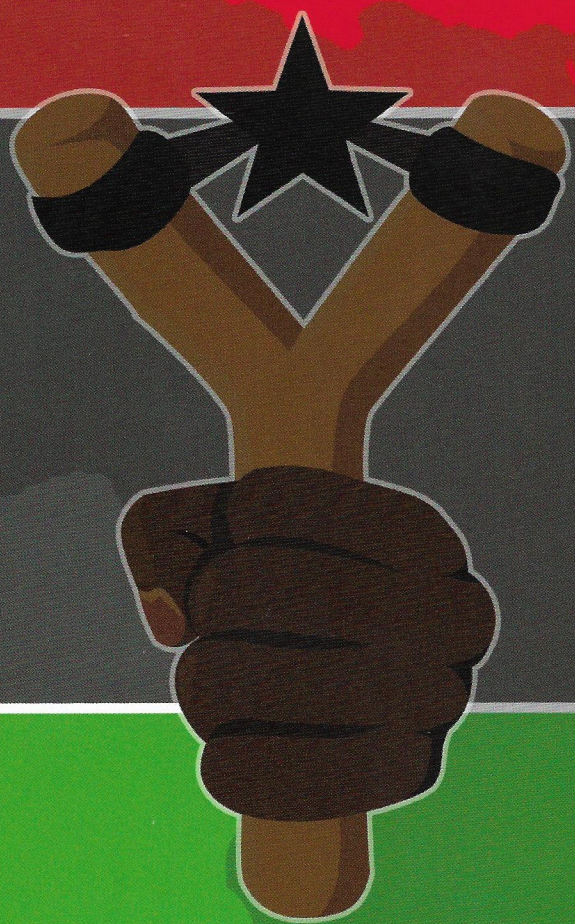
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM:

Black Resistance and Identity



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FIGHT FOR FREEDOM:

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CHAPTER THREE

In the Name of God Resist! -Prophet Jemisimiham Jehu Appiah and African Religious Nationalism in Twentieth Century Gold Coast

De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway

'We refuse to be what you want us to be. We are what we are. That's the way it's going to be' (Robert Nesta Marley 1979)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the phenomenon of Black (African) leaders using religious idioms to negotiate various kinds of resistance to foreign domination of Blacks. It pays particular attention to the twentieth century case study of Joseph William Egyanka Appiah in the Gold Coast (now Ghana). In the 1920s, Appiah who was working as a teacher-catechist for the England-controlled Wesleyan Mission Methodist Church in the Gold Coast colony, left the Church and established the Musama Disco Christo Church (lit. Army of the Cross of Christ, hereafter MDCC, as a new 'true' African church). He left the Methodist Church, as a teacher-catechist, because it opposed his personal stance, and established the first 'indigenous' African church – Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) – in the Gold Coast. He initiated nationalist philosophies and liberation theologies to reform Euro-centric Christianity into an Afro-centric one to salvage aspects of

indigenous African cultural beliefs and practices. Historically, Euro-centric Christianity provided ideological and institutional support to European enslavement and colonialism of the African peoples, and psychologically alienated many from their original mental and cultural personality.

In this way, Appiah conceptualised and reconsidered religion as a force of social change. Religion, therefore, had to be used in African nationalism, because it was not just a matter of personal worship and spiritual salvation, but a potent tool for the physical redemption of the African. He then became known as Prophet Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah. Appiah viewed his church as Afrocentric, born and controlled by Africans, and instituted to restore the lustre of Afrocentricity to Christianity, which was a universal religion of freedom and self-determination. Europe had made it Eurocentric to serve European cultural and political interests and to control African societies.

