

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Theology Project

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: REASONS FOR MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN DEATH RITUALS IN NCHALO DISTRICT, SOUTH MALAWI FIELD**

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Date completed:

The Seventh-day Adventist is one of the fastest growing churches in South Malawi Field where Nchalo belongs. The tendency of some baptized members of Nchalo in participating in death rituals that are contrary to Bible teachings prompted the carrying out of this study with the purpose of investigating the causes for this continued practice and develop a program to it.

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, a survey in form of a questionnaire was designed to capture the desired information. The questionnaire targeted the Mang'anja and Sena people in Nchalo District. Furthermore, three couples of varying ages were picked for the interviews.

The study reveals that some church members continue to participate in the death ritual called 'kulowa kufa' (removing death) even after baptism. The questionnaire revealed four main reasons for continued participation namely: fear of death, pressure from relatives, some see no problem in participating and some feel that it is a tradition that they have grown up with. Two years after implementing the

program, three members who participated in the ritual after baptism resisted the practice when death occurred in their families.

From the findings, it is concluded that there is need for men and women who are conversant with Adventist teachings to handle baptismal classes. This will help baptismal classes to produce Christians who are grounded in the faith. Finally, recommendations were made to Malawi Union Mission, South Malawi Field and those who would pursue the same study.

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IN NCHALO DISTRICT, SOUTH MALAWI FIELD

A project  
presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree  
Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by  
Innocent Rodrick Chikomo

April 2014

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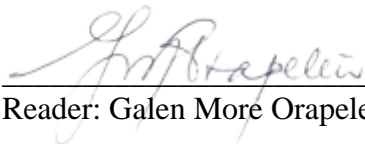
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## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this project to the Creator God who out of His providence called me to be His co-worker in His vineyard. To my beloved late wife, Sarah, who saw the beginning of the research and encouraged me in my endeavours but could not witness its conclusion, and my three sons—Joshua, Peter and Paul—who, though the last two are young, were supportive during my studies after the demise of their mother as at times I had to move my attention away from them to concentrate on my studies. To my beloved mother, Edna Taulo, who always attended to my sons during the last segment of the studies.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

The project was conducted in Malawi, a landlocked country located in Southeast Africa. It borders with Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania.<sup>1</sup> It has a population of 13,077,160 according to the latest statistics.<sup>2</sup> Concerning Malawi's political history, Chiunguzeni says that Malawi, formerly known as Nyasaland, became a British protectorate in 1891 and it was called Nyasaland Protectorate between the years 1891 to 1907.<sup>3</sup> Chiunguzeni reiterates that "on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1964, Nyasaland attained its independence and took the name Malawi" and finally became a Republic on 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1966."<sup>4</sup> The first President of Malawi was Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Malawi was governed as a single-party state for thirty one years until 1994 when a multi-party government was ushered in.

The capital city of Malawi is Lilongwe and other cities are Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba. Malawi has four regions namely, North, Centre, South and East. For her economy, Young asserts that Malawi has an agricultural economy, hence it is referred

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<sup>1</sup>National Statistical Office, *Malawi Geography*, accessed 30 January, 2014, <http://www.factmonster.com/pika/Ao107747.html>.

<sup>2</sup>2008 Population and Housing Census (Zomba, Malawi: National Statistical Office, 2009), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Grant Chiunguzeni, *New Junior Secondary History* (Blantyre, Malawi: Christian Literature Action in Malawi, 2006), 142.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

to as a 'land of farms.'<sup>5</sup> Young goes on to say that Malawi grows two categories of crops which are food crops and some of these are maize, groundnuts, sorghum, rice and the other category is the cash crops among which are tobacco, tea, sugarcane, cotton, coffee, sunflower, beans and peas.<sup>6</sup>

Malawi has a population of 13,077,160 according to the latest statistics.<sup>7</sup> The distribution of religion in Malawi goes as follows: Christians – 83%, Muslims – 13%, other religions – 2%, and 2% do not belong to any religion.<sup>8</sup> Nchalo is located in the southern region of Malawi, the country's largest and most populated region. It is in the political district of Chikhwawa. Chikhwawa has a population of 437,892.<sup>9</sup> Chikhwawa lies in the Shire valley which has two districts, the other one is Nsanje. The two main tribes in the Shire valley are the Mang'anja and the Sena. Nchalo has the largest sugar plantations in Malawi and the sugar estate has facilitated an influx of people across the country in search of employment allowing for a mixed culture on the growth point.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been in Malawi for over one hundred years now. It is one of the fastest growing churches in the country. It is a denomination that calls for a total paradigm shift for its adherents in the way they relate to life issues and practice mainly taking into cognizance one's previous beliefs and traditional values before joining it. Adventism has always found people with

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<sup>5</sup>A. and D. M. Young, *A Geography of Malawi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chiltem Street, London: Evance Brothers Limited, 1990), 27.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 27–29.

<sup>7</sup>2008 Population and Housing Census (Zomba, Malawi: National Statistical Office, 2009), 3.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

different cultural practices, some of which are not consistent with Seventh-day Adventist teachings.

Some of such beliefs and practices are rituals and rites that are performed when a family member dies. Nchalo district, with her geographical position, finds herself in a culture that practices several death rituals in which some church members participate. One outstanding and widely practiced death ritual is the one locally known as “kulowa kufa” (removing death). It is a ritual that involves sexual intercourse among members of the immediate family of the deceased person. This ritual involves even people who are not couples. This is all in a bid to eliminate death in the family.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, being true to the Bible, teaches that “the dead know nothing” and have no “share in anything done under the sun” (Eccl 9:5, 6). All members who join the Church are taught this Bible doctrine before they are baptized. Nevertheless, some church members in Nchalo district participate in some death rituals that are contrary to the Bible. This behaviour leads to a double standard life which encourages undivided allegiance to God, hence syncretism.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to establish factors that lead to church members in Nchalo district to participate in death rituals inconsistent with Seventh-day Adventist teachings and then develop a program that will help church members desist from such practices.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study will help church members of Nchalo district refrain from participating in ‘kulowa kufa’ (eliminating death) and other death rituals contrary to the Adventist teaching on the state of the dead. It will also help local church leaders develop further programs on the same. South Malawi Field will take advantage of this program to extend it to other church districts. Realizing that each tribe or group of people has its own death rituals which may be inconsistent with Adventism, the church’s national leaders will consider addressing this malady at the national level using a contextualized version of this program.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Death rituals/rites:** ceremonies, practices, activities performed when a family experiences death.

**Spirit:** an entity that is believed to live after one’s death.

**Ancestral veneration:** an act of honoring members of the family who died.

**Syncretism:** a double standard life (in this case between Christianity and heathenism).

**District:** a group of churches in an area under administration of one leader (Pastor).

**Field/Conference:** the administrative organization of all churches in one region (province).

**Union:** the administrative organization of all churches in a country.

**Spiritualism:** a belief that dead people communicate with the dead.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Since some rituals are performed many years after the death of a family member, the study dealt with the rituals that are performed from the time of death up to the seventh year, although I surveyed two churches in Nchalo district namely Mlambe and Mkombezi, the pilot program was conducted at Mkombezi Church.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEATH RITUALS

This chapter will look into what the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments say on death rituals. Ellen White's writings will be reviewed on the same. The position of Adventist authors will be discussed, followed by the views of non-Adventist authors.

#### **The Bible and Death Rituals**

The Bible is very explicit in its teaching on the wiles of Satan and his warfare against the Church. One of his strategies in this cosmic war is to encourage Seventh-day Adventist Christians to still practice pagan rites (1 Pet 5:8).

#### **Old Testament**

Death rituals may not be discussed without touching the issue of spiritualism. The Bible has several texts on spiritualism and death rituals. The first ever recorded incident on spiritualism is the one recorded in Gen 3:4<sup>10</sup> where the Serpent (Satan) said to the woman, "You will not surely die." When God had created everything, He declared all things to be very good. After some discussion with Eve and following the woman's response that God had forbidden the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it was when the devil brought forth his lie that they would not die if they ate of the forbidden tree, but instead they would be like God, knowing good and evil. It

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<sup>10</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural quotations are from the New King James Version.

was from here that the devil has perpetuated his lie and this led God to warn His children.

The Lord advised the children of Israel not to take part in some death rituals as recorded in Deut 14:1 “You are the children of the Lord your God, you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your hair for the dead.” A warning against taking part in spiritualism is echoed by God to the children of Israel through Moses, “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits, do not seek after them, to be defiled by them; I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:31). The book of Deuteronomy carries the same warning in which the Lord commanded that all spiritualists be put to death by way of stoning them (Deut 20:27). The Lord drove the spiritualists away from the children of Israel because they are an abomination to Him (Deut 18:10-12).

Isaiah expressed wonder as to why people associated themselves with spiritualism. This came in the wake of people inquiring about the living from the dead (Is 8:19). One other well-known spiritualistic activity in the Old Testament is the encounter of Saul with the witch of Endor. When Saul had savored his relationship with God due to his disobedience, he inquired of the Lord but to no avail. So he resorted to the witch of Endor, the one who himself had banished from the frontiers of Israel. Saul’s request to the woman was for her to bring forth Samuel to advise him on the way forward about the battle. Samuel, the prophet of God had since died. The witch of Endor brought forth the spirit out of the earth and it was this spirit that informed Saul that Israel will lose the war and that Saul’s sons will be killed. The prediction came true yet it was not Samuel’s spirit that made the prediction (1Sam 28). This was a perpetuation of the same lie that “you will not surely die.”

The Old Testament thus shows that God is not pleased with the practice of death rituals that are inconsistent with the Bible.



## **New Testament**

The New Testament relates a number of spiritualistic activities. When one reads the Gospels he/she observes that during Christ's earthly ministry, spiritualism was on the rise. Jesus encountered several spiritualistic activities. One such encounter was that of a man possessed with evil spirits whose dwelling place was among the tombs and he would not be chained by any man. Jesus drove away the unclean spirit out of him (Mark 5:1-13).

Paul forewarned about spiritualism in the last days, "Now the spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim 4:1).

In the book of Revelation, the Bible has this to say, "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirit of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev 16:13-14).

Paul and John may be implicit in their narrations about demonic activities but I would suggest that death rituals are an outgrowth of spiritualism.

### **What Ellen White Says about Spiritualism**

Since death rituals are performed as a response to the belief that man has a spirit that lives after death, Ellen White, one of the founding pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has said much on spiritualism, which is the root of death rituals. Commenting on the doctrine of immortality, Ellen White posited that

the doctrine of man's consciousness in death, especially the belief that spirits of the dead return to minister to the living has prepared the way for modern spiritualism. If the dead are admitted to the presence of God and holy angels, and privileged with knowledge far

exceeding what they before possessed, why should they not return to the earth to enlighten and instruct the living? If, as taught by popular theologians, spirits of the death are hovering about their friends on earth, why should they not be permitted to communicate with them to warn them against evil, or to comfort them in sorrow?<sup>11</sup>

It can be observed that the latter part of the preceding statement from Ellen White addresses spiritualism in Christian clothing involving the presence of God and holy angels.

Ellen White further uncovers the source of this widespread theology of natural immortality when she says

the ministration of holy angels, as presented in the scriptures, is a truth most comforting and precious to every follower of Christ. But the Bible teaching upon this point has been obscured and perverted by the error of popular theology. The doctrine of natural immortality, first borrowed from the pagan philosophy, and in the darkness of the great apostasy incorporated into the Christian faith has supplanted the truth, so plainly taught in scriptures, “that the dead know not anything.”<sup>12</sup>

Those who believe in spiritualism consider it as light from heaven. It is here that Ellen white says that

here is a channel regarded as sacred, through which Satan works for the accomplishment of his purposes. The fallen angels who do his biddings appear as messengers from the spirit world. While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1973), 483.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 483.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 483, 484.

## The Spread of Spiritualism

Every teaching or belief is expected to die or continue after inception.

Spiritualism has grown and spread wide throughout the world. It has found favorable ground even among professed Christians. To this effect, Ellen White argues that

the claim that men can hold intercourse with evil spirit is regarded as a fable of the Dark Ages. But spiritualism, which numbers its converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions, which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches and has found favor in legislative bodies and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival in new disguise of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old.<sup>14</sup>

This spread of spiritualism has had its impact as alluded to by Ellen White.

