. Kuye further observed that God is performing miracles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, citing a very recent example of how a newly wedded couple in his local church became very worried after only a few months without any sign of pregnancy. He prayed with them regularly on the phone, and soon they called and said they were expecting a child. But he also confirmed that these kinds of challenges can lead members to be engaged in dual allegiance.

Saworo also expressed a similar feeling about the need for a balanced approach to pastoral ministry in the Yoruba Adventist Church. He indicated there was a need to say prayers that will be answered by God on behalf of the members. He cited the example of a woman who desperately wanted a child. If the pastor’s prayer on her behalf is answered, and she becomes pregnant, closure is brought to that quest, and the member will become more convinced that God is present in the church, so there is less reason to be engaged in dual allegiance, and the chastity of the church is kept.

**Summary**

Some suggested that failure to tithe can be an indication of dual allegiance. If this
As a tithing standard is used, probably over 90 percent of Yoruba Adventists can be said to be engaged in dual allegiance. However, as defined in this dissertation, only a small percentage of Yoruba Adventists seems to be involved in dual allegiance, according to most of the participants in the field research. Nevertheless, when the details provided by the interviewees during the field research are carefully considered, it becomes obvious the amount of Yoruba Adventists engaging in dual allegiance may not be the 95 percent as suggested by Saworo, or the 1-2 percent indicated by some of the other participants, but a considerable number of Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists. This number may fall in between the 95 percent and the 1-2 percent as submitted by the participants.

Influences such as psychological pressure from a spouse, parental influence, and the influence of other relatives, the level of education, generational considerations, and other influences determine whether a Yoruba Adventist would engage in dual allegiance or not. It was found that if the believer is genuinely converted, none of these external factors have any effect on faithfulness to God in times of crisis.

Dual allegiance manifests itself in various forms among Yoruba Adventists. These include the secret attendance at churches of other denominations, most especially Pentecostal or indigenous Aladura types; secret visits and consultations with traditional diviners; the use of charms, medicines, and enchantments; ritualistic sacrifices, and membership in the occult. Dual allegiance is often caused by a powerless Christianity resulting from imbalances in the three essential Christian encounters—truth, power, and allegiance—a lack of contextualization, unmet felt needs, and inadequate pastoral and ministerial preparations and care. Chapter 5 will explore an appropriate Seventh-day Adventist response to the challenge of dual allegiance among the Yoruba.
CHAPTER 5

A SUGGESTED CONTEXTUAL RESPONSE TO DUAL ALLEGIANCE AMONG THE YORUBA

Mission scholars have defined dual allegiance, identified its various forms, and enumerated the causes of dual allegiance in both mission environments as well as in the nations where Christian mission originated. The literature and the findings of field research among Yoruba Adventists suggest that people are engaged in dual allegiance for both external and receptor reasons. These reasons include:

1. Discrepancies existed between the missionary worldview, which was largely naturalistic, and that of the Yoruba recipients of their mission works, which was super-naturalistic in nature. These discrepancies were responsible for what missionary anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert referred to as the flaw of the excluded middle. With this concept Hiebert describes the situation whereby the missionaries failed to understand or deal with the invisible beings and forces such as the world of the ancestors, witches, and wizards among the Yoruba and other non-Western cultures. The result was that some areas of Yoruba life were not transformed by biblical truth, and Christianity never seemed to have answers for many indigenous needs.

2. The presentation of a powerless gospel emphasized right teaching and good behavior, but offered little spiritual power to live the taught truth.
3. There was an initial silence and participation by some missionaries with the slave trade.

4. There was misapplication of the Seventh-day Adventist theology of mission.

5. Conversion practices sometimes included people movements that allowed some who were baptized to hold Christianity only as a veneer over the old un-transformed animistic worldview of the Yoruba.

6. Another reason was Ifa Orunmila, the Yoruba pre-Christian deity of divination, and the role it played during the early nineteenth-century missionary works among the Yoruba. While this trusted deity among the Yoruba prepared the Egba, a sub-tribe of the Yoruba, to receive Christian missionaries into their midst, the Egba’s openness to Christianity because of the preparation done by Ifa resulted in a continued trust in traditional divinations, a practice vehemently denounced in the Bible. As a result, Christianity was compromised and both Christianity and the old ways were seen as being able to accommodate each other.

7. The Yoruba believe in three different kinds of causalities—natural, emotional, and supernatural. The Yoruba tendency is to lean more heavily on supernatural causality of forces and beings found in the middle zone, where ancestors, witchcraft, ori, and ayanmo are viewed as responsible for the successes, failures, or calamities of life and use divination to determine these and other life experiences.

8. The Yoruba also seek power from medicines and charms to guarantee success in life, for protection, and for various other purposes. They offer sacrifices to the spirit world of the ancestors, and invoke the assistance of other spiritual beings, spiritual forces, and Olorun or Olodumare for help in times of need. In view of the above discoveries and
observations from the field research on dual allegiance, I suggest that the process of “critical contextualization” coined by Paul G. Hiebert seems the appropriate Seventh-day Adventist response to dual allegiance among the Yoruba. This process will be discussed in the next section.

The Process of Contextualization: Definitions and Steps

Contextualization\(^1\) is defined in several ways by different authors, some of which will be referred to in this section. Charles Kraft defines contextualization as “the process of learning to express genuine Christianity in socio-culturally appropriate ways.”\(^2\) It has to do with how the gospel as revealed in Scripture authentically comes to life in each new cultural, social, religious, and historical setting.\(^3\) A commonly cited biblical text in support of contextualization is 1 Cor 9:19-23, where Paul portrays himself as being all things to all people so he could save some.

John Jefferson Davis sees contextualization as “the process through which the substance of biblical revelation is interpreted and applied in terms of the categories and

\(^1\)The term contextualization “appears to have been coined around 1972 by staff members of the Theological Education Fund (TEF). Dr. Shoki Coe, General Director of TEF, and Dr. Aharon Sapsezian, one of the four Associate Directors, were some of the first to use it. In its original use the term referred primarily to theological education in non-Western countries, but soon it was felt that the concept could be used also for other aspects of the life and mission of the Church. The term received a wider acceptance at the Lausanne Congress of 1974, where one seminar studied the topic ‘The Gospel, Cultural Contextualization, and Religious Syncretism.’ Cf. J. D. Douglas, ed., ‘Let the Earth Hear His Voice,’ Minneapolis 1975, pp. 1216-1228. At the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975, Bishop Mortimer Arias spoke of ‘Contextual Evangelism.’ Cf. D. M. Paton, ed., Briser les Barrières, Nairobi 1975, p. 45 (Crollius, ‘What Is So New about Inculturation?’)”\(^2\).

\(^2\)C. H. Kraft, Anthropology for Christian Witness, 376.

thought forms of those who are receiving the message. Systematic theology, like counseling and homiletics, seeks to be context specific in its application of biblical truth.”\textsuperscript{4} Davis observes that in contextualization, the products of systematic theology encounter the specific contexts of culture where they find appropriate ground for their applications. In a practical sense, contextualization is understanding the message of the Bible and also the local cultural context of the recipients, and applying the messages to that culture by using elements viable in that culture to convey the biblical message. In applying this process to the Yoruba Adventists’ situation, four steps are involved.

First, a phenomenological analysis of the culture and worldview of the Yoruba is needed. This first step has to do with a thorough, intentional, and a well-coordinated examination of the Yoruba culture and worldview. The purpose is to understand the culture and the underlying worldview assumptions of the Yoruba, which form and motivate their day-to-day actions and behaviors. This phenomenological study of the culture allows pastors and church leaders to understand the culture and, therefore, to make more informed judgments.

Bruce Bauer captures the necessity of this step by saying:

Christian communicators do not seek to contextualize the gospel message, rather they seek to present the timeless message of the Scriptures by using the cultural forms, words, and symbols of a people in order to better present that timeless message. . . . Not only must the communicator understand the biblical message well, but the language and culture of a people group must also be understood before effective communication can take place.\textsuperscript{5}


The study of Yoruba culture and worldview was presented in the third chapter of this dissertation.