Much of his action was motivated by his personal disagreement with the Eurocentric nature of Christianity in colonial Africa, and his rejection of the tradition where European clerics, not Africans, had been the actual controllers and real managers of the administration of the church in Africa. Africans were regarded as just auxiliaries within this structure. He found this to be a product of the colonial order, which gave privileges and political, economic and religious power to Europeans over Africans. The irony was that the church in Africa, was largely populated by Africans and it purported to serve their interests, yet Christianity was being used as an appendix of the colonial order. Appiah was thus discontented with this discrimination in the Methodist Church in particular and the Christian Church in general. By extension, he was unhappy with the colonial order. Accordingly, he sought to initiate some reforms into the liturgical and political structure of the Methodist Church, and hoped that the reforms would remove some of the issues which he had problems pertaining to the ecclesiastical arrangements in the colonial churches in general. His requests

for reforms were, however, opposed by the colonial status quo of the Methodist Church administration. Unable to withstand that opposition, he founded the MDCC, which assumed a nationalist stance against the illegitimate notion and practice of European and foreign control of the Gold Coast and Africa in general. Thus, the religious arena became a place where Appiah initiated certain activities and innovations, and ideas and philosophies, as intellectual resistance techniques, which challenged European religious paternalism in Africa and European colonialism.

The Methodist Church deemed him a truculent rebel and heretic, and a menace to the church's political and ecclesiastical bureaucratic status quo, and excommunicated him. Was Appiah a rebel with a cause? He saw himself as a prophet of God, mandated to use religion to bring not only spiritual salvation to his people, but to resist all nuances of colonialism which Eurocentric Christianity had promoted in the Gold Coast and among African peoples. He saw himself as an envoy tasked to sermonise and adduce reason and philosophies of Black theology of liberation and Afrocentric liturgical innovations, within the context of Christianity, and to inject a sense of nationalism and racial pride in African Christians and encourage them to assert their humanity and control their political and cultural destinies, because they are divinely and naturally mandated to do so.

Conceptualising Black Nationalism in Religions in Africa and the African Diaspora

In separate times and places within the African continent and African Diaspora, Black people, via the use of religious, political and economic spheres, responded to the loss of their individual freedom, and collective sovereignty and national independence which were associated with Western slavery and European colonialism. Black leaders emerged as rebles, intellectuals, nationalist activists, and religious authorities who claimed to be priests or priestesses, or prophets or prophetesses, or

mediums, or God incarnates, and considered themselves divinely mandated to restore the dignity and welfare of the African and their institutions. They often employed different means such as intellectual physical and spiritual, methods to resist the exercise of Western hegemony and overthrow all forms of foreign control of African personalities and institutions. For the leaders who operated in the area of religion, they felt that it was a good place to attack the injustices within the political and economic spheres of the world. Black leaders such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner, declared at different times, during the first half of the nineteenth century that God had sent them to lead their fellow enslaved Africans in the U.S.A. to freedom because they were the lost Hebrews, the so-called God's chosen of the Bible (Azevedo and Davis, 1998, pp. 405-424). They were using religious language and imagery to move their people to act politically and rebel against the institution of slavery in the U.S.A. When Boukman, an enslaved African in the French colony of Saint Domingue, invoked Vodun, an African deity also spelt as voodoo, he said:

> The god who created the sun ... who rouses the wave and rules the storm ... watches us. He sees what the white man does.
>
> The god of the white man inspires him with crime, but our god calls upon us to do good works. Our god... orders us to revenge our wrongs. He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the white who has so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the hearts of us all, (James, 1963, p. 87)

He was using sentiments of religion to move the enslaved people to act politically, an effort and act which contributed to the start of the Haitian Revolution and ultimate triumph of the Black insurrection against slavery and the birth of the free Black republic of Haiti.

To many of the African leaders who established and operated resistance campaigns to foreign domination within the sphere of religion, the key issue was that Black people should be in charge

of their religious destinies as well as their affairs in the secular space. Black religious campaigns, therefore, could not be divorced from the so-called secular affairs of the world, because religion was more than worship, morals and spiritual salvation. For them, the essence of religion was the imparting of Black Nationalism, race pride, self-determination, and self-reliance. A significant end product of this notion of challenge and resistance to the subjugation of Blacks was the rise of Afrocentric redemption religious movements and sects and churches in the diaspora, and independent African churches on the continent, of which the MDCC was a classical case in the Gold Coast in Africa.

