

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Title: PERCEPTION OF INTER-DENOMINATION MARRIAGES AMONG MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN THE SUNYANINORTH DISTRICT OF MID-WEST GHANA CONFERENCE

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The study brought in focus perception of inter-denominational marriages among cluster of churches in Sunyani North district of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the Mid-West Ghana Conference. The Family Ministries Department of the Conference conducted a week long marriage programme in the Sunyani North district in February 2011 in the various churches. After the programme it was attested that 22.3% of the young adults have involved themselves in inter-marriages which have brought about diminishing faith and apostasy.

Therefore a questionnaire based on the attitude of the youths at the age of maturity was developed to establish the problems that made them to marry outside the faith. After the appraisal of the problems, an educative programme on how to choose a partner was organized in the various churches to implore the youths to consider the Biblical views on marrying the unbeliever.

The study indicated that the young adults' perception on the Biblical views of marrying within the church than to marry outside the faith was accepted. Also, it was perceived that the church elders and the parents can resolve the issue of inter-denominational marriages that lead to several problems if they can take it upon themselves to help, assist, and educate the young adults to make the right choice of marriage in order to retain cordial relationship with the creator God.

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

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AMONG MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
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A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree

Master of Art in Pastoral Theology

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John Akumfi Ameyaw

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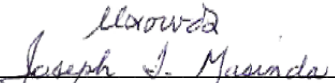
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This Research paper is earnestly dedicated to my family who have supported and cheered me up in hard times. It is dedicated to the Mid–West Ghana Conference, who morally and financially assisted me from the beginning to the end of this programme.

Eventually, it is dedicated to the

Almighty God's service.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The ardent desire of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that the members marry within the faith. Because of the injunction not to “mismatch with unbelievers”, the Seventh-day Adventist Pastors are instructed not to perform a wedding ceremony uniting in matrimony a church member with one who is not. However, inter-denominational marriages are occurring at Sunyani North district. The record of recent and current statistical report on marriages among Seventh-day Adventist and non-Adventist conducted by Reverend Ministers of Sunyani North district indicates that one out of ten Adventists marry outside the church. This fact of marrying non-Adventists church in the Sunyani North District has become a phenomenon and the researcher seeks to investigate into this phenomena.

Statement of the Problem

The young adults of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the Sunyani North District have given into inter-denominational marriages which have resulted in a growing apostasy. This has warranted the researcher to find satisfactory solutions to the alarming problem.

Purpose of the Study

The research is to ascertain whether or not Adventist should involve in Inter-Denominational marriages. It will further give the clarification of why Adventist

should or not marry non-Adventist. However, the specific objectives that feed the general in this paper are to:

1. Investigate the factors which account for Adventist marrying outside the Church.
2. Access the Biblical justification for marrying a believer or those in the same Faith.
3. Examined Adventist Church perception of marrying non-Adventist.
4. Investigate as to what constitute Adventist position regarding marrying unbeliever.

The study seeks to motivate Adventist who are anticipating marriage to marry within the Church especially Adventist in the Sunyani North District.

Delimitation of the Study

Although Adventist marrying unbelievers have become a major phenomenon in most of the churches in Mid-west Ghana Conference, the researcher limits the study to Adventists in the Sunyani North District due to time constrain. However, it is hoped that the study generalize the views of other Adventists in the Conference.

Methodology and Procedure

The study is in five chapters with each chapter subdivided into headings and quantitative research methodology being employed. The first introduces the study by stating the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitation, limitation, methodology and procedure. Chapter two presents theoretical foundation of the study. Here, the view of scripture, as well as Ellen G. White and other Christian authors, on inter-denominational

marriages will be studied. In the third chapter, the setting of Sunyani North District of Seventh-day Adventist be neatly described. It is also in this chapter that quantitative research design is used to assess the perception of the SDA members on the issues understudy. The specific research design is survey. The target population for data comprises two hundred correspondents. Simple Random sample is employed to select the respondents. While self-administered questionnaires and interviews are used as data. The fourth chapter summarizes the study with conclusion and further proposes solution (s) to the problem.

Definition of Terms

Church: A group of believers or body professing the same creed or faith and acknowledging the same ecclesiastical authority.

Couple: Two persons considered as joined together in marriage or as an engaged pair lovers.

Denomination: This refers to a religious group usually including many local churches often larger than a sect.

District: For the purpose of this study, it is a region or geographical division of a city, country, and state marked off for a religious administrative purpose in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Divorce: It is legal dissolution of a marriage or total separation between a woman and her husband.

Faith: Trust, confidence, a complete acceptance of truth which cannot be demonstrated or approve by the process of logical thought.

Inter-Faith: Anything operating or occurring between persons belonging to different religions.

Inter-marriage: Marriage between members of different religions.

Love: A strong feeling of deep affection for somebody or something, a member of your family or friend.

Marriage: A socially recognized and approved union between two individuals of the opposite sex mate with expectation of permanence and usually with the aim of producing children or a legal relationship between a husband and wife.

Religion: Man's expression for acknowledgement of the divine, a system of belief and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in a community.

Sacred: Consecrated, set apart, holy, especially for service or worship of God or a deity.

Unbeliever: Somebody who does not belief in ones established religious faith.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter concerns the theoretical foundation of the study. It has four sections. The first deals with inter-marriage in the Old Testament. The second also deals with inter-marriage in the New Testament. The third talks about Ellen G. White's comments on inter-marriage. The fourth deals with other renowned writer's views on inter-marriage.

Inter-Marriage in the Old Testament

Marriage in the Old Testament is so essential to the heart of God hence all through the scripture He has used marriage as a symbol of His love for His people. After creating and instituting marriage on the sixth day, God indicated His creation work as very good. Since then God has never changed His mind about the goodness of marriage.

The Bible has much to say on inter-marriage which reveals to us that, it is not a modern issue. Marriage is a good thing instituted by God Himself. The Scripture says that, "He, who finds a wife, finds a good thing and obtains favor from God" (Prov 18:22). For the fact that having a wife is a good thing from God does not mean we should hastily enter into it, care should be taken in the decision making.¹ In the Hebrew culture, the parents have the upper hand in their ward's marriage. The Jewish

¹ Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Pub. Assoc.1952). 79-82.

children cannot marry by their own choice. Restrictions on the choice of spouses were usually enacted to assure the continuation of the Hebrews as a nation, hence the marriages of foreigners were strictly forbidden by God.²

To separate themselves from the heathens, God said to the Jews “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou should not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and destroy thee suddenly” (Deut 7:3, 4). The children of the Jews were instructed by God that they should not go in for idolaters so that they do not experience personal and national loss. Mathew Henry interpreting Joshua 23:11-13 says “We must always stand upon our guard for many a precious soul is lost and ruined through carelessness.”³ This was Joshua’s warning to the Israelites against their intimate relationship with idolaters. Samson, who was to be the deliverer of the Israelites disobeyed his parents and took a Philistine woman as wife. He was enticed by the idolatrous woman, Delilah, and his life was destroyed, (Judg14: 1-16:4-31). Isaac and Rebecca were grieved in mind when their son Esau married a Hittite woman. He [Esau] made life bitter for his parents (Gen 26:34, 35). The father of faithfulness, Abram, had a good reason for asking his chief servant, Eliezer, to go to his family in Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son Isaac. “But thou shalt go into my country and to my kindred and take a wife unto my son Isaac” (Gen 24:1-4).

Though there were handsome males and beautiful females among the heathens that surrounded the Israelites, they had to obey God’s instructions that they should not

² Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957). 1: 977.

³ Matthew Henry, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the Old Testament* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Publishing House, 1985), 437.

marry them [heathens]. Solomon, the king of Israel, winked at this instruction of God and married many strange women who turned away his heart after other gods⁴“And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord” (1 Kgs 11:6). Solomon’s violation for God’s instruction brought about chaos and destruction to him and the nation at large.