Second, an ontological critique of the beliefs and practices of the Yoruba people based on biblical truth and principles must be carried out. This step evaluates the truth claims of the different beliefs and values, using the Scriptures and objective reality as a basis. This calls for a deep knowledge of the Bible and theological frameworks for understanding Scripture that serve as the criteria by which the Yoruba social and cultural systems are evaluated and judged. For example, the truthfulness of the Yoruba’s belief in the ancestors and the ancestral world and in their influence on the plight of the living must be checked on the basis of biblical revelation. This means studying what the Bible says on the state of the dead, the final judgment, and the reward for all who had lived on the earth. Because of the specific nature of dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists, no single set of theological answers will solve all the problems that arise. Specific theological responses must be developed for each cultural issue and challenge.

A third step involves a critical evaluation of the old existing beliefs and customs in the light of biblical understanding. In other words, those issues that cause dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists such as the fear of witchcraft, curses, ancestral venerations, barrenness, and the need for guidance in life, which cause some to seek divination or carry out ritualistic sacrifice, must be evaluated by the Scriptures and dealt with on the basis of the Christian faith. This is a dynamic process that needs upgrading from time to time as new issues are observed in the local church.

Several theological issues emerged from the analysis of the Yoruba worldview and from the field research conducted among Yoruba Adventists, for which a brief
response will be supplied in this chapter. There is a need for a theology of the invisible, a theology of worship and submission, a theology of power and the cross, a theology of discernment, and a theology of suffering, poverty, and death. Also, how should Yoruba Adventists respond to the invisible beings and forces they perceive to influence their lives?

The fourth step is a missiological transformation, which is the process by which new converts and churches learn to apply and internalize biblical truth in everyday life in the process of moving from the old ways to new life in Christ. For the individual Yoruba Adventist believer, this process leads to spiritual growth and maturity, while for churches it is an ongoing process of living as God’s people in a fallen world.

Hiebert and others suggest that this process should take place in the local church, which is a hermeneutical community. This might lead to confusion in the number and nature of theologies that may evolve from the process of contextualization in different cultural conditions. Hiebert and others further suggest that the solution for such confusion is the use of what they call meta-theology, which is a biblically based way of doing theology that sets limits to theological diversity. Meta-theology is based on principles that suggest that any theology must be rooted in Scripture, must be done by the church as the hermeneutical community, and also must include a conscious evaluation of the cultural context.

---

7 Ibid., 366.
8 Ibid., 385.
9 Ibid., 384.
The concept of a hermeneutical community being the local church may not be valid for the situation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has a more centralized system of administration and works by the power of delegation at the various levels of its organization. Decisions on matters of doctrine and theology that affect the world church are currently being taken during the sittings of the General Conference of the church when in session, which are essentially being “squeezed” to fit into all the various cultural contexts of the world. However, Jon Dybdahl rightly suggests that although the Bible is universally authoritative, theologies are not. Therefore, with the new General Conference policy on contextualization, recently voted on and which will be mentioned in this discussion later, it is hoped that the various cultural milieu of contextualization will be more at the level of a people group that approximately fits the local division of the church at the level of the Conferences or local missions. This is to say that the doctrines of the church which are decided upon at the General Conference in session will further be studied, analyzed, and applied in the cultural contexts of where the church is found.

If these four steps are faithfully followed in each local church among the Yoruba, syncretism or dual allegiance should have a much more difficult time existing among Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists. It must also be reiterated that this process must be an ongoing experience in the life of the church, because issues that need to be addressed and

---

10 These levels of organization begin with the local churches, which are the smallest unit and main building blocks for the local Conferences or missions. Conferences and missions are organized into Unions of churches. Several Unions of churches are further grouped together to form the Divisions of the General Conference, which is the world body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

contextualized come to the surface from time to time.

**Areas of Contextualization**

Dybdahl identifies three spheres of contextualization—church life, ethics, and theology.\(^\text{12}\) Church life includes hymnody, architecture, worship styles, methods of governance, decision making, etc. Ethics involves the standards, morals, and the sense of right and wrong in the life of the church. Theology includes doctrinal beliefs, statements of faith, and explanations about God.\(^\text{13}\) It is necessary that contextualization takes place in all of these three spheres for a true indigenous congregation devoid of dual allegiance to be planted.

During the 2009 annual council of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the council voted new guidelines for mission unity and contextualization among the diverse missionary ministries of the church.

Contextualization—Jesus, as our model, was the perfect example of love in His relationships with others. As we imitate Him in our mission, we should open our hearts in honest and loving fellowship. . . . The apostles did not make it difficult for people to accept the gospel and join the fellowship of the Christian community, but they did not shrink from declaring the full purpose of God for them (cf. Acts 15:19; 20:20-24). From Paul’s example arises contextualization—the intentional and discriminating attempt to communicate the gospel in a culturally meaningful way. For Seventh-day Adventist mission, contextualization must be faithful to the Scriptures, guided by the Spirit, and relevant to the host culture, remembering that all cultures are judged by the gospel. As the Church seeks to adapt its approach to mission in a very diverse world, the danger of syncretism—the blending of religious truth and error—is a constant challenge. Contextualization should be done within a specific cultural location, close to where the people live; it is a process that should

---


\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.
involve church leaders, theologians, missiologists, local people, and ministers.\textsuperscript{14}

Several rules of contextualization are identified in this new policy statement.

1. Contextualization must be faithful to Scripture.
2. It must be guided by the Holy Spirit.
3. It must be relevant to the host culture.
4. It must be constantly remembered that all cultures are judged by the gospel.

The parties involved in the process of contextualization are also identified in the policy statement. These are church leaders, theologians, missiologists, local people, and ministers. The primary context of the process of contextualization is within a specific cultural location, close to where the people live. This agrees with what Hiebert and others refer to as a hermeneutical community.\textsuperscript{15} One world religion that needs an appropriate contextualized approach is African (Yoruba) Traditional Religion. This process of contextualization would do much to reduce dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists or any other people group.

Three principles are identified that govern the process of contextualization.\textsuperscript{16} The first of these is the fact that a difference exists between form and meaning. According to Dybdahl, form refers to the outward act or object that transports the inward concept. Form is like the pipe; meaning it is the water passing through that pipe. All of life and religion have both form and meaning; the two go together. A second principle is that


\textsuperscript{15}Hiebert et al., \textit{Understanding Folk Religion}, 22.

\textsuperscript{16}Dybdahl, “Cross-Cultural Adaption,” 15.
contextualization is a translation process, through which church life, ethics, and theology are translated into a local culture so that the receivers, in the specific situation of the Yoruba, can “read” Christianity in their own environment. Third, contextualization requires a trialogue—a three-sided conversation among proclaimers and their culture, the Yoruba receivers and their culture, and the Bible. Much of early mission work took place as a monologue, resulting in dual allegiance.

Nevertheless, technological advances, literacy, and the danger of dual allegiance and syncretism warrant that the process of contextualization occurs as a trialogue rather than a monologue or an imposition of foreign ideas or models. In a much more realistic way today, this process can also effectively occur as a dialogue between the pastors and the local congregation or the local conference in session and their culture on one side and the Bible, since the local ministers are now at the helm of the affairs of the churches in Yoruba land.

In the development of a Yoruba Adventist theology of mission, this dissertation has suggested that issues relating to spiritual powers—such as demons, witchcraft, sorcery, and other invisible forces of this worldly realm—were a blind spot in the worldview of the early pioneers. These issues were not addressed, while issues pertaining to the eschaton, or the glorious second coming of Jesus, and the Sabbath occupied Adventist theology. Therefore, contextual responses to these areas are essential. Adventists were preoccupied with the various policies and the peculiar doctrines that made them different from the already existing denominations, as Adventists sought to explain and justify their existence as a denomination and as an evangelical missionary church organization.
In addition, there was little in the fundamental teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the missionary period which addressed the belief systems of the recipients of mission. Hence the Adventist theology of mission to address the cultural, worldview, and the other existential needs of the Yoruba was inappropriate. It is only recently that the church has begun to grapple with the certain existential needs of the culturally diverse members, especially after the General Conference session of 2005, when fundamental doctrine number 11 was added with a section that deals with evil spiritual powers.

**Contextualized Church Life**

If Adventism is to become relevant to the needs of the Yoruba people and help rid them of dual allegiance, it must work at contextualizing all aspects of church life. Church life includes hymnody, styles of worship, church administration, and the decision making process. Two of these areas—hymnody and the decision-making process—will be briefly discussed here.