This same belief in communion with the dead formed the foundation of heathen idolatry. The gods of the heathen were believed to be the deified spirits of dead heroes. Thus the religion of the heathen was a worship of the dead. This is evident from the scriptures. In the account of the sin of Israel at Bethpeor, it is stated; ‘Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

And Israel joined himself unto Baalpoer.’ Numbers 25:1-3. The Psalmist tells us to what kind of gods these sacrifices were offered. Speaking of the same apostasy of the Israelites, he says, ‘They joined themselves also unto Baalpoer and ate the sacrifices of the dead (Psalm 106:28); that is, sacrifices that had been offered to the dead.’<sup>15</sup>

## Spiritualism Today

With the rise of Christianity, one would think that this has neutralized spiritualism. However, Ellen White detects that

the belief in communion with the dead is still held, even in professedly Christian lands. Under the name of spiritualism the practice of communicating with beings claiming to be the spirits of the departed has become widespread. It is calculated to take hold of the sympathies of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave.

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<sup>14</sup>White, 484.

<sup>15</sup>White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), 684.

Spiritual beings sometimes appear to persons in the form of their deceased friends, and relate incidents connected with their lives and perform acts which they performed while living. In this way they lead men to believe that their dead friends are angels hovering over them and communicating with them.<sup>16</sup>

It is commonly believed traditionally that dead relatives are believed to turn into angels, who are higher than men. Nevertheless, Ellen White explains how the living relate with the dead as she puts it that these spirits of the departed receive a certain idolatry and to many living people the word of the dead has greater weight than the word of God.<sup>17</sup> From the preceding statement, it can be deduced that God and spiritualism compete for supremacy and allegiance for many people. Spiritualism has taken a new twist as described by Ellen White that “spiritualism is now changing its form and veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise.”<sup>18</sup>

She further asserts that unlike the former stand taken by spiritualism in denouncing Christ and the Bible, “it now professes to accept both.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Ellen White’s Admonitions on Spiritualism**

Ellen White gives precautions that can act as a safeguard for all Christians. She says that there is a no need for anyone to be deceived by the lying claims of spiritualism for the world has been given enough light to help people discover this snare.<sup>20</sup> She talks of a man who the devil used to promote spiritualism.

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<sup>16</sup>White, 684.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 685.

<sup>18</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 488.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 489.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 487.

Thomas Paine, whose body has now moldered to dust and who is to be called forth at the end of the one thousand years, at the second resurrection, to receive his reward and suffer the second death is represented by Satan as being in heaven, and highly exalted there. Satan used him on earth as long as he could and now he is carrying on the same work through pretensions of having Thomas Paine so much exalted and honored in heaven; as he taught here, Satan would make it appear that he is teaching. And some have looked with horror at his life and death; and his corrupt teachings. While living, but who now submit to be taught by him, one of the vilest and most corrupt of men, one who despised God and his law.<sup>21</sup>

This is one of the examples of how misleading the devil can be. He insinuates that the dead go to heave regardless of how they related with God while alive here on earth.

Ellen White speaks of how the angels of Satan facilitate the work of spiritualism. She asserts that the whole world, including professed Christians, is thrown into uncertainty by the lying angels who make it appear as if the apostles corrupt their own teachings.<sup>22</sup> She relates to her audience, the incident of a well known personality in her time in an endeavour to emphasize the wiles of the Devil. In this incident she says that Satan “sets up the infidel, Thomas Paine, as if he were ushered into heaven when he died on earth, and now united with the holy apostles whom he hated on earth, were engaged in teaching the world.”<sup>23</sup> She further points out that

the fact that Satan claims that one whom he loved so well, and who hated God so perfectly, is now with the holy apostles and angels in glory should be enough to remove the veil from all minds and discover to them the dark, mysterious works of Satan. He virtually says to the world and to infidels, No matter how wicked you are, no matter whether you believe or disbelieve in God or the Bible, live as you please, heaven is your home; for all know that if

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<sup>21</sup>White, “Early Writings,” in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (Harrah, Oklahoma: Academy Enterprises, Inc., n.d), 263.

<sup>22</sup>White, 263 – 264.

<sup>23</sup>White, 264.

Thomas Paine is in heaven, and so exalted, they will surely get there.<sup>24</sup>

From Ellen White's perspective, I would suggest that spiritualism has a hold on people to still trust that the dead are still living in heaven. This then encourages people to practice death rituals as a lifestyle and still hope to live with God and His holy angels in eternity.

### **Historical Origin of Death Rituals**

Based on the devil's lie in Eden about death, the participation in different death rituals has been in existence from far times back. The historicity of death rituals runs hand in hand with the belief in the immortality of the soul.

Bacchiocchi asserts that a belief in some form of life after death is held by every society. This may be done to explain away the pain of such tragic loss. He says that "the need for assurance and certainty in the light of the challenge that death poses to human life had led people in every culture to formulate beliefs in some form of afterlife."<sup>25</sup> This may indicate that they are such beliefs that have led to people's responses through death rituals.

### **The Afterlife in Egypt**

The belief in life after death goes together with civilization. Bacchiocchi states that "it may be difficult to pinpoint the historical origin of the belief in immortality of the soul since all ancient civilizations held to some form of conscious life after

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 265.

<sup>25</sup>Samuel Bacchiocchi, *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2008), 46-47.

death.<sup>26</sup> Bacchiocchi further comments that in the ancient world, the belief in the afterlife was deeply felt in Egypt.<sup>27</sup>

Bacchiocchi notes that this concern for the afterlife in Egypt is testified by the “countless tombs unearthed by the archaeologists along the Nile River. Bacchiocchi goes on to say that “they practiced elaborate ceremonies to prepare the Pharaohs for their next life, constructing massive pyramids and other elaborate tombs filled with luxuries the deceased were supposed to need in the hereafter.”<sup>28</sup> It can be seen that the concern for the next life in Egypt was only for the Pharaohs. One wonders if the common man also needed such comfort in the afterlife.

Salmond agrees with Bacchiocchi on the origin of the belief of the immortality of the soul in Egypt. He says that there are reliable records that revealed the Egyptian thought and practice some thousand years back.<sup>29</sup> He additionally states that “the belief in a future life was associated in ancient times with the Nile valley, that the Egyptians had the repute of being the first people who taught the immortality of the soul.”<sup>30</sup>

He writes that “the Egyptian belief in the immortality of the soul existed centuries before Judaism, Hellenism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam and the Greeks adopted this belief from the Egyptians.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Bacchiocchi, 47.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Steward D. F. Salmond, *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality* (Edinburgh: Morrison and Gibb Ltd., n.d.), 48.

<sup>30</sup>Bacchiocchi, 48.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

## **The Inter-Testamental Period**

Bacchiocchi defines this period as “The centuries that separate the end of the Old Testament from the beginning of the New Testament.”<sup>32</sup> He further reveals that it was during this period that some two groups of Jewish Apocryphal writers emerged with the earlier group maintaining the “Old Testament holistic view of human nature in which immortality is not an innate human possession, but a conditional gift of eternal life given to the believers at the resurrection.”<sup>33</sup> I infer that with this view about the soul, rituals of any nature may have been practiced but they may not have been death rituals that were inconsistent with the state of the dead.

Bacchiocchi mentions of the later group of Jewish writers that was “influenced by the Greek belief in the immortality of the soul, prayer for the dead, and denial of the resurrection.”<sup>34</sup> It is notable that someone’s practices are preceded by his belief. This is noted from the beliefs the two Jewish writers held. Based on the belief of the latter group, it is probable that they practiced death rituals based on their beliefs, which are on the increase in the twenty first century.

## **The Christian Church**

Death rituals have been in practice from many centuries back. Bacchiocchi writes of the two eras of the Christian church; the early Christian church and the later Christian church, whereby in the early Christian church “Christ and the apostles confirmed and clarified the Old Testament holistic view of human nature by teaching that immortality is not an innate human possession, but a gift reserved for the

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 47

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>34</sup>Bacchiocchi, 48.



righteous and bestowed at the resurrection.”<sup>35</sup> He alludes the above view was maintained in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers (Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, the Didache, Barnabas of Alexandria, Hermas of Rome, Polycarp of Smyrna) and the later writers in the names of Justin, Irenaeus, Novatian, Arnobius and Lactantius.<sup>36</sup>

He further asserts that the teaching of immortality of the soul gradually found place in the Christian church “which was already influenced by a modified form of Platonism called Neo-Platonism.”<sup>37</sup> It seems that civilization brought in other aspects of life that invoked people’s minds on issues of the realities of life, including the state of the dead and the immortality of the soul as evidenced in the practice of death rituals. Civilization started in Egypt and it is here that the concern of the afterlife was deeply felt resulting in death rituals.

### **The Seventh-day Adventist Authors on Death Rituals**

Like Ellen White, the Seventh-day Adventist authors have written much on the issue of spiritualism. This is so because the root cause of these death rituals is the perception and belief people have on death. The belief is that a human being has a spirit that continues to live when he/she dies. This belief contradicts with the Bible. This section is not intended to repeat the already clear teaching on the state of the dead. Adventists’ view on death, issues of soul, spirit, and breath are discussed in this section.

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<sup>35</sup>Bacchiocchi, 49.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 49.

## **Soul in the Bible**

The Hebrew ‘nephesh’ for soul whose Greek equivalent is ‘psuche’ both refer to a man as a living being. Elaborating on this point the *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* confirms that, “Nothing indicates that man received a soul but that man became a living being (soul).”<sup>38</sup> Paned adds that it has been interpreted that at creation there was an infusion of a soul into a physical body.<sup>39</sup> Andreasen asserts that the life-breath is not a second entity which exists separately but rather it is an energizing power from God that transformed the earthen body into a living being,<sup>40</sup> making man “a living soul” (Gen 2:7).

## **Spirit in the Bible**

It is the “spirit” that has caused several beliefs associated with death that have resulted in the performance of death rituals and rites. Commenting on the use of the “spirit,” the Seventh-day Adventist Bible dictionary reiterates that the Hebrew word for spirit is *ruach* which is the ‘divine energy or life principle, that animates human beings.’<sup>41</sup> The Bible dictionary further alludes that whereas soul denotes personality, “spirit refers to the energizing sparks of live essentials to individual existence.”<sup>42</sup> To

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<sup>38</sup>James Cress, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 94.

<sup>39</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, “Spiritualism” in *Issues in SDA Theology* (MA Lecture Notes, Solusi University, 2007), 133.

<sup>40</sup>Niels-Erik Andreasen, “Death: Origin, Nature, and Final Eradication,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 316.

<sup>41</sup>S.H. Horn, ed. “Spirit,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1979).

<sup>42</sup>Pfandl, 134.

this notion, Pfandl says that the New Testament equivalent for ‘ruach’ is ‘pneuma’ and does not refer to an entity that can exist apart from a physical body.<sup>43</sup>

### **Breath of Life**

There is an assumption that people make concerning the breath of life. Pfandl alludes that some take this breath of life as an immortal soul implanted by God in Adam’s material body.<sup>44</sup> Pfandl continues to argue that this type of interpretation cannot be harmonized with the biblical meaning as the notion that the breath of life is identified as immortal soul is not found in the Bible.<sup>45</sup> Bacchiocchi could not remain silent on this issue. He adds that in scripture the “breath (*neshamah*) of life” is the life giving power associated with the breath of God.

Thus we read in Job33:4. “The spirit (ruach) of God has made me, and the breath (*neshamah*) of the Almighty gives me life.” The parallelism between the “spirit of God” and the “breath of the Almighty” suggests that the two are used interchangeably because they both refer to the gift of life imparted by God to His creatures (see also Isaiah 45:5, Job 27:3).<sup>46</sup> In this vein, the creation of man is a mystery. This is why people have challenges in identifying the connection of the elements that make up life. It is notable that there is varied understanding about the breath of life that contributes to the belief that leads practice of spiritualistic activities.

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>44</sup>Pfandl, 135.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997), 49.

Concerning immortality in connection with the breath of life, Pfandl verifies that

possession of the “breath of life” does not in itself confer immortality, because the Bible tells us that at death “the breath of life” returns to God. Life derives from God, is sustained by God, and returns to God. In describing death, Job says: “If he (God) should take back his spirit (ruach) to himself and gather to himself his breath (neshamah) all flesh would perish together, and man would return to the dust” (Job 34:14-15, see also Eccl 12:7, 7:21-22). The fact that death is characterized as the withdrawal of the breath of life shows that the “breath of life” is not an immortal spirit or soul that God confers on his creatures but rather the gift of life which human beings possess for the duration of their earthly existence. As long as “the breath of life” or spirit remains humans beings are “living souls.” But when the breath departs, they become dead souls.<sup>47</sup>

In his concluding remarks on the response to ancestor veneration which is a spiritualistic activity, Pfandl reveals that “ancestor worship is a fact of life in most African societies.<sup>48</sup> He further stresses that “as Seventh-day Adventists we cannot participate in something that is clearly contrary to scripture. However, beyond proclaiming the biblical position on the nature of man and spiritualistic practices, there is need for a development of a coherent strategy to overcome the deeply seated fear of ancestor power even among Seventh-day Adventists.”<sup>49</sup>

Since death is considered as a journey by some people, Anderson stipulates that “death is not a modification of life, a continuation of life in changed condition, a release into fuller life, life in misery, life in happiness, life at all, in any condition whether good or bad. To die is not to live.”<sup>50</sup> Haynes agrees that death does not take a

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<sup>47</sup>Pfandl, 135.