The prophet Ezra witnessed mixed marriages in his time because the people of Israel, the Priests and the Levites did not separate themselves from the people of the land. “For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands.” (Ezra 9:2). What they did was disobedience to their God. Marriage is a symbol of spiritual truth, “it is a familiar Biblical thought that the marriage relationship is typical union and communion of God with His people.”⁵ Marriage has to do with salvation because it affects all aspect of life, therefore God should not be left out in one’s marriage. The act of joining hand in marriage was initiated by God when he created Adam and Eve. He provided a helpmeet for him, a helper corresponding to him, one who fitted to be his companion, and one who could be one with him in love and in sympathy.⁶

The question to be considered when contemplating marriage to someone with different religious background is “How much does the religion mean to you? Is it something of little importance? Do religions matter in marriage?” When anyone is matured enough to marry, we should seek God to help us in choosing the right partnership. God’s warning is that His people should separate themselves from inter

¹Geoffrey W. *The I.S Bible. Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991). 3: 263.

⁵Skey, I.C, *Religion & Ethics Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (England: Solar Press,1980). 433.

³Nancy Van Pelt, *The Complete Courtship* (Osu, Accra, Ghana: Advent Press, 2002). 56.

marriage. The wrong choice of Solomon, the king of Israel, by marrying foreign women made him denied his God and followed after other gods.⁷ He was drawn by strange women to the worship of strange gods. He grew cold and indifferent in his own religion and remiss in the service of the God of Israel.⁸

After God created the first man and woman He pronounced unity among them when He said “they became one flesh.” This statement is embraced by the New Testament Christians because they believe God Himself affected that oneness. When two people from the opposite sex are put together, they are no longer two but one flesh, one spirit, one person. While on earth, Jesus pointed people to the true marriage so that they would abandon the imperfect and move steadily toward a marriage that reflects God’s revealed purpose.⁹ The state of marriage should be highly honored because it is instituted by God Himself to the best interest of mankind, (Heb 13:4). It is not out of place then when Jesus attended a wedding ceremony in Cana to show us that there is divine involvement in the true marriage (John 2).

The unlawful alliances with the heathen caused great confusion in Israel. “There were some in sacred office who pleaded for their heathen wives, declaring that they could not bring themselves in separation with them ... whoever among the priests or rulers refused to sever his connection with idolaters was immediately separated from the service of the Lord. A grandson of the high priest, having married a daughter of the notorious Sanballat, was not only removed from office, but promptly banished from Israel.”¹⁰ By their sins, they separated themselves from God. They were not able

⁷ Matthew Henry, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the Old Testament* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House. 1985), 650.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹*The I. S. Bible Encyclopedia* (Reprinted, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1988), 3: 265.

¹⁰Ellen G. White. *Prophets and Kings* (Boise, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 674.

to discern the deep spiritual significance of their symbolic service and established their own righteousness.¹¹

Culture varies from nation to nation and from society to society. The Hebrews had a culture of choosing wives from their own family (Gen 28:1-2, 5). They did that to build a firm society and a strong nation (Gen 24:2-4). Robert Jamieson, an English theologian says, “Among the tribes of Israel, matrimonial arrangements were made by parents for the youth to marry, not among strangers, but in their own tribe. Custom also gave them [male children] a claim, which seldom or never resisted, to the hand of his first cousin in marriage. Abraham had a motive, a fear, lest if his son be married into a Canaanite family, he might be gradually led away from the true God.”¹²

The perverted king of Israel, Ahab, caused the whole nation to worship Baal. “And Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that was before Him. . . . That he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him” (1 Kgs 16:30). A clear example of how inter marriage can lead one astray. His union by marriage with a woman of decided character and positive temperament, who was devoted to idolatry, made them both special agents of Satan to lead the people of God into idolatry and terrible apostasy.¹³In order not to disorganize the Hebrew tribe, they disabused marriage with foreigners. Despite that the selection of a bride or groom was in the hands of the families, custom varied, at times the parent had to seek the consent of the daughter.

¹¹Ibid., 708.

¹² Robert Jamieson, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the Old Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Publishing House, 1985), 67.

¹³Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the church* (Washington D.C: Reviewand Herald 1948), 3: 262.

For example, Laban and Bethuel asked Rebecca, “Wilt thou go with this man?” (Gen 24:58).

“And Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, whose name was Tamar.”(Gen 38:6). “And Moses was consent to dwell with Reuel, and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter” (Exod 2:21) “And Saul said to David, behold my elder daughter Merab (Michal) her will I give thee to wife “ (1 Sam 18:17).

Life became bitter for the parents of Esau, when he married two Hittite women, “ And Esau, was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebecca,” (Gen 26:34,35).

Beyond this, since Israel’s faith was fashioned in the line of religious and cultural tension, the prominence of the concept made an Israelite adaptation to it a most effective weapon for defending the faith.¹⁴The faithful God, who instituted marriage and desired it to be esteemed, frowns at any wrong act which causes defilement. The incident that occurred between Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Prince and Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, was a reproach to the people of God (Gen 34:1–31). The sons of Jacob revenged the Shechemites by slaying all the males, proving to them that their God is not interested in intermarriages.

Inter-marriage in the New Testament

While Jesus Christ was on earth, the Pharisees questioned Him on the subject to divorce. (Mark 10:2; Matt 19:3). His reply indicates that the New Testament does not set forth any law theory of marriage. The perfect ideal of marriage is sufficiently indicated in the passages in Genesis which profess to record the original institution of

¹⁴*The Interpreter Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 254.

the holy state of matrimony. There is no direct reference to marriage in the gospel except the comments that Jesus made on the subject of divorce. However, in most passages of the Epistles of Apostle Paul, a number of practical exhortations indicate the duties of married persons. “The supremacy of the husband as the head of the wife is recognized, the duty of the wife’s obedience declaring mutual love and consideration are urged with considerable insight while the perfect of husband and wife as one flesh is duly emphasized.” The New Testament recognizes the importance of the Christian household and the rightful education of Christian children but does not describe this as the main object of marriage.

In the book of Corinthians, the writer used marriage bond as union between Christ and the church. Therefore he emphasized more on the intimate association between God’s children with idolaters. He said “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?”(1 Cor 6:14). The warning indicates that the child of God should avoid Inter-Denominational marriages which place the Christian in the situation of disobedience to his Maker. There is difference in the deeds and behavior between the children of God and the non-believer so joining together in marriage should not be entertained but to be prohibited. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what communion hath light and darkness?” (2 Cor 6:14).

Adam Clarke comments, “Be ye not equally yoke together with unbelievers; this is a military term; keep in your ranks, do not leave the Christian Community to join in that of the heathens.”¹⁵ Literary, a yoke is a “heavy bar of wood which is fitted

¹⁵ Adam Clarke, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Publishing House, 1983), 1073.

over the necks of two oxen to make it possible for them to pull a plough or a cart.”¹⁶Yoke can also represent bondage to sin.”¹⁷ Hebrew has dual meaning for yoke. The first is a “pole”, “bar” or “collar.” However, the primary idea behind it is an instrument of joining or pairing objects, animals, or humans for carrying out a single purpose together (Num 4:10, 12; 13:23; Ps 55:23; Nah 1:13). The second is “team”, “pair”, “to join” “to attach oneself with someone or something,” and “to bind.” In the scripture, those who do not share common belief in ones established religious faith are termed as unbelievers. Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:8 that, “he that has disowned our faith is worse than an unbeliever”. Someone who disobeys is also an unbeliever as found in the context of Christianity and Western culture. It is accepted that “unbelief” refers to turning away of individuals and groups from the traditional Christian faith and world view.¹⁸

Furthermore, unbelievers are described as “non-religious persons, doubters, non-believers, agnostics, free-thinkers, liberal thinker, non-religious humanists, and persons indifferent to religion.”¹⁹ On the other way round, “Belief” is a mental state of assurance or conviction, the attitude of the mind towards its own experiences in which it accepts and endorses reality.²⁰

The Apostle Paul might have had knowledge of the agricultural work in Palestine which made him coin the word “yoke” in order to suit his appeal. He might have deduced from the Palestinian way of tilling the soil by using plowing carts being

¹⁶ Good News Bible, *Word Listing* (American Bible Society, 1992), 372.

¹⁷ Ibid..

¹⁸ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Academy Book Preview, 1984).

¹⁹ Clark T.T, *Religion & Ethics Encyclopedia* (Edinburg, UK: 1981), 2: 459.