**Hymnody**

A contextualization of Yoruba Adventist hymnody needs to take into consideration Yoruba traditional methods of singing and needs to use local, traditional musical instruments which resonate with and are meaningful to the Yoruba Adventist consciousness in order to make worship more meaningful. The Yoruba Adventist liturgical style is currently patterned after Western forms of worship, though there is no official denominational liturgy. Yoruba Adventist hymnody could be contextualized by using culturally and biblically appropriate music and songs that originate from the
Yoruba Adventist experience of almost a century. Local instruments such as the *gangan* or the talking drum, *bata, sherek*, *akuba*, and using non-sexual and appropriate dance moves or what Joseph Adeyinka Olanrewaju\(^\text{17}\) calls “moderate swaying of the body,” can be used in the church to worship God. If local instruments and music forms are used, Yoruba Adventists will be more spiritually fulfilled and remain in the church instead of running to other churches or shrines for similar experiences.

This principle of using local forms is both in line with the Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White. The Scripture is replete with invitations to the worshipers of God to approach him with all kinds of instruments and songs (1 Sam 18:8; 1 Chr 13:8; 16:42; Ps 100:1-5; 150:1-6; Col 3:16; and Eph 5:19). During her lifetime, Ellen White encouraged the church to use instruments in worship services which brought glory to God. Statements such as “in our camp meeting services there should be singing and instrumental music. Musical instruments were used in religious services in ancient times. The worshipers praised God upon the harp and cymbal, and music should have its place in our services. It will add to the interest.” \(^\text{18}\) “In the meetings held, let a number be chosen to take part in the song service. And let the singing be accompanied with musical instruments skillfully handled. We are not to oppose the use of instruments of music in our work.” \(^\text{19}\) White encourages the skillful use of musical instruments in worship.


Lilianne Doukhan postulates that “a religious community needs to determine which musical language belongs to its own cultural setting and which is appropriate to express the values attached to the sacred and supernatural as they are understood within that given culture or subculture.” In other words, music in worship must be culturally sensitive so as to be meaningful to the worshippers, which in turn creates a contentment and assurance in them that forestall any return to paganism. For the Yoruba, local instruments like the gangan, bata, shekere, and akuba should be involved in worship. The gangan is also called the talking drum, because a skillful drummer can literally “speak out” the praise notes or lyrics of a song to worship and glorify God. The affective dimension of the Yoruba consciousness in worship is thus appropriately ministered to through the judicious use of these musical instruments.

Ellen White also suggested that music is a good means of freedom from idolatry. This implied that with the availability of psalms and songs which express praise and worship to the true God, the people of God can find freedom from idolatry and eventually from dual allegiance of any sort. She further wrote:

The service of song was made a regular part of religious worship, and David composed psalms, not only for the use of the priests in the sanctuary service, but also to be sung by the people in their journeys to the national altar at the annual feasts. The influence thus exerted was far-reaching, and it resulted in freeing the nation from idolatry. Many of the surrounding peoples, beholding the prosperity of Israel, were led to think favorably of Israel’s God, who had done such great things for His people.

However, many have condemned the use of the gangan and other similar Yoruba

\[20\] Lilianne Doukhan, *In Tune with God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010), 46.

cultural musical instruments for Christian worship. Some have argued that Ellen White counsels Christians to avoid a bedlam of noises. However, are we to assume that her writings contradict the Scriptures which encourage worshipers to approach the praise of God with loud-sounding cymbals and various kinds of musical instruments? The Psalms and other books of the Bible and even the writings of Ellen White as shown above contain admonitions to praise and worship God with music instruments. It is interesting that foreign instruments, such as the guitar, violins, and the piano, are allowed in Yoruba Adventist churches, but traditional musical instruments are prohibited for most of the year, except during thanksgiving celebrations, which are normally held on Sunday.

As a result, Yoruba Adventism is still dominated by foreign forms after almost a century of existence. Akin Omoyajowo comments on the phenomenal and very positive growth of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church movement in Nigeria as being partly a function of their dynamic liturgy, which includes the use of Yoruba traditional instruments, their meaningful hymns, the joy with which they worship, and the confidence with which they pray, all which are in harmony with the African way of life and which demonstrate the Africanness of their Christianity. The Cherubim and Seraphim Church may not be free of dual allegiance, yet in the area of music this church has contextualized Christianity for Africa, which is a step toward freedom from the taint of foreignness that contributed to a tendency towards dual allegiance.

**Church Administration and Decision Making**

Sherwood Lingenfelter postulates that contextualization includes approaches to

---

leadership that are appropriate both to Scripture and to the receiving society. The current form of administration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church uses committees that discuss various issues in the church and then make decisions. There is obviously a lot of strength in this kind of administration. For example, a committee helps to maintain continuity in church life, it is biblical, it is based on the decision of many, and, according to a Bible passage, there is safety in a multitude of counselors, especially when they are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the system also has some weaknesses, for the committee system is slow and ponderous in making decisions, so progress and development are often delayed. Committees may be torn between conflicting ideas and desires. Some committees may be misdirected and may be used by the devil to mislead the congregation. There is also a lot of dependence on human abilities and skills, on human knowledge, and on political calculations, which always limits divine manifestations. Too often the decision of a committee results in a lack of a sense of ownership that is essential for growth and an empowered pastoral ministry. These weaknesses can result in a system where pastors and church administrators are out of touch with the spiritual needs and problems of the members and where they rely on human solutions rather than on the Holy Spirit.

The visionary and prophetic system of leadership, which was the traditional system of governance among the Yoruba, whereby a prominent visionary leader directs the affairs of the community, can be a prototype of a visionary and dynamic ministry

---

under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit with counsel from a group of elders. This system of leadership has proven to be more effective among the Yoruba, especially when such a leader allows God to completely and totally lead and direct. The astronomical growth of several Yoruba Christian ministries within a short period of time suggests that this system of church administration may be better suited to the Yoruba cultural situation.

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the sodality or mission structure serves as a very good demonstration of this model of church organizational structure, whereby a visionary leader sets up a ministry to address a specific need in the life of the church. Examples include the various supporting ministries working in conjunction with the larger church body in the fulfillment of mutually agreed on aims and goals. These ministries and their work are reminiscent of Ellen White’s prophetic insight of the laity finishing the work of the church. Outside the Adventist denomination, examples of such Christian organization include the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Deeper Life Bible Church, which came into existence about five decades after the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba, but today they each have millions of dedicated members.

However, this system is also fraught with weaknesses and dangers. For example, how will the succeeding leader be chosen? Through visions or dreams? What is the assurance that such visions would not be falsified? How can one be sure that such ministries in the hand of just one person will not become perverted and misused? It is very obvious that the needed sense of ownership that is essential for a powerful and effective ministry can also be acquired even under the leadership of a committee if it is sought with determination and a deep sense of intentionality, dedication, and
commitment to the word of God.

In summary, I suggest that supporting and adventurous ministries of dedicated Yoruba Adventists should be allowed and encouraged. Those involved must be faithful to God and to the denomination in carrying out mission and ministries among the Yoruba. It is expected that such groups will plant appropriately contextualized churches that are empowered by the Holy Spirit and are void of dual allegiance.

Contextualized Theology and Ethics

The Yoruba Adventist theological and ethical stance is built on the general Adventist theology and ethics which are solidly grounded in biblical revelations as explained in the twenty-eight fundamental doctrines of the church. These fundamental beliefs encompass Kraft’s encounters with truth and allegiance. These fundamental doctrines contain the teachings on salvation and give instruction on the life of the Christian after conversion. Scripture identifies the saints of God as those who have the faith of Jesus and who keep the commandments of God (Rev 14:12). The Ten Commandments constitute the moral laws of God which define what is right and wrong for the Christian, and they have been well defined in the nineteenth fundamental doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is quoted below.

The great principles of God’s law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God’s love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God’s covenant with His people and the standard in God’s judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and


awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14.)²⁶

The foundation for Seventh-day Adventist Church ethics must remain the faith of Jesus and the loving obedience to the laws of God. However, this commitment to the laws of God must never be allowed to degenerate into legalism, which can occur at any point of the spiritual development of an individual and in the corporate body. An appropriate relationship must be maintained between law and grace. This is also vital in the life of Yoruba Adventists today. There is the need to constantly keep the cross of Jesus in sight, so as not to have one’s faith degenerate into mere formalism and legalism.