<sup>48</sup>Pfandl, 140.

<sup>49</sup>Pfandl, 140.

<sup>50</sup>Roy Allan Anderson, *Secrets of the Spirit World* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific press, 1966), 50.

person to another destination, when he writes that, death does not mean to go to heaven, hell, purgatory or anywhere.<sup>51</sup>

In line with Seventh-day Adventist authors, it can be noted that Seventh-day Adventists do not believe in spiritualism. As such they may not participate in death rituals in the same way that other believers do.

### **Non-Adventist Authors on Death Rituals**

From observation, one would assume that the issue of death rituals is spreading wide even among believers of other denominations. This section will investigate what non-Adventist authors have written on death rituals. This has an influence on Seventh-day Adventists who live in society together with non-Adventists.

### **Life after Death**

Concerning life after death, Mitchel says that “the general belief is that the dead continue their existence as ‘shades or spirits.’”<sup>52</sup> He further asserts that “the dead possess powers that affect the living especially when newly dead or if the deceased was powerful while alive and that the family includes both the living and the spirits of the dead.”<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, I look at death as a great separator between the living and the dead, regardless of when someone died. The living may not include the dead relatives when referring to a family.

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<sup>51</sup>Carlyle Haynes, *Spiritism and the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1941), 27.

<sup>52</sup>Robert Cameron Mitchel, *African Primal Religions* (Allen, Texas: Argus Communications, 1977), 27.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 81.

Mitchel continues that “properly performed rituals bring good luck and fortune to the family and if not properly performed the opposite is true.”<sup>54</sup> No one wants misfortunes of any type in life. May be that is why responses in form of rituals are given.

There is a belief of the living dead not only in Africa but in other parts of the world. Moody asserts that “the African traditional belief is that they are ancestors the dead fathers and grandfathers of the living.”<sup>55</sup> May be it is from this traditional belief that Fama writes about the Tekela—Kusu-Anamongo of the Democratic Republic of Congo who hold a belief that the dead circulate among the living and that the former are able to see and hear the living’s works and thoughts.<sup>56</sup>

Fama further articulates that the Tekela—Kusu-Anamongo hold a belief that their ancestors guide them through life and that communication is possible between the living and ancestors and when they are angered, the anger can be averted by the use of sacrifices.<sup>57</sup> The observation is that if the ancestors guide the living then we would have not much problems. The ancestors would come in person to the living to tell them to put to a stop practices that have the potential of bringing misfortunes instead of letting these acts take place and then visit the living with punishment. He additionally notes that “it is important to understand that ancestors are revered, though not necessarily adored. This attitude has never had a negative effect on the diffusion

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>55</sup>Raymond A Moody, *Life After Death and Reflection on Life After Death* (New York: Guide Posts, 1975), 1755.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Onema Fama, *Gospel and Culture in an African Culture: The Tekela—Kusu-Anamongo People and the Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2006), 74.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 74.

of the Christian gospel.”<sup>58</sup> Fama further asserts that it is often the non-Tekela—Kusu-Anamongo who reject the idea of the veneration of ancestors, although at the same time, they believe in the doctrine of communication with saints.<sup>59</sup>

It is notable that the line between reverence and adoration is thin. One looks at the possibility of revering someone without adoring him at the same time. It seems the two may not be neatly separated. On the same note of ancestors, shorter comments that “transition from an earthly life to the spirit life is done through body corruption, embalming, cremation, ceremonies of reinstatement, through which the deceased becomes an ancestor spirit, saved cannibalism, in which body parts of the deceased are consumed by the living to ensure that their powers are passed on.”<sup>60</sup> The issue of becoming an ancestor spirit after death may have contributed to the practices of death rituals as the living know that there is uplifting of status after one’s death. It is a common belief that powers are passed on in form of written documents, swearing in and in some cultures equipment like spears, bows and arrows and special types of clothes represent these ceremonies.

Concerning the living dead, Moody argues that “the Christian missionaries consider the living dead as demons or evil spirits who receive honour and service in the pretense of being ancestors.”<sup>61</sup> He further states that “by pretending to be the ancestors, these evil spirits have tried to take away man’s worship from God and to

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<sup>58</sup>Fama, 74.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>60</sup>Aylward Shorter, *African Culture; An Overview: Socio-Cultural Anthropology* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paucines Publications Africa, 1998), 64.

<sup>61</sup>Moody, 177.

lead people to worship the fallen spirits of Satan's kingdom."<sup>62</sup> The observation here is that the Christian missionaries are not talking of African traditional beliefs in general, but they specifically talk of the ancestors who are believed to be the living dead in the African context. Africans and other non-Africans relate to the dead in form of death rituals which are meant to do away with the negative results from the dead. It is fear that necessitates these rituals and there is a possibility of shifting allegiance from God to the ancestors.

### **Some Death Rituals in Africa**

Every country and tribe perform different rituals. Mbiti outlines some death rituals. He begins by the disposal of the body where great care is exercised to fulfill the funeral rites so as to avoid offending the departed.<sup>63</sup> It may be observed that these departed were the type of people who may have not commanded any respect while alive, but since they are dead they get the respect from their surviving relatives and friends. May be this is why in some places in Malawi when one goes to attend a funeral ceremony, the dead person is addressed as king or queen.

Burial of belongings with body is part of the rituals. Explaining further on the rituals Mbiti says that

some belongings such as spears, bows and arrows, stools, snuff, food stuffs, beads, ornaments, money, tools and domestic utensils are buried with the body. Former practices in some places allowed for the burial of servants and wives of kings or other rich people together with the body. The belief behind this custom is that the departed needs weapons to defend himself along the way to the next world or food to eat on the journey. Wives and servants would

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>63</sup>John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Westlands, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 1991), 119.



keep him company and other property to use so that he would not arrive empty-handed or remain poor.<sup>64</sup>

The observation is that people hate poverty to an extent that they don't want their departed relatives to remain poor after death. Even those who were poor while alive are not allowed to maintain their status after death. One wonders why kings and rich people needed company when companionship may be every person's need. Everyone needs friends in life be it the elite or the materially disadvantaged.

A further observation is that there is no record of someone who came from the next world explaining to the living in person what the dead are going through as this would be evidence to the living, hence the continuity of the death rituals. The living seem to be assured that things are well with their departed relatives when no misfortunes or bad luck befall them.

Mbiti speaks of other funeral rites that are performed at the "actual burial or other disposal of the body which are intended to send off the departed peacefully, to sever his links with the living, and to ensure that normal life continues among the survivors."<sup>65</sup> In connection with these rites, Mbiti says, "Women wail and weep, lamenting the departure of the dead person, recalling good things he said and did and reminding themselves he lives on in the next world."<sup>66</sup> Mbiti relates what happens in some parts of Africa:

Following someone's death, a day or a two-day fast is observed which is broken by the communal feasting afterwards. Work is also suspended for a few days as a sign of respect for the dead. In some places, members of the immediate family have their hairs shaved off, and some of their normal activities are suspended until the funeral rites have been performed. The

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>65</sup>Mbiti, 121.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

shaving of the hair has another significance to the people. It is a belief that death is a destroyer of life and the growth of the hair is an indication that life continues to spring up.<sup>67</sup>

It appears courteous to suspend some activities that do not jeopardize life in case of death in the family. Since death brings sorrow, it will be inconsistent with some cultural norms for some family members to continue with the usual daily activities. It is normal that when the hair is cut it grows again even in the absence of death.

Mbiti reiterates that in some places washing of bodies and clothes is suspended for several days and months and it involves the killing of some domestic animals to mark someone's death.<sup>68</sup> He capitulates that the suspension of spouses sleeping together for weeks and months is also observed with certain houses in the homestead being abandoned for good.<sup>69</sup>

I perceive that the suspension of body and linen washing may seem inconsistent with people's normal healthful living even if it were a day's suspension. During funerals people are crowded. This on its own may be a health hazard. Furthermore, it is not a common practice for a person to go for days without body and linen washing. It is heavy for mourners to go not only for days but months being away from water. May be several days may do for drinking purposes.

The suspension of spouses not sleeping together for weeks and months is also may be not welcome in an age when unfaithfulness between spouses is on the rise. The observation is that this suspension is likely to bring unfaithfulness to another height. It seems to be in order to stay away from a spouse when death strikes the

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>68</sup>Mbiti, 122.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 122.

family. However, I am of the view that the space be improved. On the permanent abandonment of houses, I am of the opinion that costs that are incurred in the construction of even a single house are to be kept into consideration. This abandonment leads into other expenses in trying to replace those houses, taking into cognizance that funerals are by nature expensive.

The Chewa people of Malawi have their own rituals. Some of these have the same connotation with other rituals in other parts of Africa since the central and southern parts of Africa are dominated by the group of people called the Bantu. Concerning the woman who dies while pregnant, Makumbi reports that four men carry the dead body on a stretcher while women sing their traditional dance called 'chisamba.' Men carrying the dead body on their shoulders hurriedly go round the house of the deceased woman three times."<sup>70</sup> He has not given the significance attached to the going round of the house. He goes on to relate upon arrival at the graveyard, they lower the dead body in the grave. One man is assigned to cut open the deceased woman's womb because failure to do so will result in all female relatives of the deceased woman dying of the same disease that killed this woman.<sup>71</sup>

One would want to appreciate how the disease that killed the woman will be transferred to all female relatives. Makumbi capitulates that the assigned man to cut open the womb uses a spear for the exercise who then whistles to call back the other men who left him alone on the site. After burial, they go to the river to wash their

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<sup>70</sup>Archibald J. Makumbi, *Maliro ndi Miyambo ya Achewa* (Blantyre, Malawi: Longman Ltd., 1999), 18. (The title of this Chichewa book can literally be translated as *Burial Rites and Traditions of the Chewa*.)

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

bodies as a way of removing spirits. Upon arrival at home, they warm the hoes used at the graveyard in the fire in case spirits remained on the hoes.<sup>72</sup>

For the stillbirth child, Makumbi talks of a birth attendant who splashes medicine on the doorsteps which signifies that the child is not a human being enough for men to touch. It is believed that if men touch this type of a child, they will contract serious illness.<sup>73</sup> It is known that some illnesses are contagious yet this illness affects only men who touch the child.

According to Ncube, Zimbabwe has her own way of relating with ancestors. He gives an example of an ongoing communication between the deceased and the living which is the bringing home of the ancestral spirit.<sup>74</sup> This calls for an appeasement ritual that brings to rest the spirit of the deceased. Ncube gives the steps for this ritual as follows:

First, an inquiry is made from other divines through a delegation to establish the cause of the death so as to come up with both corrective and preventive measures. The spirit is then addressed by the relatives, who escort it to its original home. It is this ceremony that results in the wondering spirit becoming an ancestor. The second step is the transferring of the name of the deceased to one of the family members preferably an elder son, grandson or grand daughter who in turn becomes an official representative of the departed. Third, is a communal fellowship for all relatives, guests and spirits. Meat and beer are shared and consumed. It is during this fellowship that the family pleads with the ancestor not to afflict family members with sickness and other misfortunes.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Makumbi, 1.

<sup>74</sup>Zebron Masukume Ncube, *Ancestral Beliefs and Practices: A Program for Developing Christian Faith Among Adventists in Zimbabwe* (DMin Project Report, Andrews University, 1997), 34.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 35.

## **The Famadiana**

It is a Malagasy custom with an eastern background which has to do with venerating the remains of the corpses of the deceased people within the immediate family. According to the Indian Ocean Union Conference Adventist University of Africa students, “they wrap the remains of the dead person and transfer them from the original burial place to a familial or new tomb.”<sup>76</sup>

The Indian-Ocean Union Conference Adventist of University of Africa students reiterate that this exercise is “the duty of the survivors towards their departed parents and all this is done out of fear, it is a means of asking for blessings from ancestors, it is a family gathering and it is the reinforcement of the ‘giving and taking back’ obligation in the community.”<sup>77</sup> This exercise is done systematically every first, fifth or seventh year from the day of death. The students further said that sometimes a family member may have dreams that their departed family member is feeling cold or the astrologer binds the family suggesting the right time to do the Famadiana, which is usually after harvest. All family members and the community are invited for a festivity that runs for three days accompanied by beer drinking, dancing and eating.<sup>78</sup>

The Adventist University of Africa students Indian Ocean Conference disclosed that “during this festivity, a folkloric band is hired to entertain people.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Indian Ocean Union Conference Adventist University of Africa students in ‘Topics’ MA Pastoral Theology class presentation (Solusi University, 2007), 1.