²⁰ Ibid.

pulled by two yoked-laden oxen and found out that animals with unbalanced size, (bigger and lesser) could not make an even yoking. Yokes could only be hanged on animals with equal balances and same species because God had already warned against yoking of an ox and donkey for plowing (Deut 22:10).

The two basic fears that inter-denominational marriage create are:

1. That the family life of the couple may be disrupted if husband and wife do not belong to the same faith, and
2. That religious affiliation may weaken or dissolve as a result of inter-denominational marriage

It is God's plan that marriage lasts forever. This can be achieved if the couples are of the same religious faith because if they have different religious backgrounds, they become handicapped in trying to build church relationship. Instead of being able to participate naturally in the same kind of religious exercise in their community, there is the tendency to compete for church loyalty. Sociologist recognized marriage as an approved union between two individuals of the opposite sex.

Marriage must be a relationship based on emotional, physical and spiritual oneness. Once you get married, all kinds of forces will work against you and you will need your resources to fight them, young people often reject this idea. One girl said, "If I love a man, his faith would not matter because religion does not count—love does. Another young man said, the marital relationship is between you and your partner, and the religious relationship is between you and your God, the two are different. Sometimes people in love fail to realize too, that, it is not only religion as such that is important but what is done in connection with it. If religion involved only faith and entirely separated from life activities, mixed marriage would present few problems.²¹

² Ibid, 280.

Those who succeed in marriage are those who are educated in the values that are religion inclined. Religious people would have the values, beliefs and expectations internalized as guide lines for themselves that would help make marriage and family a success. Maximum support is given by the religious body to uphold firmness, courtesy, uprightness, self – sacrifice, goodness, soundness in all aspect of human behavior.

Church leadership is often able to provide wise counsel from the pulpit or in private, lending further social support in the direction of success in marriage and family life. But there are different by – laws enacted by each of the numerous denominations to defend their separatism. Each church has erected its own barriers by which it resists unity with the whole Christian body, each perpetuates its teaching to bring up a child “the way he should go”, “each depend largely upon the success of the upbringing of children in the faith of its growth and even its survival. Each strives to see that young people choose mates from the in – group.”

The members of each church are trained to grow concern for the choice mate, “The Jew, Catholic and the Seventh-day Adventist, tend to require religious training. But the protestant groups are more permissive. They are more likely to depend on persuasions than on oaths or commandments, or canonical pronouncements, but the goals are the same to retain a body of believers through the generations.²² The curiosity of church bodies about marriage, family life, and child training often interfered with the marriage relationship itself, particularly where there is conflict of loyalties as in Inter – Denominational marriages. Loiya Saxton said that, from earliest history, Judaism has regarded inter – Denominational marriage as a sin. Both the

²² Ibid.

Talmud and the rabbinical code indicates that inter – marriage is punishable by banning which is equivalent of excommunication. The Jewish identity is bound up with family loyalty and those who intermarry demonstrate a history of alienation from their family.²³

Ellen G. White’s Counsel

The counsel of Ellen G. White in her book “Adventists Home” is that, “never should God’s people venture upon forbidden ground. God forbids marriage between believers and unbelievers. But too often, the unconverted heart follows its own desires and marriages unsanctioned by God are formed. Because of this, many men and women are without hope and without God in the world. The noble aspirations are dead: by chain of circumstances, they are held in Satan’s net, those who are ruled by passion and impulse will have bitter harvest to reap in this life and their course may result in the loss of their souls.”²⁴ She continued by saying, can two walk together, except they are agreed? If two of you agree on earth, then anything that they shall ask shall be done for them, of my father, which is in heaven. But how strange in sight! While one of those so closely united is engaged in devotion; the other is indifferent and careless. Also while one is seeking the way to everlasting life; the other is in the broad road to death.²⁵

In her book, *Adventist Home*, Ellen White writes, “Can two walk together except they be agreed. Hundreds have sacrificed Christ and heaven in consequence of

²³ Loyd Saxton, *Individual Marriage & the Family*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1977) 277.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 61–63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

marrying unconverted persons.”²⁶ Ellen continues to say, “At first the unbelieving one may make no show of opposition in the new relation but when the subject of Bible truth is presented for attention and consideration, the feeling at once arises. ‘You marry me knowing that I was what I am; I do not want to be disturbed. From henceforth let it be understood that conversation upon your peculiar views is to be interdicted.’”²⁷

Addressing the issues confronting God’s people, Ellen White said, “One of the greatest dangers that beset the people of God today is the association with the godly in uniting themselves in marriage with unbelievers.”²⁸ Marriage was instituted by God to be a blessing to man but it has been abused and become a curse. Since marriage affects one in this life and the afterlife, that is, the world to come, people who are contemplating on marriage should watch the character traits of the one they want to make their life partners. Questions of these natures should be considered, “Will the new relationship prove a source of true happiness? Will it be helpful to my Christian life? Will it be pleasing to God? Will my example be a safe one for others to follow?

The Seventh-day Adventist Manual states that “Differences of partners regarding religion are likely to mar the happiness of the home and lead to confusion, perplexity and failure in child rearing.”

²⁶ E. G. White, *Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 66.

²⁷Ibid., 65.

²⁸Ibid., 63.

The writers of the Manual said, “The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties, but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of taste, inclinations and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one’s principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead the believer away from God.”²⁹

Marriage affiliation should be fashioned only in Christ and human love should draw its closest bonds from divine love. Deep, true unselfish affection is found only where Christ reigns. Let the happy couple enter into a sacred covenant with God in the presence of affirming and encouraging parents and friends, let there be laughter, joy, romance and honey moon in exotic places. Let there be rejoicing in what God has done in bringing two of His children together.³⁰

Writing to the young lovers, E.G. White said, “Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without a companionship, the scenes and delightful employment of Eden would fail to yield perfect happiness. Even angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship”³¹ Again she said, “God gave Adam a companion—He provided a helpmeet for him; a helpmeet corresponding to him in love and in sympathy. A renowned writer wrote on her vision she had about young lovers. She saw the cases of some who professed to believe in the truth, yet made a mistake by marrying an unbeliever. Such people hoped that the unbelieving party would embrace the truth than before but the subtle workings and the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bill & Lynne Hybels, *Fit to be Tied, Making Marriage Last* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing. House, 1991), 83.

³¹Ellen G. White, *Letters to Young Lovers* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1983), 11.

cunning efforts of the enemy draws away the believer from the faith. Furthermore, she said “hundreds have sacrificed Christ and heaven in consequence of marrying unconverted persons. Can it be that love and fellowship of Christ are of so little value to them that they prefer poor mortals?” Marriage will not be holy and honorable in the sight of a pure and holy God, unless it is after the exalted spiritual principles.

Marriage is a symbol of God’s covenant with His people. The unity, sacrificial love and interdependence usually associated with marriage enable the individual to comprehend and impart the love of God’s relationship with His people under the symbol of His covenant with Israel and the church as bride and body of Christ. The focus is on the individual’s understanding of the relationship between God and His people.”³² “Religion should dictate and guide you in all your pursuits, and should hold absolute control over your affections. If you yield yourselves unreservedly into the hands of Christ, making His power your strength, then will your moral vision be clear to discern quality of character so that you may not be deceived by appearances and make great mistakes in your friendship.”³³

Other Writers’ Views on Inter-Denominational Marriage

These days, Inter-Denominational marriage has become a matter of concern and other writers as well as various religious bodies and denominations all over the world have done much to address the issue. Paul H. Landis once said that Inter-Denominational Marriages are likely to increase very rapidly in our nation of mixed religious background. The increase will be affected due to the growing religious tolerance, increasing secular orientation and the bridging together of more young

³² Ibid.

³³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 3: 47.

people in large groups in schools and colleges where the issue of religious differences is minimal.³⁴

Furthermore, he said, “The church academy and church college were once effective in seeing that young people married in the faith, even in the particular denominations. But they no longer handled much of the total youth population; the school atmosphere is generally secular and campus life is not much given to religious exercise.”³⁵ A renowned marriage counselor, Henry Bandt, stated that, “If you want your marriage to be better, you must build it upon spiritual foundation. Your Christian education is basic to building that foundation”³⁶

Again, Landis said that marriage across religion lines have no legal barriers but many church groups advice against it. He commented “Nevertheless about fifty parents of college students find no mistake in crossing these religion barriers if the aspects of relationship are satisfactory, but if the couples are of the same religious faith, this building of the marriage into a larger fellowship of the church group is made and natural.”³

In the book, “Making the Most Marriage”, of Paul Landis, he reported on the studies of Burgess and Wallin that a sociologist may develop the idea that the divorce problem of Inter-Denominational Marriage is higher. Once, the public Health Department in California reported on couples who have divorced or separated. The department came out with the result that different faith pairs break after duration of three to four years while like–faith couples break a media of six to eight years.

