

# Adeogun, Caleb Oyelayo (1932–2016)

## CALEB ADEOGUN JR.

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Caleb Oyelayo Adeogun was a pastor, teacher, evangelist, and church administrator from Nigeria.

## Early Life, Education and Marriage

Caleb Oyelayo Adeogun was born November 25, 1932, at Oke-Bola in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. He was the first of six children of a pioneering Seventh-day Adventist convert and pastor, Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun, and Comfort Wuraola Adeogun, the daughter of Pastor James Abiola Ojo, an earlier convert to Adventism.<sup>1</sup> He moved a lot as a child because of his father's work as a pastor. In his first seven years, he lived in Ibadan, Owobale, Omu Aran, and Otun-Ekiti (western Nigeria). The incessant movement, coupled with a strong passion for Adventist education, motivated Pastor and Mrs. Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun to send young Caleb back to Ibadan in 1939 to live with Pastor and Mrs. William McClement, Irish missionaries, at Oke-Bola Ibadan.<sup>2</sup>

Caleb's formal education started at the Adventist Primary School at Oke-Bola, Ibadan. He later attended the Adventist Teacher Training College at Ihie, Abia state (Eastern region). Caleb received the Teacher's Elementary Certificate in 1951 and the Grade Two Teachers' Certificate in 1956. He attended the University of Ibadan where he obtained a bachelor of arts degree in 1963. He later obtained a master of arts in English from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1975.<sup>3</sup>

Caleb married Elizabeth Adunola Odia on July 9, 1967, in Ibadan, Nigeria. Their marriage was blessed with six children, namely: Moyosore, Olugbenga, Ayotunde, Oyinkansola, Abiola, and Olubukola<sup>4</sup>

## Ministry

Caleb Adeogun served the Seventh-day Adventist church with dedication all his life, and he held various positions in denominational service. He began his teaching career in 1947 at Oke-Bola Seventh-day Adventist Primary School. The following year he was called to work at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Otun Ekiti, under the leadership of Pastor D. T. Agboola, where he spent a year. From 1963 to 1969 he taught at the Adventist Grammar School (AGS) Ede, Osun State (western Nigeria) with Pastor D. T. Agboola, Elder Enoch Dare, and Mr. Boram, the principal of AGS. Commenting on the sweet memories of the years he worked at Ede, Pastor D. T. Agboola is quoted by David Babalola as saying, "I should mention that we both (Pastor D. T. Agboola and Pastor Caleb. O. Adeogun) did our best to help the late Brother Boram to build the school the best we could and did the same when Brother Enoch Dare became the Principal too."<sup>5</sup>

From 1969 to 1976 he taught and served as the registrar and later as acting principal of the Adventist College of West Africa (now Babcock University). He worked tirelessly alongside other staff and faculty to build the school's enrollment and to transform it into the premier Adventist institution of learning that it is today. He was a mentor to many students and workers while at ACWA. He made himself available for private and free tutorials in English. To prevent the government of the Western region from taking over the school, in 1975 it was converted to a seminary and the name of the school was changed from the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) to the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA). He was ordained into the gospel ministry in February 1977 in Benin City, Edo state (Bendel), Nigeria.<sup>6</sup>



Caleb O. Adeogun  
Photo courtesy of Gbenga Adeogun.

In addition to being a teacher, Caleb Adeogun was also an accomplished pianist. While he was living with the McClements, he painstakingly learned to play the piano and organ. As a musician, he was a member of several singing groups and quartets, and he established and conducted several choirs in Ede, Ibadan, and Yaba. Pastor C. D. Henry, an American missionary based in Liberia at the time, conducted public evangelism at Yaba in 1958, and he said this about the sacrificial spirit of Pastor Caleb O. Adeogun: "Mr. Caleb, though the principal of our Lagos elementary school and studying for an external examination, sacrificed time needed for study and preparation to be our loyal interpreter and musician."<sup>7</sup>

Caleb Adeogun was involved in several translation projects. He joined a group of other educators to translate the *Advent Hymnal* into the Yoruba language. In the early 1960s he helped to translate the Sabbath School quarterlies into Yoruba. He was also a contributor to the *SDA Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, Complementary Reference Series, 1996 edition.<sup>8</sup>

Caleb Adeogun became the first Nigerian to be elected executive secretary (1976) and president (1984) of the Nigeria Union Mission. During his eight years as secretary of the Nigeria Union Mission, he made evangelism his passion. In addition, he organized several seminars for local church clerks and secretaries, and record keeping of church activities became mandatory throughout the union. He traveled to every zone in Nigeria to sensitize them about the gospel commission and the soon return of the Lord. As the union president, he led a team of church officials and medical professionals to negotiate with the government for the return to the church of the Ile-Ife Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. The government had taken over the hospital without any compensation to the Church a few years earlier. Through his dialogue and negotiation with the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health, the hospital was returned to the Church in 1987.