The African Diaspora is replete with many examples of such groups, like the Candomble in Brazil, Vodun in Haiti, Santeria in Cuba, changô in Trinidad, the secret Black church services of enslaved African alias "invisible Church", the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Marcus Garvey Universal Negro Improvement Association affiliated African Orthodox Church, the Nation of Islam, the Black Jews, and the African Hebrew Israelites in the U.S.A., and the Revivalist and Poccomina groups, the Native Baptists movement popularly known as Bedwardism, and Rastafari in Jamaica. This helps to explain why some of these Black religious systems are also briefly examined in the chapter by Beckford and Charles on Jamaica and also discussed in Talburt's chapter on Pan Africanism. Some of the initiators of some leading independent churches in Africa in the twentieth century were William Harris, of Liberia, Garrick Braid of Sierra Leone, Simon Kimbangu of the Belgian Congo, Elliot Kamwana of Malawi, and Isaiah Shemba of South Africa. Many of such leaders were condemned and persecuted by some of the traditional European churches. Some like Kimbangu and Elliot Kamwana were imprisoned by the colonialists.

In the context of Christianity, such Afrocentric groups and churches were the products of a long process of incubation and results from the mixture of Christian ideas and African indigenous

beliefs. Christian ideas were grafted on indigenous African cultural roots and concepts. The Christian God was seen as a redeeming Black/African deity who was ready to listen and save his people. The message of Christianity based on the Bible was, for the subjected African, the message of salvation, deliverance and equality of all persons regardless of race.

The founders and leaders of such groups realised that religion, especially when it was controlled by Blacks, was a tool that could be employed as a notion and institution to get people to act as patriots and nationalists. The rise, creation and existence of certain Afrocentric churches and religious sects, which refused to be subjects of White religious groups, were an assertion of African nationalism and racial self-determination. As challengers to the European leadership in religion, especially Christianity, these leading individuals indirectly and directly encouraged other Africans to question the illegality of European political and economic leadership in the affairs and lives of the African. They encouraged them to question the European appropriation of their land, destruction of their prestige, prohibition of their ancestral religious and cultural world views, and introduction of an exploitative economic system that deprived Black people in their African homeland and in the African Diaspora. Whether the churches were founded because of leadership issues or ideological and doctrinal differences between Whites and Blacks, the fact is that, they signalled the African determination for their voices to be heard as equal and rational beings. Furthermore, there was a need for their ideas to be taken into consideration by the European missionary, who by and large, had been a direct or indirect factor of European imperialism and colonialism which frustrated Africans and their aspirations.

In Africa, independence in the church was an early step on the path to political autonomy in the twentieth century. In the Gold Coast, which became Ghana and a beacon of African independence struggle and Pan Africanism when it attained independence from

the British in 1957, the tradition of schism was manifested through the early efforts of people like J.B. Anaman, who established the Nigritian Church (1907), and Appiah who instituted the MDCC. Both their efforts in the twentieth century formed part of the history and continuum of the global Black resistance efforts against non-Black, i.e. European slavery and colonialism.

The rest of this chapter examines the anti-colonial ideas and activities of Appiah and his efforts in the Gold Coast to give Africans the right and power of religious redefinition of Christianity. It pays attention to his Afrocentric cultural innovations which he injected into the fabric of the Eurocentric liturgy of the Methodist Church. It discusses his ultimate production of the MDCC Church as a Blackman's church with its own Black religious leaders, which did not need any authorisation from England or Rome or Jerusalem. It also highlight the actual and symbolic significance of his struggle and the church that he established to campaign for Black leaders to manage the affairs of their peoples and their communities. Appiah's story of religious reformation and schism was part of the early manifestations of African reactions of resistance to colonialism in the religious field in Africa. Despite Appiah's death in 1948, his church has remained alive and active today.