<sup>77</sup>Indian Ocean Union Conference Students, 2, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

The presenters observed that “exhuming and reburying of the dead parents may lead to moral and social degradation.”<sup>80</sup>

Regarding family gathering, Gewi confirms that “rituals associated with death bring together relatives and friends of the deceased in any way than no other rite of passage could.”<sup>81</sup> One would conjecture that it is a good gesture to take care of one’s parents. The beauty of this is seen when the parents are alive because they can appreciate their children’s or relatives’ care.

Concerning coldness in the grave (if at all the dead feel cold), the observation is that the dead are generally put in a tightly closed coffin after being dressed, wrapped with clothes and blankets. The assumption is that this takes care of the coldness and there would be no complaint from the departed relatives to the surviving people. I argue that exhuming the remains of these dead relatives in a bid to rebury them may only increase the coldness considering that they are further exposed to air. It may also be observed that the festivity on its own is expensive, as it is done on these stipulated cycles and it is strategically arranged after harvest. There is a possibility that the surviving children surrender much of their harvest to the famadiana leaving them hungry the rest of the year.

The children used to communicate directly with their parents when the parents were alive. This time they need an astrologer who may not even be related to their parents to inform them of their parent’s situation in the grave. One would see lack of consideration in this exercise on the part of the community that gathers for the festivity organized by children of the departed.

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 4, 5.

<sup>81</sup>Mary N. Gewi, ed., *Responsible Leadership in Marriage and Family* (Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, 2008), 149.

The experience of Famadiana may spread diseases that would result from handling decomposed dead bodies. It may also revive the grief of the bereaved as they watch their dead relatives' bodies. Economically, Famadiana depletes the food reserves of the children of the bereaved since they are responsible for the function.

## **Purification**

Purification is another death ritual. For this ritual, Gehman writes that purification or cleansing is necessary because of death. Neglect will cause sickness and death. Among the Lodagga of West Africa there are four ways of cleaning in the ceremonial uncleanliness of death. Washing with water, breaking a new-laid egg on the forehead in such a way that the yoke falls into the grave (the egg symbolizes birth). White shaving (white-painted) on the bodies of people symbolizes cleaning, sweeping the house clean is an act of purification.<sup>82</sup>

He further comments on the rituals:

The effort to restore life normality among the Akamba of Kenya included various practices. Before a barren woman was buried, a stick was placed in the vagina to remain there permanently in order to prevent barrenness from flowing out through the vagina into the vagina of another woman. In case a married woman died having her monthly periods, the husband was called to have intercourse with the corpse before burial so that the family might be purified.<sup>83</sup>

This seems to be another level of death rituals. It may be noted that this practice was exposing women to extreme degradation. Gehman mentions another aspect of death rituals concerning purification:

After the body was buried (or cast in the bush) ritual intercourse was necessary among the Akamba to make death harmless. The widow or widower had to have ceremonial intercourse before any other member of the family was allowed to have sex. A widow performed this with the man inheriting her, and a widower with another wife or woman. If a child died, the parents would "remove death" by going to bed together. The close relatives of the dead person then visited the witchdoctor who performed rituals to remove death

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<sup>82</sup>Richard J. Gehman, *Who Are the Living dead? A Theology of Death, Life after Death and the Living Dead* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 18.

<sup>83</sup>Gehman, 19.

from the family. This made the family ritually pure that other members of the family could have sexual intercourse.<sup>84</sup>

The scenario presented above is almost the one practiced in Nchalo. All this is done in fear of death.

### **Christianity and Death Rituals**

Death rituals are performed even by Christians. Gewi points out that: “among African Christians, funerals are conducted according to the liturgies that came with missionary teaching. However, Africans do not abandon their traditional beliefs when they become Christians. They carry their world-view into Christianity.”<sup>85</sup> The observation is that the lack of abandonment of traditional beliefs by Africans upon becoming Christians may facilitate a situation whereby one just claims to be a Christian while participating in traditional beliefs that may not be consistent with Christianity. It is observed that not all traditional beliefs are inconsistent with Christianity. They are some traditional beliefs that tell one’s identity. The missionaries brought Christianity to Africa, only that they brought it in a foreign vessel. They may have discredited some of the African traditional practices that do not interfere with Christianity. There was need for gospel contextualization.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>85</sup> Gewi, 150.



### CHAPTER 3

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nchalo is located in the southern region of Malawi, the country's largest and most populated region. It is in the political district of Chikhwawa. Chikhwawa has a population of 437,892.<sup>1</sup> Chikhwawa lies in the Shire valley which has two districts, the other one is Nsanje. The two main tribes in the Shire valley are the Mang'anja and the Sena. Nchalo has the largest sugar plantations in Malawi and the sugar estate has facilitated an influx of people across the country in search of employment, allowing for a mixed culture in this rural growth centre.

The project was done in a church called Mkombezi, thirty five kilometers west of Nchalo growth centre. Mkombezi was ideal for the project because the majority of the members are the native Sena and Mang'anja, the two tribes that participate in several death rituals including the "removing death" (kulowa kufa). Nchalo district has a membership of 910. Mkombezi has an iron-sheet roofed church building with a membership of 147.

At the time of this project, Nchalo church district had four organized churches and seven companies. It had a membership of 910. This project was done in a church called Mkombezi, which had 147 members. It is thirty-five kilometers west of Nchalo rural growth centre. Mkombezi was ideal for the project because the church

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 65.

leadership noticed that the majority of the members were native Sena and Mang'anja—the two tribes that well-known for participating in several death rituals, including the “removing death” (kulowa kufa). Members of Mkombezi Church were not immune to the practice of these traditional rituals.

### **Research Methodology**

Nchalo was the previous district I served before coming to work in the Ministerial Association and Stewardship department at the Malawi Union Mission office. I chose the topic of the project in 2007 when I joined Adventist University of Africa and that time I was the pastor of Nchalo District. However, I was moved to Malawi Union headquarters in the same year I moved to. Considering the nature of the study I had already identified, it was deemed necessary for me to pursue the same project. I informally contacted the Pastor Mofolo, my successor, about my desire to do my research in his territory. The pastor indicated his willingness to support me in the course of my research.

I then wrote a letter to South Malawi Field administration asking for permission to do my research in Nchalo. The administration through the Field Executive Secretary granted me permission to go ahead with my request.

During the research, I lived in Blantyre, which is eighty-five kilometres away from Nchalo. From Nchalo growth centre to Mkombezi church, where the project was done, it is another dusty and rough thirty-five kilometres. I then made arrangements with Mr. Frank Khoka, who served as the first elder of Nchalo church during my tenure of office in Nchalo district to be providing me with food, transport and accommodation, which he happily did.

Four research tools were used: questionnaires, Bible studies, personal interviews, and Sabbath worship sermons. Before proceeding with the study, I had to

psychologically prepare the church members on what was supposed to be done. The first visit to Mkombezi concerning the project took place on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2008. I had to make my intentions clear for I knew I was dealing with a popular and protected issue of the Shire Valley. I also took cognizance that I had served the District the previous two years, but I never did this undertaking. Now that I had moved to the head office, it was necessary to clarify that this was not a witch-hunting program. The first elder of Mkombezi church assisted me in explaining the importance of the research as it was done by someone they knew.

### **Sensitizing the Membership**

The initial visit was solely for sensitizing the membership of the church. Before addressing the members, I first called aside two elders and the church clerk to brief them on the purpose of my visit. These three men remembered that I had joined the masters program while serving them. This visit served a good purpose in making members aware of what to expect. I further pleaded with members that their openness in their responses to the questionnaires and to me (during personal interviews) in the course of the research would do much to give the whole exercise the desired outcome.

### **Questionnaire**

The second visit took place on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008. This was solely for the purpose of administering questionnaire. Before distributing the questionnaire, I pleaded with the church members that their fair response would provide an opportunity for the project to deal with the real issues at stake and provide the necessary solution, thus making it easy for leaders in this church to serve them well. Fearing that some members would not return the questionnaire the following Sabbath,

I proposed that the members work on the questionnaire on that same day they got them.

Before the members completed the questionnaire, I went through with them every detail of the questionnaire and this helped clarify everything about the questionnaire. In a church with a sizeable membership, it was noted that some members did not come on that particular Sabbath. I then entrusted the first elder, Mr. Sineki with copies of the questionnaire to be administered to the members who were not present. Mr. Sineki brought back all the copies of the questionnaire from the members with responses.

Since it was already planned to administer the questionnaire in another church in Nchalo District called Mlambe, the local Pastor administered the questionnaire on my behalf and he brought all copies of the questionnaire that he had taken to Mlambe Church.

On the Sabbath of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2009, the questionnaire was given to every baptized member of the church present. It included all the areas that needed to be surveyed: member's spiritual growth even before baptism; what the members knew before baptism; who taught them when they were attending a baptismal class; topics taught during their baptismal class attendance. Most of the questions required "Yes" or "No" answers. Considering that it is hard to collect back a questionnaire and the literacy level of the members, the members agreed to complete the questionnaire in the church as this made it easy for collection and for those who could not read and write to be assisted by the literate.

The questionnaire was designed in this way because there are those things that are done to make one become a strong member of the church. There are times leaders complain that the church is not heading in the right direction based on members'

lifestyles, when those leading them have not done much on the members' spiritual growth. Participation in death rituals is an issue of lifestyle; hence the reason why this questionnaire addressed issues on lifestyle and traditional customs. It also surveyed the members' knowledge of the doctrines of the Church. The questions explored on the doctrines found in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 28 Fundamental Doctrines*, The Church Manual, and the Baptismal Class Manual.

### **Sabbath Sermons and Bible Studies**

As a pastor in this district, I had observed that members got involved in traditional customs that were at variance with the Bible's standards due to inadequate knowledge in the Scriptures. So in the research I prepared morning Sabbath sermons, which were presented in a teaching method. In the afternoons I gave Bible studies. All these sessions took place in the church. Mkombezi Church has no electricity and it was not feasible to do evening presentations. This is why I chose Sabbath days for the presentations. This further made it easy for the members to attend the meetings in large numbers as compared to week days' presentations whereby other members would have been away for business or would have been tired from the field work.

The first afternoon session began at 13:30. This was so because almost every participant did not go home for lunch. This gave us ample time for the Bible study. I welcomed all members to the Bible study of that afternoon. I assured them we were going to study the Bible and members participated in the Bible study through questions, comments and observations. All subsequent sessions followed the same procedure: morning preaching and afternoon Bible study.

## Personal Interviews

Besides administering a questionnaire, interviews were conducted. Three elderly men, three elderly women, two young couples were interviewed. Single young people were not included in the interview because they are not traditionally permitted to be involved in this ritual.

## Research Findings

This section brings out the outcome of the study that was done at Mkombezi Church in Nchalo district. This is reflected in Tables 1 to 11.

I believe that well-grounded students of the Baptismal class mostly end up being well-versed Christians. Table 1 depicts the frequency of Baptismal class teachers. Out of 101 respondents, 76 joined the church through baptismal class, representing 75% of the total respondents. The other 34 joined the church through evangelistic campaigns which do not necessarily require one to join the baptismal class. By saying that these members joined the church through baptismal class, all those who were invited by friends to church, who followed their spouses, whose parents were already in the church and those who were witnessed to by a friend are in this category.

*Table 1.* Frequency of Baptismal Class Teachers

Pastor	Elder	Someone Assigned by the Church	Total Respondents
11	59	6	76

Pastors look after large districts in terms of membership and area, which makes it challenging to visit churches regularly. As a result, church elders are entrusted with the responsibility of teaching baptismal candidates. It then requires that these elders have the relevant information for these prospective church members. It

can also be observed that because of the practice of elders handling baptismal classes in the absence of the pastor, not many who are not elders are assigned to do this work. There are some members who may not be serving as elders but can handle the baptismal classes, if the church uses them. What candidates learn at baptismal class are the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs.

Table 2 reveals that baptismal candidates did not know the number of Fundamental Beliefs taught by Seventh-day Adventists. This may not mean that the Fundamental Beliefs were not taught to the members while attending baptismal classes. The baptismal manual is divided into four quarters and has separate numbering for every quarter. Though the baptismal manual is a reflection of the Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, the baptismal manual is not numbered in the way the Fundamental Beliefs are numbered.