Hiebert and others²⁷ suggest several areas needing a contextual theology, some of which are applicable to Yoruba Adventists based on the findings from the studies done on the Yoruba culture and worldview as well as from the field research. These include a theology of the invisible, a theology of power, a theology of the cross, a theology of worship and submission, a theology of discernment, and a theology of suffering and death, which unveil the right posture to situations involving such challenges in life.

A Theology of the Invisible

A theology of the invisible is a biblically based theology that recognizes the

²⁶Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 263.

existence of invisible spiritual forces and beings. This theology that deals with the issues of the invisible realm is important to the development of a victorious attitude and faith in Christ, who has promised his victory over the forces of darkness that constantly seek to destroy. Due to the influence of the naturalistic philosophy of the West (which increasingly depends on the physical world that can be seen) on Christian mission, it is of great necessity that ministry among Yoruba Adventists recovers an awareness of the invisible world. The Yoruba’s belief in the existence of invisible beings and forces must be taken seriously and ministered to appropriately.

The Bible reveals the existence of God who cannot be seen, of angels who are also usually invisible, and who impact human life in different positive ways. Scripture also reveals the existence of malevolent spirits, Satan, and his hosts who also exert a lot of negative influence upon humans. It is believed among the Yoruba that witches, sorcerers, and diviners operate using diabolical powers, and that they carry out their baleful works in the invisible realm, which often resonates in the physical realm. The Yoruba worldview closely resembles the biblical worldview in this sense.

Witchcraft

To deny the existence of witchcraft would mean being naïve and to negate the Scriptures. There are several Scriptures which forbid God’s people from consulting or engaging in witchcraft and sorcery (Deut 18:9-14) on the pain of death by stoning (Lev 20:6, 27). Saul visited the witch of Endor in his backslidden state. The traditional Yoruba view of supernatural (witchcraft, wizardry, ancestors, curses, sorcery, ori, and ayanmo) causation can create fear among church members and can lead to dual allegiance. This fear can also increase the potency of evil in their lives.
The Bible talks about the fall and activities of Satan and demons, which empower witches and wizards, and other of his agents, which seek to destroy the faith and life of people, especially believers. However, more powerful is the truth of the victory of Jesus Christ over these agencies of darkness. Jesus conquered Satan by the power of his resurrection. That victory and the power it affords the Christian must be claimed and appropriated in their lives today. There are several promises of divine protection in the Bible that the Christian can dwell on. For example, the Bible says, “There shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any plague come near thy dwellings” (Ps 91:10). “The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven” (Deut 28:7).

Ancestors and funeral rites

The Yoruba believe in the existence of the ancestors and the fear of these ancestors, can lead the Adventists among them to dabble into dual allegiance. The Yoruba see life as a cyclical journey, with death being just a part of that journey, albeit, a journey of no return, although it is believed some may return in rebirth, and hence the naming of some of their children Babatunde (father has returned or has come again) and Iyabo, or Yetunde (mother has returned). I remember as a child the burial of a member of my community who was buried with his belongings. It is believed that the dead are not actually dead, but have only experienced a change of environment. They are believed to be a part of this world’s unseen realm of the spirits.

The ancestors also define and maintain morality and ethics in the Yoruba
communities through the various taboos that are associated with them. Nevertheless, the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine on the state of the dead makes it clear that the so-called ancestors are impersonating demons, since the dead are dead, from which they cannot be woken until the day of resurrection and final judgment. So the idea of either a positive or negative influence of the ancestors on their descendants is false, and Yoruba Adventist must base morality and ethics not on the fear of the ancestors or divinities but on a close relationship and love for the true God and his laws.

Such thoughts and verbal ejaculations as *Baba mi ma sun l’orun o*, meaning “my father, please do not sleep in heaven,” or *oku olomo ki sun*, “the ancestors never sleep,” feature prominently in Yoruba worldview and also may unknowingly slip out of the mouth of Yoruba Adventists in a time of crisis. This again illustrates how deeply the Yoruba worldview is embedded in the Adventists’ sub-consciousness and how difficult it is to change. The lyrics, *mo j’okun mo j’ekolo,²⁹* fall into this category. It means “do not eat worms and centipedes, but what they eat in heaven.”

To respond to these perceptions on the state of the dead, the regular Bible study sessions of the church in Yoruba land must be made more attractive to the members, and also be active so they will attend and study biblical topics such as the nature of man, the state of the dead, resurrection, and the final judgment, and other important topics, so they can be well informed about these biblical truths and encouraged to believe and change their perceptions of the state of the dead accordingly. The current state of the church Bible study classes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yoruba land is really

²⁸Olanrewaju, “The Relationship,” 47.

²⁹See page 232, “Cultural and Worldview Influences,” of this dissertation.
deplorable. Only a few members attend, and the meetings are inconsistent as well. So members remain unaware of the fundamental beliefs of the church. During the field research, only few of the participants could attest to understanding the fundamental teachings of the church.

Culture and worldview of the Yoruba were identified by the participants as some of the factors responsible for dual allegiance among Yoruba Adventists, since deeply embedded cultural values were not addressed during the early Adventist missionary work, and are not being appropriately addressed today. A clearly contextualized Bible study that helps the members to understand the doctrine of the state of the dead can help to remove this form of dual allegiance.

Curses

Curses are other invisible phenomena believed to be potent to cause calamities in the life of the Yoruba and that may push the Yoruba Adventist into dual allegiance. David Westerlund underscores curses as the cause of calamity, diseases, and other misfortunes among Africans.\(^3^0\) Also from the field research for this dissertation, when Inudun had difficulties with childbearing, many of his fellow Yoruba Adventists suggested he was probably cursed as a child by his parents.\(^3^1\)

Curses, known as *epe* among the Yoruba, are non-physical means of causing misfortunes and illness, by a father or mother or other more sinister agents in the society,\(^\)\


\(^3^1\)See page 231, “Cultural and Worldview Influences,” of this dissertation.
such as witches and wizards.\textsuperscript{32} Parents, out of annoyance and bitterness against their children, may unwillingly or even knowingly cast a spell or curse on their disobedient children for their misbehaviors, which are eventually believed to be used by invisible diabolical forces to carry out the intended curse or spell. Meredith Long postulates that “words in Africa bring about the events for which they are symbols.”\textsuperscript{33} The power of a curse is increased by the status of the one who pronounces it in reference to the accursed. The Scripture also confirms that the power of life and death is in the tongue (Prov 18:21).

To respond to curses, the possibility of curses in the life of the believer should be diagnosed at conversion and addressed in a biblically acceptable way. Deliverance sessions consisting of a close study of Scriptures about what curses are, the power of curses, and the greater power in the blood sacrifice of Jesus to break the power of curses should be encouraged. In addition, fasting and prayer sessions for the destruction of the yoke of curses should be organized in the churches. Our evangelistic outreach and follow-up studies should include messages and deliverance sessions whereby pastors pray for the destruction of spells. As in the story of Balak and Balaam cited above, the divine promises to neutralize curses must be claimed by those who are now children of God. The Bible promise, “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” (Num 23:23), assures us of divine protection against curses.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 167.

and spells for anyone who has become a child of God.

**A Theology of Power**

One of the encounters which Kraft deems important for an appropriately contextualized faith to develop among Christians is a power encounter. The concept of a power encounter was one of the three encounters developed in this dissertation to explain why dual allegiance results among Christians in general and among the Yoruba Adventists in particular. A power encounter has been defined as

the demonstration by God’s servants of God’s ‘incomparably great power for us who believe’ (Eph 1:19) based on the cross (Col 2:15) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) in confrontation with and victory over the work of Satan and demons (Luke 10:19) in their attacks on God’s children or their control of unbelievers resulting in the glory of God and in the salvation of the lost and/or the upbuilding of believers.\(^{34}\)

From the field research it was discovered that currently there is little or no visible manifestation of spiritual healing and deliverance in the Adventist Church. Several members and ministers lamented the fact that the pastoral ministry is not presenting the availability of divine power strongly enough in the church, thus there is little for believers to hold unto in times of crisis. We claim too little of the power of God in ministry. Not enough is currently being done to encourage the parishioners to approach the throne of grace boldly to claim the power of the Holy Spirit, for fear of being classified as “Pentecostal.” It was also observed that this lack is partly responsible for several Yoruba Adventists attending Pentecostal churches or visiting the Aladura prophets, and in some

situations visiting the traditional diviners, as people seek a fuller demonstration of the
divine power they crave.