³⁴ Paul Landis, *Making Most of the Marriage*, 5th ed (Engle Cleffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1975), 180.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶ Henry Bandt, *I want my Marriage to be Better* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 141.

Bowman, a renowned marriage counselor once said, “Young men sometimes fail to realize the importance of religion in marriage, because their relatively short time perspective does not permit a final judgment. Individuals abandon religion and the church only to return and regret their lives, when the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood awaken them to a new sense of religious values.”³⁷ Again, Colliers wrote, “Marriage, as important as it is, should not be easily entered into without looking at its spiritual implications. Religion is important in marriage than some persons in love are inclined to think”³⁸ Furthermore, Henry Brandt advised that if you want your marriage to be better, you must build it upon the spiritual foundation of your church.³⁹

Apparently, serious trouble develops more quickly between mixed faith pairs or they act more quickly in seeking divorce as a separation to serious difficulties.⁴⁰ In the fundamental doctrines of the Seventh day Adventist church, it is stated that, “Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian, a marriage is a commitment to God as well as to the spouse and should be entered into only between partners, who share a common faith.”

Throughout the scripture, we see that God has human marriage at heart and it has become the symbol of choice for His love for His people. Ever since creation, God has not changed his mind about that. Marriage is very good. Marriage is a

¹ Henry A. Bowman, *Marriage for Moderns*, 7th ed. (Washington DC: Vector. Press, 1987), 163.

³⁸ *Collier's Encyclopaedia*, “Marriage” (NY: Macmillan Educational Com., 1988), 15: 437.

³⁹ Henry Brandt, *I Want My Marriage to be Better* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 141.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

socially recognized and approved union between two individuals of the opposite sex and it is a binding agreement with each other before God. Again marriage includes promises, privileges and obligation. Bowman stated that people tend to select marriage partners who have similar social characteristics, like social-economic background, age, education or religion race.⁴¹ Furthermore, he said, “Religion is more important in marriage than what some persons in love are inclined to think”⁴²

Bob and Margaret Blood said that Religious differences present obstacles to personal relationships especially for persons who believe theirs is the true faith. Such people lack not only spiritual unity but also respect for each other’s conviction that makes possible to live.⁴³ The leadership of the Seventh –day Adventist church has warned ministers not to perform the marriage ceremony between Adventist and non-Adventist. The holistic theology of genuineness leads to a lifestyle too different to encourage marital harmony that will make her marriage unhappy⁴⁴Revealing the intention of the Catholic Church, Landis said, “The Catholic church is much more militant in its opposition to Inter Denominational marriage than the Protestant Churches. The Catholic Law requires that its members be married from within the church if the marriage is to be sanctioned and if only the member wishes to remain in a state of grace and a regular member of the church.

⁴¹ Henry A Bowman, *Marriage for Moderns* 7th ed. (Washington DC: Vector Press, 1970), 133.

⁴²Ibid., 135.

⁴³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th ed. (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 164.

⁴⁴ Adam Clark, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Publishing House, 1985), 1157.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

Sunyani lies in the mid – western part of Ghana. It was founded by a hunter called “Bofo Tiah” in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The hunter hailed from a town called “Akwamu Anwanweso” in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.¹ Since he was an elephant hunter, he could not stay at a particular place for a longer time but kept moving from place to place so that he could hunt for big and ferocious animals like buffalo, lion, tiger and elephant. Finally, he settled at a forest area where Elephants were very common. In the forest was a small stream surrounded by some weeds called, “TOO”. He named the stream “TOO Nsuwa” (TOO stream). It was at the banks of the “TOO Nsuwa” that “Bofo Tiah” skinned the Elephants he killed. People from far and nearby villages usually visited the hunter “Bofo Tiah,” and whenever they were going, they said, we are going to “Osono nnwaeɛ” (a place where Elephants are skinned).²

Occasionally, a man called Boahen Korkor, a royal from Amakom – Kumasi in the Ashanti region of Ghana visited his friend Bofo Tiah at “Osono Nnwaeɛ.” Later he decided to stay permanently with him. As time elapsed, the name “Osono Nnwaeɛ” was changed to “Sunyani.” The village “Osono Nnwaeɛ” now Sunyani, was originally ruled by the two friends, “Bofo Tiah” and “Boahen Korkor.” The present areas, New Town and Tunsum Estate, formerly “TOO Nsuwa,” of Sunyani are occupied by the

¹ Nana Bofo Tiah Amponsem, Krontihene of Sunyani Municipal, interview by author.

descendants of Bofu Tiah, the chief hunter, who is the “Kurontire” [Head of the town]. And the kingship lineage of Sunyani is the descendants of Boahen Korkor. These two men lived cordially and shared things in common.

Local Government Council of Sunyani Municipal

The composition of Sunyani Municipal consists of fourteen small villages. They are: Tunsuom, Atoase, Gyeduakoro, Mmeresa, Nwawasua, Kanturo, Adaboreso, Yawsai, Kurotia, Kurotiabenkum, Penkwasi, Tweredua, Adomako and Baakoniaba. Some of the chiefs of the various villages hold higher positions in the local assembly. In the language spoken by the people of Sunyani, a chief is called “Ohene”. Hence the suffix “Ohene” is added to titles of the villages’ heads. Tunsuom here is the “Kurontire,” (the head of the town.). Atoasehene is the “adonten,” Mmeresahene is the “Twafoo,” Kurotiahene is the “Akwamu” Kurotia benkumhene is the “Benkumhene” Gyeduakorohene is the “Kyidom”

Language of the People of Sunyani

The larger population of the people of Sunyani speaks “Brong” while only a small population speaks “Ga.” The Ga people descended from the Southern part of Ghana while the Brong people hailed from the middle-belt of the Country.

Population of Sunyani

Statistically, the population of Sunyani State stands at 64,000 people.

Common Boundaries

The Sunyani Municipal shares common boundaries with five towns. The north is bounded by Domasua and on the east by New Dormaa. While on the west is bounded by Ntotroso and Mim respectively and on the south by Abesim.

Occupation of the People of Sunyani

The major occupation of the people of Sunyani is farming. The thick forest which initially attracted the founders for settlement can no more be found due to seasonal bush fire outbreak. The remnants of woods commonly identified are odum, wawa, akasa, framo, sapele and pepea.³ These woods are used by the carpenters for furniture works and roofing of houses. At present the woods are not enough for exportation. The incessant rainfall during rainy seasons has made agriculture prominent for the people of Sunyani State. The crops commonly grown in the area are cocoa, mango, and coconut. The richness of the soil has favored the farmers to cultivate foodstuffs like cocoyam, maize, cassava and yam in abundance.

Economic Background

Since the major occupation of the people is farming, many other people from far and nearby towns rush in to buy foodstuffs. There are two market centers at Sunyani: the daily market center and the weekly market center called “Busuma Market.” The weekly market is observed on Wednesdays. The traders from Ashanti Region come with clothes to sell and traders from the Northern Region come with goats, sheep, cattle and also groundnut and shea butter, among others. Other traders proceed from the Central Region with all kinds of dried fish. Other jobs identified with the citizens of Sunyani are vegetable crop growers, hunters, animals husbandry and governmental workers.

³ Yeboah, J.K., Senior Forest Guard, Sunyani, interview by author.

Religious Background

Before Christianity reached Sunyani, the people worshipped many gods. The chief among them was “Asirifi Kotoku.”⁴ This great fetish was worshipped on Mondays and Fridays. Most of the citizens paid obeisance to the great fetish, and to them, they received everything they requested from it. The fetish priest confirmed that “the god could cause the barren woman to give birth to children.”⁵ To honor the gods, the parents named some of the children after “Asirifi Kotoku.”