*Table 2. Knowledge of Total Number of Fundamental Beliefs*

Candidates who Knew Fundamental Beliefs	Candidates who did not Know the Beliefs	Total Respondents
28	73	101

The survey also wanted to find out other values that were taught to these members when in they were in the baptismal class. One of such values is the importance of Bible study. Table shows the number of candidates who knew the value of Bible study. This was tabulated from all age groups. 51% of the total respondents were taught the value of personal Bible study while 49% did not come across such a teaching when they were attending baptismal class.

This may be attributed to the low literacy level of the members. However, the fact that people cannot read and write is no excuse for not imparting to them things

that matter in one’s Christian life. For those who cannot read and write it is one thing to read and write and another thing to listen to the topic being presented.

This latter comment is made with an assumption that those who cannot read and write may have chosen not to pay attention to something that involves their challenge; hence it is tantamount to the topic not being presented to them as a value, which may have been reflected in their response. Bible study and prayer go together for someone’s spiritual growth that helps to live a new life consequently doing away with old practices inconsistent with the Bible.

*Table 3. Value of Personal Bible Study*

Candidates who Knew	Candidates who did not Know	Total Respondents
52	49	101

Table 4 shows that 96% of the respondents were taught the importance of prayer while attending baptismal class, while 4% missed it. It is observed that some important topics like prayer may be presented to baptismal class members without the latter embracing them.

To some, prayer is applicable during meals, when going to bed and when rising from bed. For prayer, illiteracy may not be an excuse since prayers are not meant to be memorized. As a farmer needs tools for his trade, a Christian needs tools as well for his spiritual growth—prayer being one of them.

*Table 4: Value of Prayer for Spiritual Growth*

Grasped Value of Prayer	Did not Grasp Value of Prayer	Total Respondents
96	5	101

Table 5 indicates that the numbers of respondents who have a copy of the Fundamental Beliefs are fluctuating. The number of years one has been in the church was included in order to determine the impact of one’s stay in the church has on the



individual's understanding of the Church's doctrines. For those who have been in the church for 1 – 5 years, the percentage of those having a copy of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* is at 30%, those for 6 – 10 years, it is 30% as well, those who have been in the church for 11 – 15years it is 25%, those for 16 – 20years, the percentage stands at 28% while those who have been in the church for over twenty years, which is the group that has been in the church the longest, their percentage is at 27.

These percentages may be attributed to low literacy level since the Fundamental Beliefs are in English. Although members are illiterate, attendance of church scheduled meetings can make a difference in their understanding of the teachings of the church.

*Table 5: Possession of a Copy of Seventh-day Adventists Believe*

Number of Years in the Church	With Copy	Without Copy	Total Respondents
1 – 5	6	12	18
6 – 10	6	11	17
11 – 15	4	16	20
16 – 20	10	25	35
21 and above	3	8	11

Table 6 shows that when members are new, they attend meetings so often as indicated by those who have been in the church between the years 1 – 5 and 6 – 10. Attendance of Bible studies on Fundamental Beliefs dropped for those who have been in the church for 11 – 15 years.

It is noted that those who attend Bible studies on Fundamental Beliefs and those who don't attend at all share the same percentage for those who have been in the church between 11 – 15years. This can be middle age in Christianity. Highest attendance and highest non attendance compete for those who have been in the church between 16 – 20years. This group has the highest number of respondents. Another drop in attendance occurs for those who have been in the church for over twenty

years. This group shares the same experience with the group that has been in the church for 11 – 15years.

*Table 6. Attendance in Bible Study on Fundamental Beliefs*

Number of Years in the Church	Often	Seldom	None	Total Respondents
1 – 5	11	4	3	18
6 – 10	10	2	5	17
11 – 15	8	4	8	20
16 – 20	21	5	9	35
21 and above	4	3	4	11

From the study, it can be deduced that these two groups comprise the elderly in the church. Going from the age of twelve, then it can be estimated that these two groups comprise members whose ages are above thirty. In the Malawian context, the members from these two groups are expected to be married. By their long stay in the church, these members were supposed to be mentors to the new members. Instead, it seems complacency and laxity have overtaken them.

It is surprising to note that this attendance issue has become a challenge when all groups have indicated that their churches do conduct Bible studies on Fundamental Beliefs and other topics as follows: 1 – 5years in church showed 61%, those between 6 – 10years in the church indicated 75%, 11 – 15years indicated 70%, those between 16 – 20years indicated 61% while those who have been in the church for over twenty years indicated 63%.

It is noted that the very same people who accepted that these exercises take place in their churches do not attend. It is possible that the ones who present these studies, who are likely to be elders, may not reach people’s hearts and as a result members may feel that their leaders are just filling in the time. In this era of postmodernism, even the illiterate need presenters who are straightforward.

*Table 7. Frequency of Bible Studies on Fundamental Beliefs and Other Topics*

Number of Years in the Church	Often	None	Total Respondents
1 – 5	11	7	18
6 – 10	12	4	16
11 – 15	14	6	20
16 – 20	22	14	36
21 and above	7	4	11

Table 8 indicates the involvement of members in the participation of death rituals before they joined the Church. From the results one can see that a larger number of members in the 1–10 (56%) participated. This is the most threatened age since they are not yet rooted in the doctrines of their Church’s new lifestyle. The number dwindles as the years of membership affiliation in the Church increases. This also testifies to the assumption that there is no one who is born in the Church. So for someone to become a Christian there is need for a second birth or conversion experience.

*Table 8. Participation in Death Rituals before Joining the Church*

Number of Years in the Church	Participated	Not Participated	Total Respondents
1 – 5	10	8	18
6 – 10	10	7	17
11 – 15	10	10	20
16 – 20	15	20	35
21 and above	3	8	11

Table 9 reveals a situation whereby the respondents have now registered their names in the baptismal class and right there and then they come across teachings that are contrary to their old lifestyle. Although change does not take place overnight but it is gradual, but something had started coming to the minds of the respondents. When the two figures are compared, that is participation in death rituals before joining the church and participation in the “removing death” ritual while attending baptismal class, it can be noted that there was a drop in participation of the rituals.

In Table 8, participation was on some other rituals other than the “removing death” rituals while in Table 9 participation was on the well known ritual in the Shire valley. The drop in participation may be due to the fact that when people are new they are excited and may want to go by the new teaching. This drop in participation of the death rituals took place in all the four groups except the group that has stayed in the church for over twenty years.

*Table 9.* Participation in “Removing Death” (kulowa kufa) while Attending Baptismal Class

Number of Years in the Church	Participated	Not Participated	Total Respondents
1 – 5	3	15	18
6 – 10	4	13	17
11 – 15	6	14	20
16 – 20	11	24	35
21 and above	4	7	11

Table 10 reveals what happened to the respondents after baptism. For those who have been in the church between 1– 5 years, one (11%) respondent moved toward non- participation, those who have been in the church between 6 – 10years, 2 (12%) moved from non participation to participation, those who have been in the church between 11 – 15years, 2 (13%) respondents moved from participation to non participation, those who have been in the church between 16 – 20years, the numbers of participation and non- participation were maintained while the group that has stayed in the church the longest increased on the number of participation. Table 10 was compared with the Table 9.

After attending the baptismal class and assuming that after touching important aspects in preparing for these candidates, the changes have been minimal and on the other hand some did not experience the expected change as some who did not participate in the ritual before baptism were found taking part in the ritual even after

baptism. May be they felt that they can run Christianity and continue participating in their old practices without being bothered by anything.

The other possible contributing factor for not experiencing much change after baptism may be that the old members, that is those who were there before did not live an exemplary life in such issues or the baptismal class teachers did not touch much on the need to divorce old ways backed by the Bible or at times there is a tendency to allow people get baptized based on attendance without monitoring their lifestyle during the time they have been attending baptismal classes. Whatever the case, “removing death” as a well-known ritual has been practiced by some members regardless of the length of their stay in the church.

Out of the 101 respondents, the tribe distribution was, one was a Tonga, one was a Ngoni, eight were Lomwe while the rest were Sena and Mang’anja. The other tribes beside the Sena and Mang’anja have their own death rituals in their areas. Yet some of them by living among the Sena and Mang’anja indicated that they participated in the ‘removing death’ ritual.

*Table 10.* Participation in “Removing Death” after Baptism

Number of Years in the Church	Participated	Not Participated	Total Respondents
1 – 5	2	16	18
6 – 10	6	11	17
11 – 15	4	16	20
16 – 20	11	24	35
21 and above	6	5	11

Respondents in Table 11 gave reasons for participating in the ‘removing death’ ritual after baptism. It is observed that the main reasons given for continued participation in the ritual are fear of death, pressure from relatives, seeing no problem in doing so and the practice being part of their tradition. Every reason though has

respondents. There are more respondents on pressure from relatives than in any other section. Pressure from relatives has the potential of losing touch with relatives. When a relative distances himself from participating what members of the family do, the relatives have a tendency to threaten the non participating relative by saying that his failure to participate in such crucial family issues is a way of calling upon himself trouble and should any trouble befall him, let it be upon himself and no relative will be involved. This brings fear on the non participating member since people live in communities.

Of all the 101 respondents, both those who participated in the ritual and those who did not participate in it after baptism, only four (4%) said it was necessary to continue participating in the ritual while the rest indicated that it was not necessary to participate in the ritual. Looking at the respondents who participated in the ritual after baptism, and considering those who did not see the necessity of participating in the ritual, it is surprising to discover that some may have participated in something they did not understand.

*Table 11. Reasons for Participation in “Removing Death” After Baptism*

Number of Years in the Church	Fear of Death	Pressure From Relatives	No Any Problem With The Ritual	Part of Our Tradition
1 – 5	-	1	2	1
6 – 10	2	2	1	1
11 – 15	3	-	2	-
16 – 20	3	5	3	-
21 and above	-	3	2	11

### **Results of Personal Interviews**

Besides administering a questionnaire, interviews were conducted. Three elderly men, three elderly women, two young couples were interviewed. Single young people were not included in the interview because they are not involved in this ritual.

In the first place, there was need for the full information concerning the death ritual called “removing death” (kulowa kufa). This information was given by an elderly man who besides being an elder in the church, he is a counselor (nduna) for village Headman Sekeni<sup>1</sup>. His name is Diverson Kapasula. Removing death (kulowa kufa) is a ritual that is performed by the Sena and Mang’anja people of Shire valley in Chikhwawa and Nsanje political districts. It is a response to death in the family.

Kapasula said that it is a deep-rooted belief among the Sena and Mang’anja people that death has a tendency to occur in the family or tribe, so it must be dealt with when it occurs. When a married person dies, it is believed that the deceased spouse has death within him or her that needs to be removed hence the name removing death (kuchotsa or kulowa kufa). A week after the death of a spouse, the bereaved spouse is supposed to have sexual intercourse. In case of a bereaved wife, the deceased husband’s brother is the choice but incase it is the husband who is bereaved, he looks for a lady of his choice.

Before the bereaved person gets a sexual partner, there is one married relative who represents him or her until he or she finds a partner for the practice. After the elapse of a week and the bereaved person has identified a sexual partner, the representative gives a stick or something in material from to the bereaved spouse to symbolize transfer of death back to the bereaved husband or wife. All relatives wait to hear from the bereaved husband or wife if the process of removing death has started. Previously, in case of a bereaved wife, they used a brother to the deceased husband to sleep with the surviving wife. But the trend has currently changed; instead they use any man to do the removing death. This is so for fear that incase the brother died of HIV/AIDS, it should not be a brother contracting the disease leading to another death

in the same family. Rather it should be someone outside the family contracting the disease and finally dying.

At times a brother is forced by relatives to both remove death and marry his brother's widow in order to take care of his brother's surviving children. In case of close proximity of the bereaved spouse's house and the relatives, the relatives come to bring back death to the owner (the bereaved spouse). When the relatives go back to their houses, they stay away from their spouses sexually until the deceased person has a sexual partner.

The process of removing death is done at intervals for a period of a week. That is, they have sexual intercourse on the first day, then they rest the following day, they have sexual intercourse on the third day, the following day becomes a resting day, they have the final ritual sexual intercourse on the fifth day. This marks the conclusion of the process. Thereafter, the man who was staying at the house waiting for everything concerning the funeral to come to an end is allowed to go and conclude the process at his place if he is married, but if he has no wife, he will have to look for a sexual partner for this purpose. This man is called a funeral attendant (nyalumbi). If the funeral has no funeral attendant (nyalumbi), the bereaved person and his or her sexual partner conclude everything on the last day of the prescribed week.

The three men and three women that were interviewed revealed something else to me. They said that every death is followed by the "removing death" ritual. If it is a young child, or single person, they are the parents who do the removing of death.