Throughout his meritorious service, both as the secretary and as the president, Caleb Adeogun demonstrated his passion for souls and for frugality, and he avoided wasteful spending of church funds. His fellow officers attested that he lived above reproach. According to David Babalola, Caleb Adeogun "detested favoritism, politics, nepotism, and tribal gimmicks in all forms."<sup>9</sup> He was known as "the policy man." He upheld the integrity of church policy and he was quoted to have said that, "If you want to have fruitful and blessed ministry you must abide with the policies of the church, otherwise the policy will throw you out."<sup>10</sup> In 1990 he became the first African to serve as executive secretary of the African-Indian Ocean Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. He played an active role in ensuring that all missionaries in the central Africa countries of Rwanda and Burundi were safely evacuated during the genocide of 1994.

## Retirement and Death

He remained at the division until his retirement in August 2000.<sup>11</sup> Pastor Caleb O. Adeogun moved back to Inisa, his hometown in Osun state, after retirement but remained active serving as the administrator of the Inisa Adventist Medical Center and as a member of the board of directors of the Inisa Community Health Center. He invested his energy in the growth of the town and led the effort to found a new secondary school to improve the educational opportunities of the children of the town. He also continued to hold evangelistic efforts in the towns around Inisa. Due to his declining health, Caleb and Elizabeth moved to Dallas, Texas, to live closer to their children and grandchildren, but continued to visit Inisa regularly.<sup>12</sup> Caleb Adeogun passed to his rest on December 2, 2016, after a prolonged illness.<sup>13</sup>

## Legacy

Pastor Caleb Oyelayo Adeogun has left a legacy of honesty, dedication to duty, untainted piety, and efficiency. His work as the first indigene to be the executive secretary of the Nigerian Union Mission, the first indigene to be the president of the union, and the first African to be the executive secretary of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, showed that God could use devoted natives of the missionary fields mightily to advance the work of the gospel. Pastor Adeogun is dead, but his work lives on forever! In the tribute contained in the obituary of Pastor Adeogun, Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, had this to say: "Pastor Adeogun was a longtime leader in God's church in Nigeria and in the West-Central Africa Division. It was a privilege to work with him while serving in that territory some years ago. We are grateful for the dedicated service of Pastor and Mrs. Adeogun."<sup>14</sup>

## SOURCES

Adventist World Staff. "Pastor Caleb Adeogun obituary." *ARH*, NAD Edition, March 2017.

Agboola, David. T. *The Seventh Day Adventists in Yoruba Land, 1914-1964*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Day-Star Press, 1987.

Babalola, David O. *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers*. Somolu, Lagos: Emaphine Reprographics Ltd., 2001.

## NOTES

1. David T. Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in Yoruba Land, 1914-1964* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Day-Star Press, 1987), 56.?
2. David O. Babalola, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers* (Somolu, Lagos: Emaphine Reprographics Ltd., 2001), 133, 134.?
3. Testimony of Joshua Adeogun, a brother of Pastor Caleb Adeogun.?
4. Caleb Adeogun Jr., personal knowledge as a son of Pastor Caleb Adeogun as he told his children his life history.?
5. Testimony of David Babalola, a Nigerian Union officer who worked with Pastor Caleb Adeogun.?
6. Caleb Adeogun Jr., personal knowledge as a son of Pastor Caleb Adeogun.?
7. Babalola, 133,134.?
8. John Adeogun, personal knowledge as a brother of Pastor Caleb Adeogun.?
9. David Babalola, a Nigerian Union officer who worked with Pastor Caleb Adeogun.?
10. Ibid.?
11. Babalola, 133, 134.?
12. Caleb Adeogun Jr. personal knowledge as a son of Pastor Caleb Adeogun.?
13. Ibid.?
14. Adventist World Staff, "Pastor Caleb Adeogun obituary," *ARH*, NAD Edition, March 2017, 4.?

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