Traditional Laws and Games of the People of Sunyani

The citizens of Sunyani had traditional laws. The people were restricted not to go to certain rivers on specific days. Also it was a taboo to go to a reserved forest called “Nananom Mpo” (Dead ancestors’ forest) for hunting and ferreting. After tedious work of the day, the people assembled at the principal street in the night for entertainment. They played games, sang songs and danced. The popular among the games were “Adowa, Kete, Mpintin, Fontonfrom, and Konkoma.”⁶ Others were “Adenkum and Dansuom,” which were displayed at a durbar or when the king died.

Social Background

The well-known and recognized ceremony was the “Asommofo Afahye,” (Elephant Killers Ceremony). During this festival, two groups of hunters left to the deep forest to hunt for four days. A group was selected from “Bofo Tiah’s” family and the other group from “Boahene Korkor” family. All animals killed within the first three days were dried up, but those animals killed on the fourth day were brought

⁴ Nana Bofo Tiah Amponsem, Krontihene of Sunyani Municipal.

⁵ Kwaku Firi, the Chief Fetish Priest of Asirifi Kotoku.

⁶ Nana Bofo Tiah Amponsem (Krontihene of Sunyani Municipal).

fresh to the palace and with joyous song they jubilated as they walked through the principal streets of Sunyani. Most of them held aloft in their hands the meat of the Elephant killed on the fourth day. They then gather together at the palace grounds where they celebrated and crowned the occasion with eating and dancing alongside drumming.

The aim of the festival was to draw the people's attention to the environmental degradation, re-forestation and to promote formal and informal education. One memorable thing achieved from the hunters was herbal medicine. They got to know the herbs that the animals ate for long life therefore they promoted and applied the use of these herbs for healthy living.

Statistics of Various Religious Bodies

There are several churches with larger membership in the Sunyani Municipality. Statistics reveal the following percentage of the citizens; Pentecostals – 15%, Baptist – 8% Seventh – day Adventist 18%, Roman Catholic – 20%, Moslem – 14%, and Traditionalist – 25%.⁷

Socio–Political Background

The people of “Osono Nnwaεε” (Sunyani) were law abiding. The Chiefs were the settlers of disputes or conflicts. The person found guilty had to meet corporal punishment to appease the community and the ancestors.⁸ Initially, guilty persons were banished from the town to return no more. With time, the leaders of the town found that to be tyrannical and therefore they devised a way of punishing the guilty ones. They collected money from them and at times Goats, Sheep or Fowls. They

⁷ J. A. Boateng, Evangelism Director, Reporting on Church Survey, Ghana to Author.

⁸ Nana Bofa Tiah Amponsem Krontihene of Sunyani Municipal.

have names for the items collected; for example “Gyigyori Dwan” (a fool’s sheep) is a Sheep they collected from a guilty person if the community found the culprit to have behaved very foolishly in that case or situation. Another one too is “Sika Dwan” (Money collected in the place of the Sheep). Here the settlers of the case share that money among themselves. Also they had what we call “Nkondwa Dwan” (stool sheep). In this case, the Chiefs collected a Sheep, slain it and smeared the stool with the blood to appease the ancestors.⁹

In the case of land disputes, the Elders of the town were allowed to testify. But if there were confusion and misunderstanding, the parties involved took oath. That is, they swore to the gods and the ancestors so that any anticipated calamity befalls only on the one who is insincere or dishonest. That person may die or fall sick and become bedridden.¹⁰ This testified that each was his brother’s keeper. In the aspects of child training, any Elder in the community could take any child as his own by counseling and punishing him or her without the real parents taking any action. But today who dare touches someone’s child; he will face insults and strong caution from the real parents.

Marriage before the Advent of Christianity

Before Christianity arrived at Sunyani, marriage was treated with great respect. In Sunyani at present, like any other place, the number of women is greater than that of the men.¹ But in the early years of Sunyani, the women were not outnumbering the men so the parents sought women for their sons. It was normally done through betrothing for young girls.

⁹ Nana Adjepong, Nifahene of Techiman Traditional Area.

²Ibid.

This method was called “asiwa.” “Asiwa” was done before a baby was born. When the baby was still in the womb, the father of the boy made inquiry if any man had come to see the pregnant woman for it. If no, he would talk the pregnant woman into accepting him. After the acceptance by the pregnant woman, he is then obliged to spend on her till she delivered the baby. If the baby was a male, he became a tight friend to the father who asked for the betrothal. When the baby betrothed was a female, she was monitored by the parents of the boy. The proposed husband was at will to call her as his wife but the girl had no choice of visiting him.

In order not to discredit this exercise, when the parents of the boy discovered that the girl is matured, they approached for bride price, such as a Sheep or calculated amount of Money and Schnapps (wine). After the date for the marriage ceremony is fixed, the boy bought assorted clothes and shoes to be presented to the girl on that fateful day. On the ceremonial day, either in the morning or in the evening depending on the time fixed by the families involved, the boy moved to the house of the girl’s family to pay the bride price. This showed a cordial relationship between the two families. When the bride price performing ceremony was over, the parents of the boy asked for permission to take the girl along with them to stay forever with the husband.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

This section shows that, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was established long time ago and it is a worldwide church. It will also abuse the minds of some Ghanaian folks who believed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is “Adabantwea.” That is a small church in a small particular area in Ghana.

In 1816, a farmer from New York, William Miller, studied his Bible carefully and was convinced about the eminent return of Christ. He was committed to share the good news with people who believed him. The number of preachers of Christ’s soon

return shoot up because people from other denominations joined him in preaching the good news. These people together formed a group called the “Millerites” or “Adventist Movement.”¹¹ In order to awake sinners from their slumber, a camp meeting was held in 1842. Their anticipation was to make disciples of all people and to convey the eternal gospel in the context of the “Three Angels Message.”¹² Many Sabbath conferences were held to clarify the Sabbath teaching in several places. They met regularly to study the Bible and they accepted some basic doctrines and came out with 27 fundamental beliefs.¹³

The birth of the Seventh–day Adventist Church dates back to the early 1860s and later organized as the General Conference of the Seventh day Adventists Church in 1863.¹⁴ Though the Seventh–day Adventists state that their root in history go back a long way to the Millerites Movement of the 1830s, it however extends further to creation.¹⁵ “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the Seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (Genesis 2:2-3) because in it He had rested from all his work which God created and made.”¹⁶

¹¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 2.

¹²*Present Truth & Advent Review & Herald*, (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1962), 1: 166.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵ R.W Schwarz, *Light Bearers the Remnant* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1979), 13.

²Adventist Review, *Our Fundamental Beliefs & Day to Live*, April 29, 1999, 3.

The Seventh–day Adventists have a firm religious faith that they are the Remnant church of God (Rev 12:17), “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷They accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to the teaching of the Holy Scripture.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Seventh–day Adventists believe that they are the last and end time church which has been called out to keep the commandment of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. They believe that it is their obligation to proclaim the arrival of the judgment hour and the nearness of Christ’s second coming. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Rev 14:6–12.¹⁹The absolute acceptance of the Bible has made the Seventh–day Adventists to set aside all their works and worship on the seventh day Sabbath, which is a command and a gift from God to humanity. The assurance that the Bible teaches is that, Jesus, who died for the sins of mankind and rose again, will return to this earth. They proclaim the second coming of Jesus and live in this blessed hope.²⁰

The Coming of SDA Church to Sunyani

Christianity had inroads to Sunyani Municipality and the people began to embrace the good news. Many churches emanated and their messages were accepted

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹*Present Truth & Advent Review & Herald*, Articles (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, Oct. 13, 1904), 1: 8.

²⁰“Our Fundamental Beliefs & Day to live” *Adventist Review*, April 29, 1999, 3.

by the inhabitants. In 1959, the town folks accepted the Seventh – day Adventist church.²¹

Before the Seventh–day Adventist faith reached Sunyani there were various religious groups and other traditional worshippers. Some of them were the Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, and Islamic Religion.²²The gospel of Jesus Christ and the three angel’s messages of Rev.14:6-12 is to be spread to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. In fulfillment of propagation of the gospel message, an evangelist called G.K. Amoateng came from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region to stay at Sunyani. He worked as a typist. He shared his faith with his friend Mr. Asenso, so that they could both establish a Seventh–day Adventist church in Sunyani. In April 1959, the first Sabbath was observed by four people.