The young couples I interviewed narrated that they have not participated in the ritual because they have not experienced death of a close relative since they got married. But they revealed to me that their relatives have told them of the "removing death" ritual which is supposed to be practiced by all couples in case of death in the



family. There are other men who volunteer themselves to be doing the exercise of eliminating death with widows though at a fee. These men are called “hyenas” (afisi).

The village headman counselor observed that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS pandemic has facilitated the reduction of the rate the ritual is being practiced though there is a general feeling that deaths in this area are ascribed to the negligence of the practice of the ritual.

### **Conclusion**

This was a program development research design. I used four research tools—questionnaires, personal interviews, Bibles studies, and Sabbath worship sermons—to collect data, analyze it and come up with the program. There are times when leaders complain that the Church is not heading in the right direction based on members’ lifestyles, when those leading them have not done much on the members’ spiritual growth. Participation in death rituals and other traditional customs that are at variance with the Bible teaching is an issue of lifestyle. Thus the whole research was concerned with an approach to help members assimilate the Biblical standards as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As a matter of priority to this end, the tradition in this Church has it that the Bible (baptismal) class is the Pastor’s. This is so because this class is like a seed/plant nursery. It calls for someone who is well-conversant with the doctrinal pillars of the Church and is also able to teach. Notwithstanding, usually have multichurch districts, rendering it almost impossible for the said tradition to be sustained. This reality was clearly exposed by this survey. It is then expedient that a well-grounded elder or some seasoned member to take charge of this Bible class.

The survey further revealed that on the one hand, the Bible class manual has its lessons divided into four sessions (quarters) of thirteen doctrinal lessons each. On

the other hand, the *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, the book that deals with the twenty-eight fundamental beliefs of the Church, has the same doctrines but differently numbered as compares to the Bible class manual. It was revealed that the candidates for baptism seemed to be confused with this arrangement. It may seem a trivial point but it has some grave bearing on the candidates as they prepare for baptism and church membership.

Another supposition that surfaced was the fact that it is very hard to break away from old habits—especially when it comes to traditional customs, like “kulowa kufa.” This means that all who become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church need a second birth experience; even those whose parents were already in the Church and were influenced by the parents to join the church. So, the respondents in Tables 8, 9, and 10 can be justified taking into cognizance that they were still in darkness as these were the days of ignorance. However, it can be assumed that the longer one stays in the Church, the more exposure to the Church’s teachings he/she gets, leading to transformation.

There is also the issue of HIV/AIDS pandemic. The immediate observation of the interview with the village headman counselor was on the drop of the ritual due to the HIV/AIDS prevalence. It seems transformation is being informed by fear of contracting the virus instead of being informed by the correct understanding of the correct Bible teaching resulting in members embracing Bible values. (See Appendix A.)

## CHAPTER 4

### PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

#### **Program Development**

This chapter undertakes the task of developing a program on how to assist members become fully knowledgeable of the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and assimilate them into their day to day living. The program to this endeavour will include Sabbath morning presentations and Bible studies. With its theme: “Striving to Live a Transformed Life,” this program is an attempt to address the challenges which the survey has exposed (see Appendix D). The Pastor and the elders will be key participants in developing, implementing and evaluating the program in the church.

#### **Bible Studies**

The “kulowa kufa” lifestyle as participated by the members of the Church as revealed by the study is an indication that there is need for intentional Biblical education on this tradition and other related ones. Paul puts it right when he reiterates that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). The members will be encouraged to attend these Bible studies (see Appendix A) so that they are liberated from their inadequate concepts of God, expand their notion of what it means to live faithfully

before God, help them cast aside old self-defeating habits and replace them with habits of holiness.<sup>2</sup> A sampling of these Bibles studies is in Appendix A.

### **Sermons: Christianity as a Personal Relationship with God**

This is a series of sermons to be preached on Sabbath focusing on the fact that members are called into a personal relationship with God. “Kulowa kufa” is a cultural lifestyle. Diop remarks that “when culture, or any human structure and the realities they generate, is made to function as the norm, then the human being is caught in a vicious circle.”<sup>3</sup> This series then will encourage members to understand God’s intervention in the Great Controversy motif to liberate His people from the fear of death and all other fears. With Paul they will stand and proclaim that they are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...” (Rom 1:16). Appendix B discusses examples of such sermons.

### **Implementation**

The responses to the questionnaire are shown in the tables above. These gave room for the implementation of the project which began on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009. During this day, Sabbath school was conducted as usual but I had to take the preaching hour and the afternoon sessions.

The sermon lasted for an hour and we broke for lunch. To avoid up and down movements as some members came from far distances, we agreed to be taking packed meals on days I went for presentations. Baptismal class members were invited to participate though they did not participate in completing the questionnaire. Young

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<sup>2</sup>James C. Wilhoit and Leland Ryken, *Effective Bible Teaching*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 36.

<sup>3</sup>Ganoune Diop, *The Gift of the Gospel: Portraits of Freedom and Fellowship* (Collegedale, Tennessee: The College Press, 2001), 75.

boys and girls below the age of twelve were excused during the afternoon presentations.

At the first session, I preached in the morning. In the afternoon I reviewed the fundamental beliefs on “Creation” and “The Nature of Man.”

*Table 12. First Session Schedule*

Date	31 <sup>st</sup> May, 2007
Morning Attendance	93
Afternoon Attendance	98
Sermon Title	On Becoming God’s Children
Lesson Title	Review of the Beliefs: (i) Creation (ii) The Nature of Man

For the second session, considering the material I had intended to present as a package in response to the questionnaire responses, I made an intentional decision to take the teaching approach during the morning preaching period, which is from eleven o’clock to around noon. In the afternoon I presented on Fundamental belief 11: “Growing in Christ.” For this one, I did the whole chapter because it is a new doctrine.

The second visit experienced an improvement in attendance both in the morning and afternoon. It is noted from the above table that morning sessions have more people than the afternoon ones. Some of those who attended the morning session might have been those who are not regular members of this church hence they would not have made it back in the afternoon.

*Table 13. Second Session Schedule*

Date	2 <sup>nd</sup> September, 2009
Morning Attendance	119
Afternoon Attendance	107
Sermon Title	Culture and Christianity
Lesson Title	Growing in Christ

The third session had more people in the afternoon than in the morning.

Another intentional decision was made to have an overview of the previous lessons after giving a presentation in the morning. This attracted wide participation from members and I touched critical areas from the previous presentations.

*Table 14. Third Session Schedule*

Date	16 <sup>th</sup> September, 2009
Morning Attendance	130
Afternoon Attendance	137
Sermon Title	Culture and Christianity
Lesson Title	Overview of Previous Lessons

In the fourth and last session I preached in the morning and conducted a Bible study on the same topic. I did this because the topic was rather heavy considering the congregation's ability to grasp the concept. The trend in attendance kept on improving and the fourth and last session registered the highest attendance both in the morning and in the afternoon.

*Table 15. Fourth Session Schedule*

Date	30 <sup>th</sup> September, 2009
Morning Attendance	132
Afternoon Attendance	141
Sermon Title	Proposed response to ancestor veneration
Lesson Title	Proposed response to ancestor veneration

## **Evaluation**

This last section of this chapter deals with the evaluation of the program. The evaluation will focus on the challenges and strength of the program.

## **Challenges**

From the responses to the questionnaire I distributed (as given in the tables) I observed that a little lower than half of the people who were in attendance do not know how to read and write. This low literacy may have the potential of impacting the grasping level of the material presented. Although total conversion may not depend much on one's ability to read and write, there seems to be a connection between one's literacy level and the ability to grasp things. This low literacy level helped me to do the presentations according to the congregation.

The other challenge is on leadership. I observed that there were three men who can take up the leadership of the church. From the women, I saw two active ladies and one young lady is a nurse at the Health Centre opposite to the church building. Though the Adventist church does not base her leadership on sex, it is encouraging for the church to have several people of both sexes who can lead out in the church. Leadership is crucial for the smooth running of things in an entity. The survey seemed to indicate that strong Christian leadership may help in clarifying some issues church members grapple with.

During my visits to Mkombezi church, I handled baptismal class twice and I observed that the students had some challenges in answering questions on the nature of man and spiritualism, topics they informed me that they had already covered with their teacher. Baptismal candidates were exempted from responding to the questionnaire. However, the researcher just wanted to know the understanding of the baptismal candidates on issues he was dealing with the already baptized members.

## **Strengths**

I visited Mkombezi church four times for presentations as part of the program implementation. During these visits, I observed increased attendance for both the

morning and afternoon sessions. The increased attendance may attest to the relevance of the lessons presented. Besides increased attendance, I observed increased and active participation through questions, comments and observations which gave me the chance to clarify other issues. The increased participation may be an indicator that we were meeting members' spiritual felt needs.

Members expressed interest when they asked me to extend the duration of the implementation only that I felt that I had visited the church four times as planned and the scope of my presentation sufficed. Several members observed that it would be profitable if the presentations were made to the whole district. In response, I assured them that arrangements were already made with the local pastor for the lessons to go round the District. The members revealed that they belonged to the church whose teachings they knew in part or they did not know. They expressed that their knowledge had progressed during the project and they pledged to live according to the teachings of the Bible.

For the death ritual on 'removing death', they expressed sorrow for their participation out of lack of knowledge regarding the state of the dead. They spoke openly how they felt deceived in participating in the death ritual in question. The members further asked me to help in providing the baptismal class with someone who knows the Adventist teachings who in turn will impart the same information to the members of the church. They went on requesting that the lessons learnt on baptismal class to be continued after the baptism of the candidates. For this request, I encouraged them that it will be taken care of by the establishment of a program in the Division (Southern Africa Indian-Ocean Division) called 'Fishers of Men' whose thrust is to keep the newly baptized members in a class for three months so as to help them be grounded in the Bible Adventism and help them to bring souls to Christ when



they are still new in the faith. It could not be possible to validate the members' pledge to desist from participation in 'eliminating death' ritual as it is a practice that takes place in the occurrence of death in one's family.

### **Summary**

Two years later, I visited Mkombezi church as a follow-up. The context in Malawi is that one's family is wide as it includes extended family members. With this scenario, deaths in these extended family trees occur frequently. Three members reported an occurrence of death in their families after the project implementation in the form of presentations. The members were two women and one man. For the women, one lost an uncle while the other lost a cousin. The man lost a brother-in-law. They all reported that they refused to participate in the death ritual amidst threats to be disowned by their families so that should anything happen to them, they would see it for themselves because no relative would come to their aid especially in case of death, no relative would join them in eliminating death.

They said their calm and bold stand made the relatives leave them alone and they were not disowned as threatened. It is encouraging to note such a stand from the three members especially from the two ladies because they are women who are enticed to participate in this ritual. Even for the man who refused to participate in the ritual, he showed faith and courage because although women are not to miss in the participation of the ritual, men are said to be custodians of culture in their families hence they encourage this practice. The stand taken by the three members may be a result of the presentations we had as part of the project implementation that led to their transformation.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents an overview of the content of the project and a conclusion is given. At the very close of the chapter, recommendations are given for those who would want to embark on the same study in future and what to do with the program in the Field it was conducted and in the Union as a whole.

#### **Summary**

Chapter one gives the background of the problem and a statement of the problem is given based on the baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventists church's participation in some death rituals that are inconsistent with the Seventh-day Adventist Church's teaching on the state of the dead. This comes against the background that the Seventh-day Adventist church calls for a paradigm shift in the life of its adherents. The significance of the research is that the leadership at the Malawi Union headquarters may consider making this program go round the whole union. The purpose of the study was to investigate factors leading to some church members' participation in such death rituals and then develop a program that will help these members desist from such practices.

Methodology of the research included review of the Bible, Ellen White's writings, historical origin of the death rituals, what Seventh-day Adventist authors have written on death rituals and a review of other authors on the same. A survey was administered in the form of a questionnaire. Interviews were conducted. I got results of the survey and interviews and finally this project was written.

Chapter two is the theoretical foundation of the death rituals. Since death rituals are performed as a response to the death of the person, the issue of spiritualism is discussed along death rituals. The Bible records the first lie found in the very first book of the Bible, Genesis. This lie was the beginning of spiritualism, which has been perpetuated by the Devil and his messengers. Much has been said about spiritualism with its resulting death rituals and other practices. God had several times warned the children of Israel against participation in spiritualistic activities. The New Testament has not been silent on spiritualism and death rituals. Paul warns of spiritualism as an end time deception. John portrays spiritualism as a member of the end time trio religious unity. Ellen white has written much on spiritualism. She has alluded to the practices that follow spiritualism. Ellen White calls spiritualism the Devil's masterpiece by which he will deceive people by telling them that the living can speak with their beloved who died. She has given caution to the people who will be living at the end of time.