Hiebert and others caution concerning two dangers in relation to a theology of
power. 35 Some Christians avoid any kind of boldness or expectation of the supernatural
for fear it is magic, while others chase after the sensational. Nevertheless, neither power
nor the cross can be removed from the Christian experience without creating an
inappropriate and unbalanced situation. When Christians avoid every kind of boldness in
claiming divine power as in the Yoruba Adventist Church, as it was observed in the field
research, a void and longing is created that can cause dual allegiance.

A balance needs to be sought in this area of spiritual power. The Adventist
Church has biblical and well-developed doctrines, to which it invites allegiance.
Nevertheless, from my personal assessment of data from the field research, the church
appears to be deficient when it comes to claiming and demonstrating the power of God
needed to maintain a single allegiance to God. Since the Yoruba come from a culture and
worldview where power is sought from whatever means possible, it is only appropriate to
continue a search for power within Christianity when members need it to solve their
problems. If power is lacking, some go back to the old ways.

There is a problem with this focus on power. Christianity faces the danger of
being added to the Yoruba assortment of power paraphernalia, thereby treating the name
of Jesus as just another magical charm or enchantment to use in the times of crisis
without any intimate personal relationship with him. This is the reason why a balance of

35 Hiebert et al., Understanding Folk Religion, 373, 374.
the three encounters is very essential, to prevent blind faith and fanaticism on one hand and a cold legalistic form of religion that denies the power of God on the other.

The quest for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the members and ministers in the Yoruba and the world Adventist church is long overdue. The Holy Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White are replete with both the promises of God to bestow his Spirit on all who ask, and the invitation is for the church to request the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Seventh-day Adventist Church at the General Conference level appears to be steering the church toward this experience. At the 2010 Annual Council, Dr. Ted Wilson, president of the world church, called the members to a revival of primitive godliness, to reformation, and urged them to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the power to conclude the work of God on earth. Another example is the forty days of prayer emphasis at the Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University in the fall of 2010, which focused mainly on the church’s need for the power of the Holy Spirit.

A Theology of the Cross

The fundamental belief that was added to the original twenty-seven of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs declares the victory assured the Christian in Christ, under the heading “Growing Up in Christ,” that resulted from the passion and humiliation of Jesus on the cross. Notice the wording of this newly added fundamental belief:

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to

Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7-14; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Matt 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25.)

I believe that there is still a great deal of work to be done on this doctrine, especially on how it translates into the life experience of the church members who still struggle with evil powers every day of their lives. Another interviewee, who is a minister, looks forward to when the local Conferences will find appropriate ways to contextualize the essence of this doctrine for the situations that are prevalent among Yoruba Adventists.

The discussion on the availability of divine power for victory in the life of the Yoruba Adventist must be balanced with an understanding of the cross. The victory Jesus gives us today was earned on the cross. On the cross, Jesus subjugated the power of Satan who has the keys to death and pain, and gained the kingdom back for his saints. Victory was earned by the Son of God dying for us as he hung on the cross. Jesus also bids us to take up our cross and follow him. Hiebert and others submit that


[38]See page 238, “Inadequate Adventist Pastoral Approaches,” of this dissertation.

God’s use of power is demonstrated supremely on the cross. There Satan used his full might to destroy Christ, or to provoke him to use his divinity wrongly. Either would have meant defeat for Christ—the first because Satan would have overcome him and the second because it would have destroyed God’s plan of salvation. Godly power is always rooted in love, not pride; redemption, not revenge; and concerns for others not the self. It is humble, not proud, and inviting, not rejecting. Its symbol is the cross, not the sword. This is why the world sees God’s power as weakness (1 Cor 1:23-27).

The posture of the believer in difficult situations of life should be like that of the three Hebrew boys in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar who responded to his threat of throwing them into the burning fiery furnace. They acknowledged the ability of their God who is almighty and who could save them from the furnace. Nevertheless, even if he would not save them, they were unwilling to dishonor him; they would not disobey him or worship the idol of the king. This experience exemplifies a life of faith in God that could help the Yoruba believers to overcome dual allegiance. Suffering is part of the marks of the Christian calling this side of eternity. In summary, there must be a balance in our theology of power with that of the cross, based on the knowledge of the goodness and love of God for us. God promises that he will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. So despite the difficulties and burdens facing Yoruba Adventists, they must determine to remain faithful to God.

A Theology of Worship and Submission

As was shown in chapter 3, in the pre-Christian traditional culture of the Yoruba, there was a quest to control life through divination and the use of charms and enchantments. The essence of the human fall and subsequent depravities and sin is in the fact that they fell to satanic temptation to worship themselves. Self-centeredness and self-possession are the greatest human temptation and a central concern in the Yoruba
worldview. Yoruba people are concerned with how to be well in life; how to obtain power and maintain it; and how to protect what they have from being depleted. Even those converted to Christianity are still tempted to control God through sacred formulas when their prayers do not bring the desired results. ⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the Scripture rejects an ego-centric religion and magical mentality. A complete trust and total dependence on the goodness of God, and an attitude of worship and total submission to his will, no matter what, is needed to appropriately meet the challenge of dual allegiance. One of the things that must be emphasized in a loving way in the church’s evangelistic campaigns is the importance of a complete conversion experience, which is a complete transformation of the worldview and which underscores the need for a total submission to the will of God. Conversion must be at the worldview level or dual allegiance will continue to thrive among Adventists as they try to manipulate God through tithes, offerings, or through other such means. Yoruba Adventists must learn to submit completely to the will of God.

A Theology of Suffering and Death

In John 11, Jesus heard about the sickness of Lazarus. He did not make haste to heal him, but stated that the sickness was not unto death, but that the glory of God may be manifested. From this statement of Jesus, we derive the idea that at times, negative and painful situations, which may bring tears and sorrow to the heart of the genuine believer, can be for the glory of God. But whether a negative experience will bring glory to God or not depends on how people react to the challenges of life, whether they wait upon the

⁴⁰Ibid., 371.
Lord for deliverance or run to the diviner or to the white garment prophets who often also depend on the diviner for help.

Yoruba Adventists need a theology and faith that can see a calamity, a suffering, a sickness, a failure in business, sorrow, pain, and even death as an experience that can bring glory to the Lord. They need to believe that whatever happens to them this side of eternity, whether it is good or evil, should not lead them to strike deals with Satan, whom the diviners depend upon. It takes a deeply seated trust and commitment to God for such a posture in life. A scriptural passage also states that all things work for the good of those who wait upon the Lord (Rom 8:28).

Ministerial and Methodological Responses

The psychologist Abraham Maslow identified the various needs that are essential for the actualization of the personhood of people. Although his chart of the hierarchy of needs is pretty incomplete because there is the conspicuous omission of the transcendent dimension, which is the need for a relationship with the divine, his submission is clear on the immanent and existential dimensions of human needs. His hierarchy or pyramid includes physiological or biological and physical needs, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and the need for self-actualization. Various other variations and amendments of these needs have been submitted in recent times to include cognitive needs and the need for aesthetics, which includes the search for knowledge and meaning and the need for beauty and balance.\textsuperscript{41}

Paul Hiebert identified three dimensions of human cultures and worldviews: (1)

the cognitive, (2) the affective, and (3) the evaluative dimensions. He defines culture as
“the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated
patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate
what they think, feel, and do.” Each dimension has needs associated with it that must
be fulfilled for a meaningful and purposeful existence. The cognitive dimension has to
do with ideas and the knowledge of the truth; the affective has to do with feelings and
emotions; while the evaluative deals with the ethical considerations of faith. If any of
these basic needs are not satisfied, people become restless, and the endless search for
contentment continues in their lives.

These three dimensions also correspond with the three essential encounters that
Kraft suggests in his studies. These are truth, power, and allegiance encounters. I am
strongly of the opinion that if there is an appropriate truth encounter in the life of a
Christian, the cognitive needs will be met, while appropriate power and allegiance
encounters will energize and address both the affective and evaluative dimensions of the
Christian life.