The first four Sabbath keepers, led by Evangelist G.K. Amoateng used the method of house to house visitation to reach several people with the Sabbath message. They discovered that, there were many people in Sunyani who observed the Sabbath in their various home towns. These people came together and within two months, they worshipped with forty–six members. In August, 1959, the Sabbath keepers at Sunyani organized an evangelistic campaign and invited the then Conference President, Pastor C.B Mensah, as the main speaker for the occasion. He came with five member evangelistic team and the campaign yielded forty souls, but twenty-three were baptized.

These converts served as the first people to be baptized at Sunyani. The members of the infant Church were recruited to Bible studies. Each was his brother’s

²¹Interview, Philip Nkrumah, Pioneer of New Town Seventh-day Adventist Church, Sunyani.

²² Interview, Adjei Boateng, Pioneer of New Town Seventh–day Adventist Church, Sunyani.

keeper so they helped those illiterate members to learn to write and to read.²³ The people around this little group of believers called them with different names like “Akwadwofo” meaning the Lazy People (because they refused to go to farm on Saturday). Also they called them “Adabantwewa” (that is Inferior group of people).²⁴ The baptized converts were not perturbed by the people’s mockery but rather, they joined hands to reach as many people in the vicinity as possible. Some of the converts were driven from their paternal homes because of their acceptance of the Sabbath truth. Others were denied of food by their parents and some too were forsaken by their friends. Though they suffered persecution yet no penalty of death was meted out to them. Few of the members could not withstand the horrible harassment so they denied their new found religion.²⁵ But most of the young boys and girls were very strong in the faith and did not waver despite the oppression.

In order to propagate the good news to other places, the church members formed various groups to move out to the nearby villages. Within three years the villages around Sunyani had been saturated with the Sabbath message.²⁶ Now Sunyani serves as the headquarters of Mid-West Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana.

²³Elder Gyau Joseph, Odumasi, Pioneer, Seventh-day Adventist Church Sunyani, interview by author.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵Interview, Adjei Boateng, N.T. Seventh – day Adventist church, Sunyani.

²⁶Elder Gyau Joseph, Odumase, Pioneer, Seventh – day Adventist Church, Sunyani, interview by author.

Sunyani North District

The Mid-west Ghana Conference has thirty three districts of which Sunyani North District is one.²⁷ The district is made up with four organized Churches: Penkwase, New Dormaa, Yawhima, Freedom, and three company Churches, Kotokrom, Barracks and Agape. The District covers the western territory of Sunyani Municipality. The district has a Church membership of 1,057 and 1,824 as Sabbath School membership. The analysis of the membership and date of organizations is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1 shows that there were four organized churches and three company churches in the Sunyani North District. Pengwase church had the highest church membership and Sabbath School membership.

Table 1: Membership of Sunyani North District

Church	Date & Year of Organization	Church Membership	Sabbath School Membership
Penkwase (O)	17 th July,1988	476	811
New Dormaa (O)	17 th July,2003	225	462
Yawhima (O)	22 nd June,2002	90	147
Kotokrom (C)	-	60	80
Freedom (O)	5 th October,2012	84	149
Barracks (C)	-	56	115
Agape (C)	-	36	60
Total Membership		1057	1824

Note: O= organized; C = company

²⁷The Executive Secretary, MGC, District Statistical Report, 2012.

Marriage in the Era of Christianity

When Christianity showed up in Sunyani Municipality the system of marriage changed from the traditional culture to that of the White man's culture. Today, in the community of Sunyani, religion has blocked the cultural way of choosing a life partner because of many denominations and sects. Each has slightly different creed, many of them, claiming to be the only way to achieve eternal life. A framework of rituals, taboos and beliefs which testify their separation is maintained.

In order to resist the unity with other Christian bodies, each denomination has erected its own barrier perpetuating its teaching. They endeavor to see that, young people choose mates from "in group," if not the exact denomination, the one with similar tenets and socio-moral system. The Catholic Church will not want her member to marry a Seventh-day Adventist Church member, neither will a Seventh-day Adventists Church allow her member to marry a Sunday keeper, because of different beliefs."

The young people of today are confounded with the flux of Christianity; marriage has become a controversial issue in Sunyani Municipality. There are restrictions here and there unlike the pre-Christianity days when young people were free to choose their partners from anywhere at all. Marriage is only allowed within same faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Before Christianity arrived at Sunyani, parents chose partners for their sons, but in post Christianity era, the parents have no hand in choosing a partner for their male children. If the young man sees the girl he loves, he goes to inform the Family Life leader of his Church. The Elder goes on behalf of the young man's father and inquire if the girl has not been engaged by another person. If the Elder receives a positive confirmation from the lady, the bride price is paid. When the bride price is paid, a date is set for the marriage ceremony. On

this day, the girl's father will officially give his daughter to the husband and the Pastor publicly pronounces them as husband and wife. The parents of the boy have a limited responsibility with the church marriage. The essential role played by the parents is by providing the bride price. Even if they cannot afford it, the boy with the churches assistance will do everything to the glory of God.

Working as a Pastor for thirty-five years, the author has experienced that intimate relationship of boys and girls in mixed public schools and also staying in the same compound have caused some of the people to marry outside the church. They have the assertion that, once love is established, faith is of less importance to them. Most of the females, who are no more members of the Adventist church, believed they have stayed long in the Seventh-day Adventist church waiting for members to marry them but to no avail.

Also some of the girls have been deceived by the Adventist boys who made vain promises to them. Others think they have stayed so long in the church with no sign of any serious member coming their way and so they are compelled to marry those outside the faith, who they believe are sincere and serious. Again, some of them, both the girls and the boys, ignorantly have entered into inter – denominational marriage because they did not know its implication. They took marriage for granted. Today, they are encountering problems due to absence of peace, unity and understanding in the home. The Sunyani North District Secretary, Peter Mensah, has the record that the absences of these elements have led to most of them divorced even though they have apostatized. The analysis and the interpretation of the data collected from the survey are presented in this chapter. For clarity purpose, the responses as well as the questionnaires have been expressed in figures and percentages.

Data Analysis

A total number of 1,057 questionnaires were distributed to the youth, adult males and females who were regular members of the various local churches and companies within the Sunyani North district and some youth, adult males and females who have married outside the church and no more Adventists. The number of questionnaires returned was 1, 031.

Section A: This section deals with the information about the respondents. Ten questions were designed in this section. Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents.

Data shows there are more males than females. It also indicates that 68.3% of the respondents are married while 31.7% are still single. Most of the respondents (56.4%) were 31 years old and above; 12.2% are teenagers and 31.4% are young adults. Considering the average age, most of the respondents are married or are in a marriageable age. Of the respondents, 77.7% are members of the Seventh day Adventist Church and 22.3% were former Adventists who have left the church due to inter-denominational Marriage.

Table 2. Profile of the Respondents

		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Male	612	59.4
	Female	419	40.6
Marital Status	Married	704	68.3
	Single	327	31.7
Age	10-20 (teenagers)	126	12.2
	21-30 (young adults)	324	31.4
	31 & above	581	56.4
Religion	SDAs	704	77.7
	Apostatized SDAs	230	22.3

Table 3 shows that 24.3% accept the idea that the parents are the cause of their children's marriages outside the faith, 68.9% disapprove while 6.8% of the respondents are neutral. It is clear that 76.2% of the respondents accept that the youth themselves are the cause of their marriages outside the faith, 20.1% of the respondents' show that the youths are not responsible for their marriages outside the faith, and 3.7% said that they don't know. Data show that 25.3% of the respondents perceive that inter-denominational marriage is good and 74.7% of the respondents say that inter-denominational marriage is bad. It is not good. Only 28.4% of the respondents indicated that they have friends who have married outside the faith while 71.6% accepted that they do not have any friend who has wedded outside the faith.