History forms part of chapter two. Historically, the origin of death rituals is traced back to early civilizations, with Egypt heading the list. The Greeks got the belief in the immortality of the soul from the Egyptians. The Inter-Testamental period had two groups of Jewish Scholars, the earlier group upheld the holistic nature of man as upheld in the Old Testament while the latter group of Jewish writers was for the Greek belief of the immortality of the soul, prayer for the dead and denial of the resurrection. The early Christian church believed that immortality is a gift from God bestowed at the resurrection to the righteous. Secondly, Christ and the apostles upheld the position as taught in the Old Testament. The innate immortality of the soul found place in the Christian Church from the Second century whose founders were Tertullian, Origen, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Literature by Seventh-day

Adventist authors was reviewed. The Adventist authors took a different stand from other authors on the belief that an entity remains and continues to live after the death of a person. The Adventist authors explained the meaning of spirit, soul, and breath based on the Bible and they hold a belief that the Seventh-day Adventist church cannot participate in anything that contravenes with the Bible.

Non-Adventist authors have a belief that there is an afterlife hence the need for the living relatives to prepare things the deceased used while on earth. They are these things that the departed demand to be met by the living relatives. If the relatives do not comply with these demands; disease, drought, death or any misfortune will befall them. In some cases, animals are killed to accompany the deceased, property like the homestead of the deceased is abandoned and some societies have festivals in remembrance of the deceased.

Chapter three gives a description of the area where the research was conducted. The study was conducted in Malawi, a country in Southern Africa, bordered by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. Malawi is a land locked country. The description includes Malawi's economy, religion, politics and geography. Nchalo is a rural growth point in the Shire Valley in the Southern region of Malawi. Surveys were conducted through a questionnaire and interviews. The results of the surveys and interviews were tabulated. The questionnaire addressed issues of value of prayer, personal and corporate Bible studies, members' knowledge on the number of Fundamental Beliefs taught by the Seventh-day Adventist church before and after baptism, members' former denominations, the mode of entry into the Adventist church. The questionnaire further wanted to establish the number of members owning a copy of the Seventh-day Adventist church Fundamental Beliefs and the one who taught them more often while attending the baptismal class.

The questionnaire still wanted to find out if the members participated in death rituals, including the “kulowa kufa” before baptism, if members participated in the ritual after baptism. The instrument wanted to find out the possible reasons for the participation and if there is justification for continued participation in the death ritual while belonging to the Adventist church.

Interviews were conducted to find out why this death ritual is widespread in this part of the country. One of the interviewees was the counsellor to village headman Sekeni 1 who was picked based on his position as village headmen are known to be custodians of traditional values and practices (culture).

The questionnaire responses revealed continued participation by some members of the “kulowa kufa’ ritual emanating from fear of death, pressure from relatives, some see no problem with the practice while others feel it is their belief which has been there for a long time. Other interviewees indicated that it is not necessary to continue with the practice even without basing it on Christianity. An interview with Mr. Kapasula, a counsellor to village headman Sekeni1 revealed that the practice is under mild check due to HIV pandemic for fear of contracting the virus.

Chapter four deals with the actual project program ranging from program preparation, implementation to evaluation. Program development discusses the procedure I followed to continue conducting the project in Nchalo District after moving to the Union headquarters. This involved liaising with the then district leader and seeking permission from the Field administration in writing.

I requested accommodation and transport from Mr. and Mrs. Khoka, who at times would himself drive me to Mkombezi from Nchalo rural growth point or he would at times let his driver take me to the project point. From Blantyre to Nchalo

and back to Nchalo I used commuter omnibuses that ply the Shire valley road. The first visit generally involved preaching in the morning and giving Bible studies in the afternoon as a solution to the questionnaire responses. This was the implementation of the program.

An evaluation of the study showed challenges and strengths. Later evaluation of the program revealed that some members who participated in the ‘eliminating death’ ritual before the presentations, resisted when there occurred death in their families which may be an indicator that transformation is taking place.

### **Conclusions**

The project findings have led to several conclusions. There is need to bring to the attention of baptismal candidates the Seventh-day Adventist teachings, stressing those that pose challenges to believers of many if not all denominations. This was revealed in Tables 1–11. As such there is need to assign baptismal classes as teachers, members who are well conversant with Adventist teachings both in knowledge and practice who will in turn comprehensively impart the same knowledge to their students.

Baptism candidates to be taught that Christianity is not practiced in a vacuum hence not all traditional beliefs and practices are contrary to Bible teachings and inconsistent with Christian living. From the preceding conclusions, the findings of the project suggest that when baptismal candidates are correctly taught, it is probable that they live a desired Adventist Christian life which is in line with Bible teachings and they will learn among other things to differentiate what the Bible teaches and what tradition stresses. This was observed from the members’ comments after the end of the presentations and their pledge to live a life in harmony with the Bible and it was

further demonstrated when three members later calmly and boldly refused to participate in the death ritual when death befell their families.

### **Recommendations**

There are recommendations that fall in threefold; to Malawi Union, to South Malawi Field and for those who would understand the study in future

#### **To Malawi Union**

This is a grave challenge to the whole Church in Malawi. The “kulowa kufa” is only a small sampling of a bigger picture that erodes into the lives of the membership. I recommend therefore, that the Malawi Union allow that this program be shared with all pastors and members of the church in the whole Union. A united onslaught on the challenges of traditional customs that are at variance with the Church may help to positively change the members’ lifestyle.

The program should be presented to all people groups, that is women during their seminars and congresses, youth during the youth weeks of prayer, camporees, camps and congresses and men. The Union administration should also persuade Malawi Adventist University to introduce a contextualised course on spiritualism as a general requirement course for all students and as a core course for all Theology and Religion majors so that the latter group may be of help to the members and schools upon completion.

### **To South Malawi Field**

The South Malawi Field, the territory in which this research was done, should ensure that baptismal classes be handled by not necessarily elders but those men and women who are conversant with Seventh-day Adventist doctrines both in knowledge and practice. Pastors need to make special arrangements to meet baptismal candidates up to five times before they get baptized in order to ensure that the final checklist will have candidates that have truly grasped the doctrines of the Church.

The South Malawi Field to have a list of Fundamental Beliefs that require special attention and emphasis so that any baptismal class member who misses one of these selected doctrines during his or her stay on the class may not be recommended for baptism. It should further endeavour to fully equip members for ministry and to empower elders to take their leadership responsibilities seriously since the Field has several big districts.

### **To Future Pursuers of a Similar Project**

I recommend that those who would want to undertake a similar study to do it in Nsanje district to establish the connection between ancestral worship called “Mbona” and “kulowa kufa” (removing death)



## APPENDIX A

### BIBLE STUDIES

#### 1. **Proposed Response To Ancestor Veneration**

To most people, the popular approach to the issue of ancestor veneration today is what is known as the accommodation model. Different ways have been devised to incorporate to intuitions of ancestor veneration into Christian theology and worship. Understanding of the nature of man has necessitated these responses to ancestor veneration.

Points to note on the study of ancestral worship or veneration

- i. Ancestor veneration is an ingrained socio-religious phenomenon in many African Societies.
- ii. The ancestral cult is nourished by the African view of reality and man.
- iii. The biblical view of man and reality stands in direct contract to the African view.
- iv. Many Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, continue to live in fear of ancestral powers

The Seventh-day Adventist response to the phenomenon of ancestor cult should be based not only on our understanding of the nature of man, but also on our comprehension of a biblically informed “sociology of ancestors,” which is used as an aspect of the study of structures of existence.

Grenz defines structures of existence thus:

Structures of existence are those large, superhuman aspects or dimensions of reality which form the inescapable context of human life and which therefore condition individual and corporate existence. The structures are related to human social interaction in all its dimensions and on all levels. As such they form the core of what facilitates that interaction. The structures penetrate daily life, often even imperceptibly. In fact they are so much a part of life that their presence repeatedly goes unrecognized.

### Threefold Response

Psychologically and sociologically African Adventists continue with a measure of fear of ancestors. Their individual and corporate lives and existence have been shaped, ordered, defined and given cohesion and meaning by the ancestor cult. It is not enough to respond to the problem by only/simply giving a correct exposition of the state of the dead, hence for the three-fold response of withdrawal, defense and offense.

#### (i) The Response of Withdrawal

Since the cult of ancestor worship or veneration is seen as a structure of existence, the Christian response of withdrawal should be precisely the refusal to allow one's life to be defined in any shape or form of the cult.

It is a withdrawal from ideologies and practices which hitherto defined and shaped one's life, but, which by virtue of Christ's death, have been denied that functions. It involves a redirection of one's fears, hopes, aspirations, strength and support from under the governance of ancestor cult to the kingship and lordship of Jesus Christ. It is to substitute ancestor cult as a structure of existence with the "kingdom of God" as one's structure of existence.

With the withdrawal response, the practical expression of the response may vary from culture to culture and from person to person depending on occasion.

The response of withdrawal is meaningful only as the reality of the kingdom of God which has been put in place by the atoning death of Christ becomes the Christian's personal experience.

(ii) The Response of Defense

The church's stand as an expression of the inauguration of the kingdom of God is inevitably a declaration of war against the hostile powers. It is a war that the Christian should take seriously, for the encounter between those on the side of God and the powers of darkness means that, ultimately, believers in Christ strive not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:10-18). The above text highlights that not only are the weapons provided for the warfare mostly defensive, the weapons are given so that the believers may be able to stand. It seems that the response of defense, in terms of engagement, is the primary response. The Christian withdraws not to be idle, but to take a defensive stance. By staying close to Christ who takes care of the offense, the Christian stays out of reach of the powers of darkness.

(iii) The Response of Offense

This response foresees situations where the Christian deliberately engages the power. Although Christians are primarily called to a defensive engagement with the powers, Jesus encounters with the powers may provide a model of defensive response.

It is evident in the New Testament that Jesus never set out to expel or combat the powers in a systematic fashion. However, whenever the powers crossed His path to obstruct His work He engaged them and brought them to halt (Matthew 8:28-29). We find the same model operative in Paul's ministry (Acts 13:8 – 11, 16:16-18). It may be that in a situation where the Seventh-day Adventist is challenged directly by demands of the ancestor cult an offensive response may be warranted.

### **Conclusion**

Ancestor worship or veneration is a fact of life in most Africa societies. As Seventh-day Adventists we cannot participate in something that is clearly contrary to scripture. However, beyond proclaiming the biblical position on the nature of man and spiritualistic practices, there is need for the development of a coherent strategy to overcome the deeply seated fear of ancestor power even among Adventists, hence the threefold response.

- Taken from *Issues in SDA Theology*, pp. 122–124.

## 2. **Topic: The African Situation**

### Introduction

This lesson is not intended to undermine African believers but rather to appreciate the challenges Africans are likely to face even after accepting the gospel.

Studies in traditional African religion and world views have revealed that power is what matters most to the traditional African. This is a belief to the traditional African. In quest for life in its fullness, the traditional African feels a need to affiliate with powers that command the power of life. It is not surprising that the traditional African who may have accepted the gospel does not hesitate to go back to his traditional beliefs when the going gets tough. Since all people including Africans fear suffering the traditional African relapses to such beliefs in search of power to alleviate suffering.

Unfortunately, there are many Christians in Africa who profess to be worshippers of the true God, who in times of crisis remember their beliefs. Generally, Africans believe in whatever is passed to them from their ancestors/parents. One such value passed to the members of the family, tribe and clan is the issue of respecting spirits of the departed. That is why there are medicine men, traditional healers and other specialists who act as instructors on the way to go to avoid any conflict with the spirits of the departed relatives.

This has paved way for the shift of allegiance from Christ to traditional beliefs when pain or threat of danger is experienced. The same people who claim to know Christ resort to seek help outside the gospel provisions.

## Challenges posed by this situation

Africans have several options in responding to crisis. One known option is the coming up with what used to be African Independent churches now called African Instituted churches. These churches are not Bible based (orthodoxy) doctrinally; instead they are syncretistic. They incorporate the African religio-cultural heritage which appeals to many traditional Africans. Some African Adventists are still under the influence of their cultural beliefs.

Talking about the people of Africa, Ellen White writes; “The Lord has permitted Brother Wessels to go to Africa and Elder Daniels to accompany him. But I have shown that there is in the heart o the people of Africa something that will not be easily overcome, something that shows that some are not converted. They are not under the discipline of God. They do not accept God’ way of doing good, but chose rather their own way. They have yet to learn in the school of Christ His meekness and lowliness.