**The Need for a More Adequate Pastoral Preparation and Care**

Two very important things were observed in the course of the field research.
First, there were weakness and a lack of appropriate pastoral care among the ministers as
a cause of dual allegiance. Saworo, one of the participants in the field research, was
open and truthful enough to identify and acknowledge that Seventh-day Adventist

---


ministers in Yoruba land have not been willing to discuss the issues involved in dual allegiance with their members or to deal with it in a biblical way. There is a general consensus on this view among the other participants in the study. Second, Yoruba Adventist ministers have not been presenting the power dimension of the gospel of Christ to the point that it allows the members to be confident in calling on Christ in times of crises in their lives. In a conscious attempt to dissociate themselves and be different from Pentecostals, Adventist ministers have tended to neglect the power dimension of the gospel, thus sometimes losing their members’ allegiance as they seek power among Pentecostals and diviners.

Another important insight on the weakness in Adventist ministry is that pastoral success is currently being based upon the number of baptisms with not enough concern as to whether or not these new members are genuinely converted. It would be more appropriate to base success on the number of people helped or ministered to. This might be difficult to measure. For instance, what are the determining factors to be used to measure success in ministry? By the number of answered prayers? The amount of counseling hours? Or the amount of food given to needy members? The point the elder was trying to make was quite obvious, and that is that our priorities should shift from the numbers syndrome of church growth to the quality of care and preparation for the kingdom, as well as the quality of the Christian life of the members.

The personality of the minister and the quality of their faith and ministry also has a tremendous impact on the trust within the laity. The incident Presley, another participant in the research, narrated about demon possession as reported in this research

---

44See page 234, “Inadequate Adventist Pastoral Approaches,” of this dissertation.
underscores several problems with the Yoruba Adventist pastorate. First, the amateur way the problem was handled; second, there was much of dwelling on the knowledge of human philosophy and on the Western secularized views, together with a Western psychological approach of handling matters like these, which is fraught with errors, fear, and a lack of spiritual understanding; and third, a lack of appropriate preparation to deal with issues such as demonic attacks and demon possession in the lives of believers. The pastoral responses also demonstrated a powerless pastoral ministry in which the ministry of the power of the Holy Spirit was lacking and the victory of Christ over the forces of darkness was not emphasized.

Olooto, the minister who narrated his experience with the mad tramp on the street of Lagos during the pastoral conference, stated he had to sneak away from the woman who requested help and prayer for deliverance from him. His comments illustrate that pastors and laity need to be ready at all times to minister to those harassed by the devil. It is true that if people are not spiritually prepared, they should not dabble in deliverance ministry, but such stories of personal defeat are not the kind one should tell ministers who need to hear stories of the victory of Jesus Christ and the power that his sacrificial blood has made available to his saints to conquer Satan.

The fact that the story came from a highly placed person in the church hierarchy reinforced the erroneous view that Adventists cannot help the devil’s victims and did nothing to encourage the pastors present at the conference that day. Many of the younger pastors expressed disbelief that such a story could be told by a person of faith. This further illustrates the unpreparedness of Yoruba Adventist ministers to handle spiritual attacks or crisis. This unpreparedness can cause members to slip into dual allegiance in
their quest to have their problems resolved by visiting Pentecostal churches or ministers of independent churches or even diviners in times of crisis.

Another way by which the Yoruba Adventist ministry might be part of the problem is their unwillingness to face the issue of dual allegiance, to discuss it, and to suggest biblical solutions. This unwillingness comes from fear that they might be viewed as less than Adventist—Pentecostal or unbiblical. Some even fear they will be attacked if they deal with demonization, so they avoid getting involved. This position, however, has not helped the situation of dual allegiance in the church.

Even after the new fundamental belief that deals with the availability of divine power in Christ Jesus to overcome Satan and his hosts was added to the teachings of the church, little or nothing has been done yet to translate that teaching into the life of the members. Unfortunately, the statement is also formatted in Western philological script and in a Western philosophical way that will require further contextualization so as to be easily understood in the Yoruba context. These challenges necessitate the development of a curriculum on the biblical principles and practices of how to rightfully identify and deal with cases of demon possession in the pastoral training program at Babcock University and in other Seventh-day Adventist seminaries all around the world. Articles that can serve as resource materials should also be written and published, so pastors may become better equipped on how to deal with cases of spiritual attacks.

**Power Encounter for Biblical Balance**

One of the causes of dual allegiance suggested by scholars and discussed in this dissertation, based on findings from the field research, is the imbalance that exists between the truth, allegiance, and power encounters in the Yoruba Adventist Church.
today. This imbalance exists partly as a result of the Adventist emphasis on truth and allegiance encounters, while there is much less attention paid to the power of the Holy Spirit. The absence of an emphasis on power encounters (which is essential if a Yoruba is to be genuinely faithful to the truth) has led to dual allegiance by some Adventists.

Many of the participants in the study lamented the void they felt in the area of the power of God, as well as a lack of willingness by church leaders to study or even discuss the need for the Holy Spirit for fear of becoming labeled as Pentecostal. Other participants in the research, mostly women, appreciate the level at which divine power is demonstrated in the Adventist Church. Several reasons may have contributed to this split opinion. One reason may be the humility and the spirit of appreciation that is consistent with the nature of African women, who have learned to be appreciative of whatever level of ministry they receive. African women would not want to offend their pastors or the researcher. Another reason may be that they are not aware of the level of pastoral involvement they should expect or perhaps their needs are being met through other ministries or by ministers from other denominations who also speak to them from the Bible and pray for them in the name of Jesus.

When it comes to the general ratio of those who answered positively or negatively to the question on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the current pastoral ministry by Yoruba Adventist pastors, about three-fourths answered negatively, saying that not enough was being done by the pastors, while only a fourth accept the appropriateness of their pastor’s work. It is obvious that something needs to be done differently to enable members to remain faithful to God in critical times of their lives. There is the urgent need for biblical balance in the presentation and experience of Yoruba
Adventists of truth, power, and allegiance encounters. The necessity of faith in the power of God to save, heal, deliver, and to prosper them as they faithfully live for God needs to be proclaimed in a more committed way.

To be fair to Yoruba Adventist ministers, it must be stated that their workload makes it almost impossible to minister to the needs of the local church members. Most pastors have six or more churches, so most one-on-one ministry is being done by the local church elders who are inadequately trained in dealing with attacks from evil spirits.

**Meeting the Quest to Know the Future**

A quest to know the future is another reason Yoruba Adventists may seek the assistance of diviners or the white garmented prophets. It must be emphasized that the longing to know what the future holds is not new. Biblical characters who were deemed to have had a relationship with God sought to know the future or the right steps to take and the right choices to make, especially during difficult moments in life. Some examples are Saul who went to Samuel to seek the whereabouts of his father’s flock; Joshua, who cast lots to discover the culprit for their defeat at Ai; and the disciples of Jesus who also cast lots to determine the rightful replacement for Judas Iscariot. I believe that the difference is in the source of the information. While one group seeks after the living God through prayer and fasting to know what steps to take in life, others go to mediums, enchanters, diviners, and witches for similar guidance. The quest to know the future and the right choices to make in life is a genuine and legitimate pursuit from the Christian perspective. Nevertheless, it must be requested from the Lord and not from diviners whose dealings are with the elemental spirits of the world. Taylor was very open
about his experience in seeking knowledge of the future from diviners.⁴⁵

Scriptures say, “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:19, 20). The question, “Should not a people seek after their own God,” obviously signifies God’s intentions and interest to reveal matters pertaining to the well-being of his people to them. The gift of prophecy was once manifested among early Seventh-day Adventists through the life and ministries of Ellen G. White. She encountered the supernatural, saw visions, dreamed dreams, travelled extra-terrestrially, communicated with angels, saw things to come, and received specific valuable information, warnings, and messages of approval and disapproval for specific people during her lifetime. However, it must be underscored that it is God who calls genuine prophets into ministry. Many of the prophets in the world today are self-made and some have been known to engage in the use of the power of the occult and diabolical means of acquiring dreams, visions, and predictions.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the prophetic gifts and ministry are a lost dimension of Christianity today that needs to be sought and restored. Its restoration will stem the practice of this form of dual allegiance among believers. With this said, Yoruba Adventists must rather be encouraged to live by faith and not by sight. The principles of divine truth must determine and guide their choices and decisions in life. Visions and

dreams can be falsified, or even misinterpreted, but the sure word of God stands forever.