Table 3. Cause of Inter- Marriage and Perception Toward Inter-marriage

		<i>f</i>	%
Parents as cause for inter-denominational marriage	Yes	251	24.3
	No	710	68.9
	Don't know	70	6.8
Youth as cause for inter-denominational marriage	Yes	786	76.2
	No	207	20.1
	Don't know	38	3.7
Perception toward inter-marriage	Good	261	25.3
	Bad	770	74.7
Friends that have intermarried	Yes	293	28.4
	No	738	71.6

Reasons for Positive Perceptions Toward Inter-Marriage

Many among the respondents constituting 25.3% have the impression that Inter-Denominational Marriage is good because it is one of the ways to evangelize to the unbeliever. Those who find it to be good have the notion that once the girl is married to the man, he takes her to his church and by that, he has added a soul to the church. Another conception is that it brings forth unification among the other

denominations that are established within the vicinity. Again, their imagination for Inter-Denominational marriages is that, it cements cordial relationship among the members of the other denominations.

Reasons for Negative Perceptions Toward Inter-Marriage

However, 74.7% of the respondents gave admittance that Inter-Denominational Marriage is bad because it is one of the roots of denial of faith. Majority of church members who once were staunch and had good standing on Church records have been spiritually affected leading to a minimal interest in Church activities. Within a flash after “outside faith” marriage, some accept that peace diminishes in the home especially when it comes to spiritual matters. Should there be arguments or misapprehension; each individual would like to do it in the way it is done in their Church. At times it leads to a heated debate which ends in fights, insults, disgrace and eventually divorce.

Section B: Parents Only

This section contains 5 questions addressed to the 704 respondents who are married out of the 1031.

Table 4 shows the parent’s role and involvement in their children’s intermarriage situation. Data shows that shows that 28.6% of the parents agree that they will encourage their children to go in for Inter – Denominational Marriage while 71.4% of them do not harmonize with the notion that they will encourage their son/daughter to marry outside the faith.

Data also shows that 70.9% of the respondents accepted that they have children who have joined hands in marriage with unbelievers whereas 29.1% of the respondents indicate that they have no son/daughter who have married the outside the faith.

Table 4. Parents' Involvement in Children's Inter-Marriage Situation

		<i>f</i>	%
Parents' Permission to intermarry	Yes	201	28.7
	No	503	71.4
Parents with children intermarrying	Yes	499	70.9
	No	205	29.1
Married but still active SDA	Yes	298	39.7
	No	301	60.3
Parents setting married children's dispute	Yes	347	69.5
	No	152	30.5

Some parents (39.7%) testified that their children who have married outside the faith are still practicing their former faith (especially, the males) but 60.3% of the parents that responded lamented that their children (especially, the females) who have married outside the faith have abandoned the Church, and accepted that of their husband. More than half of the parents (69.5%) responded that they have settled disputes between their children who have married outside their faith; however, 30.5% of the parents have not settled any problem between the couples.

The Number of Times Disputes Have Been Settled

Some parents among the respondents revealed that they have settled 1,244 disputes between their daughters/sons who have married outside the faith. It was realized from this research that the Adventist females who have married from other denominations are victims to this hectic problem. The reason is that they always find it difficult to match their spiritual way of life.

Section C: This section is for the 230 couples who have married outside their faith. Out of these 230 respondents, 120 of them are young adults. It contains 8 questions.

Table 5 reveals that 19.7% respondents have married for a short period of zero to five years. 56.5% have married, at least, for ten years, whereas 23.8% have married

for 11 years or more. Also, 29.2% of young adults that have been married were between zero to five years. However, majority forming 70.8% of young adults have married between six to ten years.

Table 6 shows that 63% of the respondents endorsed the idea that they married outside the faith to win souls for Christ while 22.6% approved that no member in the Church wanted to marry them. But only a lesser percentage, which is 5.2%, accepted that they involved themselves in Inter – Denominational Marriages due to the fact that they love and cannot afford to miss the unbelievers. And 9.2% of the respondents have a general idea that it is God’s plan for them to marry non – Adventist.

Table 7 indicates that 13% of the respondents approved that they retain maximum peace in the Inter – Denominational Marriage while 16.1% testify that they enjoy relative peace. Meanwhile 70.9% of the respondents are less fortunate to have peaceable environment in their matrimonial home. They have no peace within and without their marriages.

Table 5: Years in Marriage

Years	Frequencies Percentages		Young Adults	
	Frequencies	Percentages	Frequencies	Percentages
0-5	45	19.7	35	29.2
6-10	130	56.5	85	70.8
11+	55	23.8	-	-
Total	230	100	120	100

Table 6: Reasons for Marrying Outside the Adventist Faith.

Reasons	Frequencies	Percentages
To win souls to Christ	145	63
No member to marry me	52	22.6
I can’t afford to miss him/her	12	5.2
It is God’s plan	21	9.2
Total	230	100

Table 7: Level of Peace in Marriage

Reasons	Frequencies	Percentages
Maximum peace	30	13
Relative peace	37	16.1
No peace	163	70.9
Total	230	100

Table 8 reveals that 64.3% of the respondents attend the husband's church and 15.2% to the wife's church while 20.5% have joined different church. It is clear from the data that the women always change their faith easily when they marry.

Table 9 shows that the children of most of these couples (59.1%) have joined the father's church and 25.2% attend the mother's church while 15.7% worship with different church from their parents.

Table 8: Choices of Church after Marriage

Choices	Frequencies	Percentages
My husband's Church	148	64.3
My wife's Church	35	15.2
Different Church	47	20.5
Total	230	100

Table 9: Church Children are Attending

Choices	Frequencies	Percentages
Father's Church	136	59.1
Mother's Church	58	25.1
Different Church	36	15.7
Total	230	100

Advantages of Inter-Denominational Marriage

Those who joined the Adventist Church through Inter – Denominational marriage indicate that, they have discovered the truth about the Sabbath. Again they cherish the sweet fellowship with God on every Sabbath day. Therefore, they are highly enthusiastic to marry Adventists. Even some are able to convince family relatives to their new found faith

Disadvantages of Inter–Denominational Marriage

Some of those who have left the Adventist Church due to Inter – Denominational Marriage attest that they have suffered denial by parents. Also the love that they shared among themselves initially as couples diminish and they are no longer share intimacy, which gradually leads to disunion.

The data disclosed that the nut of Inter -Denominational Marriage in Sunyani North District rests heftily on the unconverted youths. Some refuse to uphold the Adventist faith seriously, especially, those born by the Adventist families. They have not accepted Jesus fully as their Lord and personal savior. They may be waiting with hope that, someone in the church will ask their hands in marriage. And if no one comes, they resolve to marry any person that comes their way. Some of the youths have in mind that once love is established, faith is of less significance to them. Many other boys attested that they marry non-Adventist in other to win them for Christ. This research work revealed that girls are easily converted to their husband’s Church, but sometimes, they only attend Church for the love they have for their spouses. Also they attend the Church for the fear that their marriages may end up in divorce.

The research showedthat many youths are involved in Inter-Denominational Marriage due to the fact that they live within the area where Adventist members are few. Again, they fail to marry within the faith because the members are just within the

family circle. Since the Church and the parents perform independently in educating the youths on spiritual matters, they get confused in choosing their life partners. The study designated that some of the Adventist youth enter into Inter-Denominational marriages due to the ignorance of its aftereffect. They don't value the essentiality of marriage and at the end they suffer lack of peace and tranquility in the home.

CHAPTER 4

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

The scripture indicated that marriage was instituted by God, in Eden, and it is so dear to His heart that he cautions His beloved children not to enter into it hastily. Since marriage is a symbol of His love for His people, God Himself admonished them not to marry the foreigner with the reason that they will leave Him to serve other gods.

The Jewish parents restricted their children from marrying outside the Jewish family. It was an instruction from God to separate themselves from the heathens. It is based on these scriptural orders that some Seventh-day Adventist members in Sunyani North District have resolved not to marry an unbeliever.

The following adequate solutions will help the church members to solve the problem of inter-denominational marriages:

Effective prayer, which is communion with God, has a dynamic value for the youths. Again, it is said to be a key that unlocks the heaven's gate therefore intercessory prayer by the Church and the parents should be offered on behalf of the youths. This act of praying should be constant and regular for the youth, so that the God who instituted marriage in Eden will provide for them a life partner within the faith.