## Possible solutions

### i. A better understanding of the great controversy

There are two forces that are ever competing for the control of humanity: God and the Devil. The war started in heaven until finally Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven to planet earth (Rev 12:1–9). This made planet earth the battle field for the two. Satan and his angels transform themselves as angels of light (2Corinthians 11:14–15).

The war continues between good and evil, light and darkness. The Bible talks of the later evil trio in the form of religious power—Modern

spiritism or paganism, the papacy and apostate Protestantism (Rev 16:13 – 14).

1. Well coordinated personal and corporate prayer

The church to take an intentional decision to be praying for those under the influence of demons. A proactive intention to be praying of all members of the church ever before the attack by the demons is essential. Some circumstances or situations need both prayer and fasting

2. Claiming Christ's victory through our connection with Him

God promises to be with us – Isaiah 41:10. God gives us victory through Jesus – 1Corinthians 15:57. If God is our father, what belongs to Him belongs to us as well. Since He is a God of victory, this victory will be ours if we claim it. But this victory is through faith (1John 5:4) because it is impossible to please God in the absence of faith (Heb 11:6).

**Conclusion**

Victory is already ours. We just need to claim it from the one who promised it to us through our serious connection with Him knowing that He does not fail in anything.

- Extracted from *Issues in SDA Theology*, pp. 137–140.

**3. Culture and Christianity**

Some cultural beliefs and practices in a locality seem more powerful than those of other cultures. Some cultures even seem more Christian than others leading to culture inferiority or superiority.

## The Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1–33)

The Jerusalem council was convened to decide whether Gentiles were to become Jews before they were accepted as Christians. The issue was the Jewish culture was associated with Christianity so that Gentiles were to live as Jews for them to become Christians.

During the discussion, Peter reminded the gathering how the Holy Spirit used him to bring to the Lord a Gentile household without requiring them to first become Jews. The council resolved not to lay burdens on the believing Gentiles but the believing Gentiles were required to do those things that were common for all believers.

Gentiles were to abstain from the following: -

- (i) Things polluted by idols
- (ii) Sexual immorality
- (iii) Things strangled
- (iv) Blood

However, some believers hide behind ‘unity in diversity’ meaning that since people come from different background and cultural beliefs and practices, people should be allowed to do what their cultures require of them so long they meet in Jesus.

## Lessons from the Jerusalem Council

- i. No culture is superior or inferior to the other
- ii. Every culture has both positive and negative issues that are both consistent and inconsistent with Bible teachings



- iii. Every believer needs to identify practices in his culture that he may keep or discard after conversion
- iv. Believers do not exist in isolation. Christianity does not divorce you from your culture but rather from one's evil cultural practices
- v. God will save people from any culture

### **Conclusion**

All believers though they make one great family of faith, they come from different backgrounds and cultures. Conversion does not detach someone from his tribe or culture rather conversion helps one divorce completely practices in his or her culture that are contrary to Bible teachings.

## APPENDIX B

### SERMON

#### **Title: On Becoming God's Children**

Text: John 1:10-13

##### Introduction

All human beings regardless of what they do their colour, status, age and whether they believe in God or not, they are all God's people. We are all God's people by virtue of creation. But this sermon addresses the issue of becoming God's children. This is a three point sermon

- i. Those who received Him
- ii. He gave the right to become children of God
- iii. Those who believe in Him

##### i. Those who received Him

Receiving Christ should not be confused with getting baptized into the church. Christ was born among the Jews, grew up among them and preached to the Jews as the first recipients of salvation but His fellow Jews did not accept. They were the very same Jews who claimed to believe in God, kept all the requirements of Judaism, but they did not receive the promised Messiah.

John saw many people who followed Christ on his preaching errands but their accompanying Jesus did not do much to some of them, that is why John was compelled to stipulate what it means to be God's children.

People do not become God's children by simply belonging to a singing group, attending church regularly or doing all church activities. People become God's children by accepting Jesus. Although baptism is a public testimony and a prerequisite of one's acceptance of Jesus, baptism is not tantamount to accepting Jesus. There are people who get baptized before experiencing the second birth experience. That is why the apostle Paul wrote what it means to be in Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This newness implies newness of mind, heart, attitude and actions. A new person in Christ no longer delights in practices that are consistent with the Bible. When a person accepts Christ, Christ takes control of that person's life. It is no longer the person's will that is done but Christ's will. It is the indwelling Christ who does everything. Therefore Christ will not do anything contrary to His will and word found in the Bible. "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)

ii. The right to be called God's children

We are in an age when "rights" have become the order of the day, Right to clean and safe water, right to sound medical care, right to education for children. When we accept Christ, we become God's

children hence Christ's brother. It is commonly said that children take after their parents hence an old adage "like mother like daughter or like father like son." Children of God will become like God, they will not be God.

The question is "when do we actually become God's children when we accept Him?" We instantly become God's children upon accepting Him. It is not like being put on probation before full incorporation in an organization.

John 3:1, 2 says "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called Children of God!.... Beloved, now we are children of God...but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him and He is.

When we receive Christ, we become God's children right there. Another elder in the previous church I pastored talked of three lies; white lie, blue lie and business lie. In the business lie they will say "I will come back to you" yet this is a way of running away from you. Our God does not operate this way. He confers son ship or daughter ship the very time you surrender fully to Him. It is a "now" issue. They are God's children who have become like Him while in this world who will see Him and be like Him. God's children will be like Him because they are already like Him.

Jesus contention with Pharisees on the issue of fatherhood "I speak what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have seen with your Father" (John 8:38). Christ referred to God as His father. The

Pharisees had a different father from that of Jesus. If their father was not God, then the Devil was their father.

Children do the works of their father

If you are God's child, you will do His works but if you are the Devil's child you will likewise do His works. The works of each of the two fathers are not hidden.

iii. Those who believe in His name

It is not once children of God always children of God. When one accepts Jesus he/she is given the right to become a child of God that is not the end of the road. There is need for continuity in the faith. That is why Jesus said "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt 24:13) A Christian must live a Christian life the rest of his life. If he stumbles, let him rise quickly. In which areas have you stumbled since you became a child of God? What strange practices have you been engaged in?

### **Conclusion**

Do not miss the greatest honour God ever gave to His people to become His children. Plan to live with Him in this life as you plan to live with this loving father eternally. Do what is expected of you as a child of God.

APPENDIX C  
QUESTIONNAIRE

This is an academic research. The results of this survey will help us know how we can best minister to members of this area. Please do not indicate your name, and please respond to the questionnaire sincerely as the information will be considered anonymous.

Please tick the appropriate answer.

1. For how long have you been a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church?
  - (a)  1 – 5years
  - (b)  6 – 10years
  - (c)  11 – 15years
  - (d)  16 – 20years
  - (e)  25years and above
  
2. What is your tribe?
  - (a)  Mang'anja
  - (b)  Sena
  - (c)  Ngoni
  - (d)  Lomwe
  - (e)  Yao
  - (f)  Tumbuka
  - (g)  Other (Specify)
  
3. What is your highest academic achievement?

- (a)  Primary school
  - (b)  High school
  - (c)  College Certificate
  - (d)  Diploma
  - (e)  BA Degree
  - (f)  Masters Degree
4. Who taught you often on baptismal class?
- a.  Pastor
  - b.  Elder
  - c.  Someone assigned by the church
5. Did you know the total number of Fundamental Beliefs taught by Seventh-day Adventist church before baptism?
- (a)  Yes
  - (b)  No
6. Did you have a copy of the Baptismal Manual when you were attending the Baptismal class?
- (a)  Yes
  - (b)  No
7. Were you taught the value of personal Bible study before baptism?
- (a)  Yes
  - (b)  No
8. Were you taught the value of prayer before baptism?
- (a)  Yes
  - (b)  No
9. Do you have a copy of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs?
- (a)  Yes
  - (b)  No
10. Does your local church conduct Bible studies based on Fundamental Beliefs?
- (a)  Yes
  - (b)  No
11. If so, how often have you attended such Bible studies?
- (a)  Often
  - (b)  Seldom

(c)  None

12. Did you participate in the death rituals before joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

(a)  Yes

(b)  No

13. Did you participate in 'removing death' (kulowa kufa) before joining Seventh-day Adventist Church?

(a)  Yes

(b)  No

14. Since you became an Adventist by the rite of baptism, you participated in 'removing death' (kulowa kufa)?

(a)  Yes

(b)  No

15. If you have participated in 'removing death' (kulowa kufa) after becoming a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, what prompted you to do so?

(a)  Fear of death

(b)  Pressure from relatives

(c)  I see nothing wrong with the practice

(d)  It is part of our tradition

16. Do you consider it still necessary to participate in 'removing death' (kulowa kufa)?

(a)  Yes

(b)  No



APPENDIX D  
THE PROGRAM

(The Bible studies and the sermons will fit into these steps.)

**Striving to Live a Transformed Life<sup>4</sup>**

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1-2

- I. **Introduction:** God desires that every believer lead a righteous life. But our culture places a tremendous amount of pressure on Christians to "fit in." The doctrines of our faith are often mocked and ridiculed in the public arena. Individual believers sometimes make spiritual or moral compromises in an attempt to be accepted. How can we resist the secular influence of our time? In Romans 12:1-2, the apostle Paul reveals how to pursue holiness and resist compromise.
  
- II. **God calls us to godly living.**
  - A. God's call to surrender our lives to Him as living sacrifices is reasonable because He redeemed us from spiritual darkness and adopted us as children.
    - In Romans 1-11, Paul explains salvation, victorious Christian living, and the Lord's ultimate plan for Israel. In Romans 12:1-2, he urges believers to give control of their lives to God in light of all He has done for us.
  
  - B. **We must make the choice to give control to the Father.**
    - As God's people, we no longer have the *right* to run our own lives, but He still allows us to choose whether or not to surrender. Your entire being—including your mind, will, and emotions—should be yielded to God.
  
  - C. **We are called to be *living* sacrifices.**

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<sup>4</sup>Adapted from "A Call to Godly Living" By Dr. Charles Stanley, accessed 4 June, 2014, [http://www.intouch.org/resources/sermon-outlines/Content.aspx?topic=A\\_Call\\_to\\_Godly\\_Living\\_Sermon\\_Outline](http://www.intouch.org/resources/sermon-outlines/Content.aspx?topic=A_Call_to_Godly_Living_Sermon_Outline)

- Becoming a "living sacrifice" means we allow the Holy Spirit to live through us. As we surrender to the Spirit's guidance and leadership, He empowers us to live a godly life.

D. **The apostle also urges believers to be *holy* sacrifices.**

- In Greek, this word means "set apart" (as in "for a special purpose"). In one of the paradoxes of our faith, sanctification—or being made holy—happens immediately at salvation, but it is also a lifelong process.

E. **Our lives should be *acceptable* to God.**

- As believers, we ought to be different from the world. Our goal should be to act as Jesus did: forgiving, loving, and helping others—yet knowing when to speak the truth in love or share our faith. When we sin, we should be quick to confess and repent.

A godly lifestyle will attract some people to you, and it will drive others away. But sometimes the same people who resist the gospel will seek out a believer for help when life gets difficult.

III. **Those who live in a godly manner will face conflict with the world.**

A. **Pressure from those in the world sometimes causes believers to compromise their convictions.**

- As individuals, Christians sometimes justify compromising the truth in this way: they claim they are "being a witness" by spending time with ungodly friends, even when that includes making unrighteous choices. Instead, we should make sure our best friends are believers who take their faith seriously (2 Cor. 6:14-15, 17; 1 Cor. 15:33). Our highest priority should be to please God rather than to fit in with the world.

B. **Paul warns believers, "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2).**

- The media frequently portrays the idea that if we become rich, attractive, influential, or famous, we will be happy and content. But none of things guarantee joy. Don't let our culture shape your value system and determine your priorities.

C. **To resist conforming to the world's image, you must "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). But how?**

- Fill your mind with Scripture. It is through the Bible that we learn God's perspective.
- Focus on positive, righteous, and holy things (Col. 3:3; Phil. 4:8). This should include choosing friends and entertainment wisely.
- Apply biblical truth to your heart. As you go about your day, ask God to show you how to put into practice the principles of His Word.
- Practice the presence of the Lord. God is always with you. Ask Him to make you more sensitive to His presence. As you allow the Holy Spirit to live through you, He will help you withstand temptation and become more Christlike.

IV. **Conclusion:** The key to living a godly life is *full surrender*. That means we must let God have complete control over our lives. The Lord is looking for faithful men and women who will stand up for truth in a world that is increasingly opposed to the gospel. Rather than base your standards on popular opinion, allow Scripture to set your values. Answer the Lord's call to a godly life, and you will never be the same.

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