**Ministering to the Yoruba’s Quest for Posterity**

The desire for posterity can also result in dual allegiance. Olugbemi Moloye underscores the idea of the importance of having good, healthy, and proper children as follows:

The concept of reality among the Yoruba has its genesis in myths, folklore, proverbs, and syllogisms as manifested in “Odu Ifa” [Ifa verses or oracles]. This is demonstrated in the place of “OMO” [a child] in the Yoruba broad cultural and ontological systems. Yoruba people are not only relentless with the perpetuation of the cultural system but also of the lineage, hence the emphasis on procreation. Again the emphasis is not just any child at all cost as indicated in Eurocentric literature, but on “quality” children who would uphold the legacy of tradition. This is attested to in a myriad of Yoruba proverbs and axioms which portray quality children to be most desirable while the bad ones are resented. No doubt the Yoruba remain uncompromising in their wishes to perpetuate tradition and protect family legacy.46

Like the Hebrews, the Yoruba value and treat the issue of posterity and childbearing as extremely important.47 The Scriptures speak of children in glorious and valuable terms. Psalm 127:3, 4 states, “Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.” Yoruba proverbs and eulogies also speak of the children in similar ways.

One of the primary reasons why Yoruba marry is to have children. They want

---


children, they love children, and from the night of the wedding the countdown begins, not only by the couple, but also and most especially by the parents, aunts and uncles, and all the other relatives. And when nine months have passed with no sign of either pregnancy or a child, the worries, anxieties, and concern begin to build. As Olooto observed, “barrenness and childlessness is a social stigma.”48 The significance of children among the Yoruba is demonstrated in the saying: *Omo niyun omo nide, olowo ko rira, omo ti a fowo ra, eru niije*, meaning, “a child is as precious beads and silver but cannot be bought by the rich; because a child who is bought is known as a slave.” The Yoruba concept of *omo* is really meaningful within their experience. It is part of a coherent intellectual system which portrays a pragmatic moral perspective according to which the ultimate meaning of human existence can be found.49

The great concern for posterity as it is found among Yoruba Adventists needs to be contextualized. Most traditional Yoruba’s concern for posterity ensues from the idea of becoming old and subsequently an ancestor. The aged among them are treated with dignity and respect. The children take care of their parents in their old age, and the society frowns at any situation whereby this duty of the children is neglected. Such children are deemed irresponsible. This is also the situation in the church.

Nevertheless, to respond to situations of barrenness, Yoruba Adventist couples need a total faith and dependence on God. The church can pray for them, asking God to give them children. There can even be anointing services, but if they still do not have children they can be encouraged to adopt children and raise them as their own. Apart

48 See page 228, “Cultural and Worldview Influences,” of this dissertation.

49 Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 32.
from this, Yoruba Adventists can set up life and other insurance policies to help take care
of the old in the final days of their life. Another way to help rectify this situation is to
encourage the various ministries in the church to set up support systems for the widows,
widowers, and the aged.

The quest for children reveals how typical Yoruba Adventists view life. There is
the option to deviate from the path of patience, of waiting upon the Lord to seek non-
biblical ways to satisfy this need, especially when the devil succeeds in casting doubts on
one’s faith in the Lord. But the solution in such a situation is to wait upon the Lord.

**Anticipated Results of a Contextualization Process**

The anticipated results of the process of contextualization include the following:

1. The identification and itemization of problematic areas of the Yoruba
culture and worldview needing contextualization

2. The development of a contextual theological response that is solidly
grounded in the Scriptures to the specific forms of dual allegiance among the Yoruba
Seventh-day Adventists Church

3. A balancing of power, truth, and allegiance encounters among Yoruba
Adventists, and a diligent and dedicated quest and request for the outpouring of the Holy
Spirit upon the church

4. The development of appropriate ministries meeting the cognitive,
affective, and evaluative needs of Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists

5. A growing number of Yoruba Adventist churches where biblical truth has
been expressed in culturally understandable and biblically acceptable ways.
**Recommendations**

Since the Yoruba Seventh-day Adventist Church is a part of the worldwide Adventist Church, these recommendations may find validity for other segments of the church. Therefore, I recommend that:

1. An emphasis should be given to revival and reformation in the Adventist Church and a fervent call for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit be sustained. Through this process, the Yoruba’s quest for power will thus be satisfied in biblical ways and should preclude looking for power from the witch doctor.

2. Adventist theological education curriculum should include courses that will not only give a theoretical but pragmatic pastoral preparation so students learn to deal with demonization and spirit harassment when it occurs in the church, through the process of critical contextualization.

3. Biblical deliverance ministries should be encouraged in the church.

4. Study centers similar to the ones for Islam, Buddhism, and secular societies should be established to deal with the challenges of African Traditional Religions.
APPENDIX A

LETTERS
The Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan has approved a dissertation research project entitled “A Missiological Study of the Phenomenon of Dual Allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba People of West Nigeria,” which involves carrying out a field research, necessitating interviewing some Yoruba Adventists. The aim of the research is to understand the various ways Yoruba Adventists cope and deal with stress and misfortunes of life such as prolong ill health, childlessness, poverty, failure, death of loved ones and other calamities. This is to gain appropriate insights to the needs of the church as well as learn how these needs are currently being met. It is to further explore the biblical ways to address and deal with such life experiences. I will greatly appreciate if the Union and the Conferences can give the permission and the needed support to engage in this very important project.

Willing Yoruba Adventists will be contacted and selected from two-four centers each in the South West Nigeria and West Nigeria Conferences, with the help of the local church Pastors and the head elders of the headquarter churches in Akure and Ibadan and the main churches in Ipoti and Erunmu will be contacted separately, to help identify four to five members each who have at one point or the other had a traumatic life crisis, and who will be interested to participate in an interview on how Yoruba Adventists perceive and respond to problems of life. Four to five names which overlap from both the Pastors’ and Elders’ lists will further be selected for a more elaborate interview after filling the brief survey, expressing their willingness to freely participate in the study.

I believe that this study will contribute to the growth and development of the church not only among the Yoruba, but also in Africa as a whole as well as in the world, where traditional beliefs still persist.
Thanks for your usual assistance and cooperation.

Yours in His Service.

Paul A. Dosunmu
10/25/2008

Dear Pastor/First Elder,

Special greetings to you in the name of the Lord. The Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA has approved the Ph. D dissertation study on the topic: “A MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PHENOMENON OF DUAL ALLEGIANCE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA.” This study warrants the researcher travelling to Nigeria and conducting interviews on how Yoruba Adventists understand and deal with misfortunes in life. Your local church has been purposively chosen to participate in the research.

I will greatly appreciate if you and your first elder could assist in making a list of about sixteen members each, independent of one another. This list must reflect names of members who have had at least one life challenge or misfortune, such as lost of job/business, childlessness, prolonged illness, either of self or spouse or child, accident etc. Chosen participants who are willing to share their stories will be taken from the lists for the interview process.

It is hoped that this study will lead to an understanding of specific needs in the church which when addressed will lead to revival of primitive godliness in the church.

Thanks in advance,

Yours in His Vineyard,

Paul A. Dosunmu
24 January 2010

Pastor Paul Dosunmu
Andrews University
U.S.A

Dear Pastor Dosunmu,

Re – Letter of Permission

Greetings.

Your letter on the above subject matter here refers.

I write on behalf of the South West Nigeria Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to give you permission to conduct your PhD field research in Akure (the Conference Headquarters) and Ipoli Ekiti (the third town entered by the first missionary to Nigeria - Elder D. C. Babcock).

We wish you success in your academic pursuit.

Thanks.

Yours,

Dr Ezekiel A. Adeleye
President
February 04, 2010

Paul Dosunmu
704 Grant Street
Niles
MI 49120

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
IRB Protocol #: 10-002 Application Type: Original Dept: Seminary
Review Category: Exempt Action Taken: Approved Advisor: Bruce Bauer
Title: A Missiological Study of The Phenomenon of Dual Allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Yoruba People of Nigeria

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for research. You have been given clearance to proceed with your research plans.

All changes made to the study design and/or consent form, after initiation of the project, require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions. In all communications with our office, please be sure to identify your research by its IRB Protocol number.

The duration of the present approval is for one year. If your research is going to take more than one year, you must apply for an extension of your approval in order to be authorized to continue with this project.

Some proposal and research design designs may be of such a nature that participation in the project may involve certain risks to human subjects. If your project is one of this nature and in the implementation of your project an incidence occurs which results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, such an occurrence must be reported immediately in writing to the Institutional Review Board. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to University Medical Specialties, by calling (269) 473-2222.