Furthermore, the youth should be educated on how to choose a partner. A constant and regular seminars and workshops should be conducted for the youths at least four times a year to sensitize them on pros and cons of Inter-Denominational

Marriages. Another questionable character found among the youths is lack of conversion. Many of them lack the Biblical views on marriage as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church's stand on Inter-Denominational Marriages. For this reason, the Church should set time aside for Bible studies. Every Sunday evening or any other preferable day should be used to teach the youth more about Jesus for them to know what He has for them. By understanding the Bible truth, they will whole-heartedly accept Jesus as their personal Savior and appreciate His loving kindness. The conversion of the youths depends on both the Church and the parents; they should join hands in training them. The older people should draw the youths closer to themselves in order to give those pieces of advice. Again there should be counselors for the youth who will meet them in regular intervals.

Also the youths should be encouraged to attend social and spiritual retreats or programmes, such as, GNASS Conventions, Adventist Choir and Singing Band Rallies and Adventist Youth Camps. At these gatherings they will interact, cherish and love themselves. Through this relationship, they can even marry themselves. The Church should highly encourage the members to wink at tribal or cultural background of the spouse as long as both belong to the same faith.

The members should be educated to desist from worldliness and materialism for "the world fades away." Marriage is not the way of amassing wealth neither is it a way of gaining worldly fame. It is an act of a real love for where love reins poverty becomes wealth. On behalf of the Adventist ladies, the Church should encourage them to make their homes better rather than aiming to go into already made-homes.

Another problem discovered during the research is that some of the youths go in for more girls or boys at a time, this should be discouraged. This act prevents others from

making their own choice because; real and true love cannot be shared between two persons.

The liberal theology has made the members of the Churches become loose and weak so far as the Bible standard is concern. The Church should not compromise spiritual issues because it is a matter of life and death. Sensitizing the members should begin in schools. Therefore the Churches within the Sunyani North district are encouraged to construct schools from nursery to basic schools. The Conference should support the districts to establish a Senior High School so that children from the basic schools can continue after completion. This will help to impart the principles of the Adventist Church into them.

The study revealed that some ladies and some men are frustrated because no one seems to come to them to ask their hands in marriage. These victims should contact the Church leaders for assistance. The Church should continuously ask God through prayers to provide members with lovable partners. Since there is no haste in life, they should absolutely wait on the Lord.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION ANDRECOMMENDATION

Summary

After delving deep into the study, the true facts gathered reveal that the motive and action of some of the church members within Sunyani North district need a positive change. The data shows that larger proportions of the young adults are not genuinely converted despite the fact that they are born and bred by Adventist families. They are not active members in Church programmes.

Since Inter Denominational Marriages do not help the healthy growth of the Church, some leaders commented that the Church has tried every possible means to combat the problem. Sadly the youth hardly cooperates with the Church leaders. If the parents should fail in their duty to educate their children, the Church cannot afford to fail too. Inter Denominational Marriage is found to be a threat in the Sunyani North District Churches. In order not to fill the Church with unconverted people, the Church should effectively continue the spiritual programmes by inviting pastors as well as marriage counselors.

Conclusion

In the research, various ingredients from the Biblical perspective, extra Biblical document and the Seventh- day Adventist Church in Sunyani North District of Mid-West Ghana Conference were put together to put lasting solution to Inter

Denominational Marriages. This creates no doubt in the minds of the people that there are no problems associated with Inter Denominational Marriages.

The solutions to this problem rest mainly on the parents and the young adults themselves therefore the Church and the parents are challenged to pay more attention to the solutions The Church has the ability to subdue Inter – Denominational Marriage through:

- a. Prayer for the young adults, especially at the age of choosing a life partner,
- b. Members who are matured and contemplating marriage should be sensitized to develop a habit which will help them to develop the pros and cons of marriage.
- c. Since, there are many unconverted youths in the Church the leaders should organize an intensive Bible study classes, at least thrice a week.
- d. Should the youths in the Church renounce worldliness and become Bible students, Inter – Denominational Marriage will cease.
- e. The parents and the Church as a whole should join hands together in educating the young ones to make good decision for the future.
- f. The young ones should be educated on types of friends they choose. They should have acquaintance with dynamic members in the Church to be their mentors.
- g. The young adults should be actively involved in the affairs and activities of the church in order for them to know their rights.

Recommendations

To solve the problem of Inter-denominational marriages in the Sunyani North district of Seventh-day Adventist Church. The following suggestions are being recommended for considerations:

1. Every church member should see himself or herself as a youthful tool that can be used by God for the fulfillment of His work on earth
2. Pastors and church leaders should try to develop young adults into productive Christians because they are ministers of God.
3. The churches should set specific and measurable outcomes to reduce the interest of the members for example by 6% in December 2014.
4. This research project should be considered by Mid-West Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church to train pastors, young adults and the entire membership for effective church administration.
5. Baptized church members should be permitted to play a role in various departments of the church.

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE

MGC OF SDA

P.O.BOX 727

SUNYANI

3rd January, 2011

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

MGC OF SDA

SUNYANI

Dear Sir,

PASTORAL VISIT

To fulfill my requirement for the M.A., I have chosen Sunyani North District of SDA as a case study for the research work.

I will be grateful if you will permit me to study the churches in the District for the project work.

Hoping for your consent

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. A. Ameyaw', written over a light-colored rectangular background.

PASTOR J. A. AMEYAW

xc: The Officers, MGC

The Ministerial Secretary, MGC

10th January, 2011

PASTOR J. A.AMEYAW

MGC OF SDA

SUNYANI.

Dear Pastor Ameyaw,

Re: PASTORAL VISIT

At the MGC Administrative Meeting held recently; your application letter dated 3rd January; 2011 and the request to visit Sunyani North District was looked into and voted:

"To grant Pastor J. A. Ameyaw's Request" (Action Frequencies MGCADM'022 -11)

May the good Lord assist you in diverse ways during the research.

Yours truly,



PASTOR PAUL DANQUAH

(EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, MGC)

XC: The Officers, MGC

Ministerial Secretary, MGC

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES

PERCEPTION OF INTER-DENOMINATION MARRIAGES AMONG MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH –DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN THE SUNYANINORTH DISTRICT OF MID-WEST GHANA CONFERENCE

(I would be very grateful if you could objectively respond to this questionnaire)

Mark (√) against the option that applies to you, or supply the relevant information or comment in response to the following questions or statements.

SECTION A

1. Sex of the Respondent. Female Male
2. Marital Status Married Single
3. Age of the Respondent. 10-20 21-30 31 & Above
4. Faith of the Respondent. SDA Former SDA
5. Do you think Parents are the cause of their children's marriage outside the Faith? Yes No I don't know
6. Do you think the Youths are the cause of their marriages outside the Faith?
 Yes No I don't know
7. Is Inter-Denominational Marriage good or bad? Good Bad
8. If it is good, why?

9. If it is bad, why?

10. Do you have friends who have married outside the faith? Yes No

11. As a parent, would you encourage Inter-Denominational Marriage?

Yes No

SECTION B (PARENTS' ONLY)

1. As a father or mother, would you encourage your son/daughter to marry

outside the Faith? Yes No

2. Do you have a son/daughter who is married outside the Faith?

Yes No

3. If yes, is that son/daughter still practicing his/her former Faith? Yes

No

4. Since their marriages, have you ever settled any quarrel between them?

Yes No

5. If yes, how many times?

SECTION C (COUPLES WHO HAVE MARRIED OUTSIDE THEIR FAITH)

1. Why did you prefer to marry outside the Faith?

A. To win souls to Christ.

B. No member to marry me.

C. I can't afford to miss him/her.

D. It is God's plan.

2. Since you got married, how have you been enjoying the marriage?

A. Maximum.

B.

Relative Peace.

C. No Peace.

3. How long have you been married? 0-5yrs 6-10yrs 11yrs &

Above

4. Which Church do you attend?

A. My husband's Church.

B. My wife's Church.

C. Different Church.

5. Which Church are your Children attending?

A. Father's Church.

B. Mother's Church.

C. Different Church.

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VITAE

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Experience 1979 – 1984 Conference Evangelist, – CGC
1985 – 1996 – District Pastor
1997 – 1998 – Conference Executive Secretary – MGC
1999 – 2002 – Publishing Director – MGC.
2006 – 2010 – Ministerial Secretary / Stewardship Director
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