We wish you success as you implement the research project as outlined in the approved protocol.

Sincerely,

X Joseth Abara

Administrative Coordinator
Institutional Review Board

Institutional Review Board
(269) 471-6360 Fax: (269) 471-6246 E-mail: irb@andrews.edu
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355
APPENDIX B

A BRIEF SURVEY OF YORUBA ADVENTISTS
APPENDIX B

BRIEF SURVEY OF YORUBA ADVENTISTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help identify potential Yoruba Adventists to participate in a research project exploring ways people respond to major life challenges.

1. Name: ..................................................................................................................
2. Please indicate your gender
   [ ] Female
   [ ] Male
3. Age
   [ ] 1. 20-29
   [ ] 2. 30-39
   [ ] 3. 40-49
   [ ] 4. 50-59
   [ ] 5. 60-69
4. I am currently an Adventist:
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No
5. I have been an Adventist for:
   [ ] 1. Less than one year
   [ ] 2. One to two years
   [ ] 3. Three to five years
   [ ] 4. Six to ten years
   [ ] 5. More than ten years
6. Form of Education
   [ ] 1. Traditional non-western education
   [ ] 2. Western education
7. Level of Western education
   [ ] 1. Primary
   [ ] 2. Junior Secondary
   [ ] 3. Senior Secondary
   [ ] 4. University degree
   [ ] 5. Master
   [ ] 6. Doctorate
8. I am a convert from
   [ ] African Traditional Religion
   [ ] Islam
   [ ] Christian Church of another denomination
   [ ] I am a second generation Adventist
9. I have had at least one life major crisis that I am willing to share with the researcher.
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No
10. What is the nature of the crisis?
    [ ] Childlessness
    [ ] Prolonged illness
    [ ] Motor accident
    [ ] Loss of job, business failure or crop failure
    [ ] Death of loved one
    [ ] Poverty
    [ ] Curses, evil eye, spells, fear, perceived enemies.
11. Yoruba Adventist respond to these kinds of problem through:
    [ ] Coming to their pastor for prayer
    [ ] Visiting the diviner
    [ ] By being anointed
    [ ] By visiting other pastor of other denominations
    [ ] Others .................................................................
    (Check as many as applicable)
12. I am willing and able to participate in a study that will help understand how Yoruba Adventists respond and cope with problems of life.
    [ ] Yes
    [ ] No
13. I am willing to spend 3-4 hours talking with Paul.
    [ ] Yes
    [ ] No
Thank you for your time. All information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in the study. By signing my name below I indicate that I am willing to participate in this research project.

__________________________________          ___
Signature                                                                    Date
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Exploring How Yoruba Adventists Respond to Misfortunes in Life

Some of the sample questions are presented below:

1. Can you please tell me your name and give me a little background information about yourself?

2. Can you tell me the story of your conversion to Christianity? From what religious background were you converted? How old were you at the time of your conversion? What prompted you to accept the gospel message?

3. When people become Christians how do they relate to their prior experience?

4. What do you think happens during the process of conversion?

5. Are there times when people’s prior experiences might be in conflict with their new beliefs?

6. You filled in the brief survey and stated you once had a crisis. Can you please narrate what it was? What were the options you were knew were available to you to resolve the problems? How was did you cope problem? How did you solve the problem?

7. What effect do you think parental belief may have on their children’s commitment to the Christian faith? How did your parents help?

8. Were you married then, and how did your spouse relate to the problem?

9. What is your opinion of God in Yoruba traditional beliefs and God in Christianity? Are they the same or different?

10. What influence do you think Western education on whether a Christian would engage in dual allegiance or not?

11. What is your opinion about the ministry of your pastor? Do you think your pastor or
the church leadership presents the gospel in a way that builds enough faith and trust in God, so that you can depend upon God in the time of crisis?

12. Do you think some church members visit medicine men and why do you think church members visit diviners?

**Interview Questions for Yoruba Adventist Ministers**

1. Can you tell me your name, and give some background information about yourself?

2. Did you attend seminary? Was there any part of your ministerial training that prepared you specifically to deal with evil spiritual forces and phenomenon?

3. Have you ever encountered any manifestations spirit possession in the course of your ministry, and how did you deal with it?

4. What are the likely solutions Yoruba Adventists might seek for the problems they may face in life?

5. How important do Yoruba Adventists take the issue of posterity, safety, progress, and success of their siblings?

6. Do you know of any member of the Adventist Church who visit or may have visited an herbalist, diviner, a white garment church pastor or gone to any other denominational pastor due to a problem?

7. If so, what reason(s) do they give for such visits?

8. Do you know of any of church member who has left for whatever reason(s)?

9. What are some of the reasons given for their leaving?

10. What are some solutions you think there are to these reasons?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


________. “Pilot Studies on a Missiological Study of the Phenomenon of Dual Allegiance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Yoruba People of Nigeria.” EDRM 605 Qualitative Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, Summer 2006.


VITA

CONTACT INFORMATION
Name: Paul Adekunle Dosunmu
Address: 511 Rose Hill Road
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Telephone 1240 529 9604
Email: dosunmu@andrews.edu

PERSONAL INFORMATION
Date of Birth: February 2, 1965
Place of Birth: Irapon-Oro Ago,
Kwara State, Nigeria
Citizenship: Nigerian
Visa Status: F-120, Optional
Practical Training (Work
Authorization)

Optional Personal Information:
Marital Status: Married
Spouse's Name: Rachael Bose
Dosunmu
Children: Shekinah, Shalom,
Shammah, Sharon, and Shem
Dosunmu

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
2008 – Current  Substitute Teacher
Frederick County Public Schools, MD
2003 – 2007  Therapy Assistant
Lakeland Regional Medical Center, St. Joseph, MI
2003 – 2004  Direct Care Giver
Spectrum Community Health Services, Benton Harbor, MI
2001 – 2002  Seventh-day Adventist Pastor
Ososami District, Nigeria, West Africa (WA)
1998 – 2001  Education and Hospital Chaplain
Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
Seventh-day Adventist School of Nursing, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
1996 – 1998  Church Planting
Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria, WA
1995  Contract Teacher, Islamic Studies Babcock University
(formerly ASWA Nigeria, WA)
1994 – 1995  Assistant Lecturer
Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, WA
1993  Farm Manager
Sonjon Food and Feeds, Egbe, Kogi State, Nigeria, WA
EDUCATION

2007 – 2010  PhD Religion: World Mission and Ministry (Candidate)  
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI
2002 – 2004  Master of Divinity Equivalent  
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI
1997  MA Religion  
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI
1992  MSc Agriculture (Agronomy and Crop Science)  
Higher Institute of Agriculture Plovdiv, Bulgaria
1987  Certificate of Language Proficiency (Bulgarian)  
Higher Institute of Chemical Engineering, Bulgaria
1984  West African School Certificate  
Adventist Grammar School, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria, WA

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

1998 – 2001  Board Member and Member of Administrative Committee  
School of Nursing, Ife Hospital, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, WA
1998 – 2001  Board Member and Member of Administrative Committee  
Ife Hospital, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, WA
1996 – 1998  Conference-Supported Project  
Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria, WA
1996  Self-Supported Project  
Oro-Ago, Kwara State, Nigeria, WA
1993 – 1994  Self-Supported Project  
Egbe, Kogi State, Nigeria, WA
1986 – 1992  Fellowship of Christian Student Coordinator  
Higher Institute of Chemical Engineering and Agriculture, Bourgas, Bulgaria

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

2004  Dared to be Shadrach
1999  How to Beat Death
1998  Saved by His Grace
1992  Saved by His Grace (Unpublished Typescript in Bulgarian)
PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Midwest Mission Studies Fellowship

INTERESTS

I love planting and growing churches, evangelism and church growth through small group house caring fellowships, and gradually entering un-entered areas with the gospel of Jesus Christ

References available upon request

Elder Michael Harris,
Director of MDiv. Program,
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
USA

Dr. Bruce Bauer
Department of World Mission and Ministry,
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Mr. Samuel Thomas, Jr.
Special Projects
Review and Herald Publishing
55 West Oak Ridge Drive
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Dr. Moses Taiwo
1607 Fountain View Street,
Charlotte, NC 28203
Tel: 704-618-3552

Pastor Malcolm Watson
14 Ettington Close,
Solihull, England
Telephone: 01 564771353
E Mail: malcolmwa@gmail.com