The man and his work: Appiah and the birth of MDCC

Appiah was born in 1892 or 1893 to parents who were illiterate peasant farmers in the village of Abura Edumfa, near the coastal town of Cape Coast (known by its indigenous Fante people as Oguaa). Cape Coast was the colonial capital of the Gold Coast until 1877. Thus, Appiah belonged to the Fante section of the larger Akan ethnic group in the Gold Coast. He spent his early days as a pupil in the Methodist primary school at Abura Edumfa, in the Abura state, within the Cape Coast District of the then Central Province. He later joined the Methodist Middle School in Cape

Coast in 1907. Cape Coast was the starting point and key centre of Wesleyan Methodist missionary activities, and the main training ground of catechists and teachers, especially Wesleyans, and a renowned bastion of the western formal school system in the Gold Coast. Reverend Joseph Rhodes Dunwell who arrived at Cape Coast on 31 December 1834, was the one who started Wesleyan missionary work there on 1 January 1835, with the mandate of the Missionary Committee of British Methodist Conference (Bartels, 1965, p.1).

Appiah was baptised at birth as a Christian, but his parents, who were nominal Christians of Methodism, trained him to understand and respect the cultural mores and values of his people. He completed middle school and received the Standard Four Certificate in 1911. Whilst in Cape Coast as a student he stayed under the home-stay care of Reverend S.R.B. Attoh Ahuma who was a member of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS), which was an African nationalist and land protection group in the Gold Coast. It was Appiah's father and senior brother who made that residential arrangement for him. Attoh Ahuma was the author of various nationalistic articles and books. He edited some nationalist newspapers including the *Gold Coast Aborigines*, and *Gold Coast Leader*, which often promoted antigovernment ideas. These included *Memoir of West African Celebrities, Cruel as the Grave,* and *The Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness*.

He was an unrepentant and articulate political critic of colonialism and westernisation. The Wesleyan authorities sacked him as a Wesleyan minister because of his political activism in the 1890s, especially for publishing "Colony or Protectorate: Which?", which was a critical article against British imperialism in 1897, and he joined the African-American inspired African Methodist Episcopal Church when it was established in the Gold Coast in 1898.

Appiah's stay in Cape Coast occurred at a time when the region was a hotbed of anti-colonialism activities, street

and neighbourhood corner meetings of political agitators, and nationalist rhetoric, and the base of several nationalist newspapers and societies which were influenced by a very active and dynamic corpus of literate and professional African elites. These exposed Appiah to information and popular discussions about colonial policy and the prevailing nationalist atmosphere during the early years of the twentieth century (Enison, 2004). He became familiar with the nationalist rhetoric and philosophies of his guardian Attoh Ahuma, and those of other nationalists like J.M. Sarbah, , J.E. Casely-Hayford, Reverend Ossam Pinanko, Kwegyir Aggrey, and Kobina Sekyi. Kobina Sekyi became the lawyer and personal friend of Appiah when he became the founder and prophet of the MDCC. Appiah therefore became exposed to abundant anti colonial ideas and revolutionary notions of Cape Coast nationalists that filtered through the various nationalist newspaper and local homes, market places, pulpits and street corners (Sagoe, 2004).

By the time that Appiah completed his education at the age of eighteen, he was familiar with the growing local dislike for certain alien policies of the colonial regime, and the tension between Africans and Europeans over leadership in administrative offices in the colony, even in the Methodist Church, which was a dependent Overseas District of British Methodism. He obtained a job as a pupil-teacher at the Wesleyan Primary School in the village of Abakrampa, near his hometown in 1911. When the village's teacher-catechist died he was appointed by the Wesleyan supervisors as teacher-catechist. Perhaps the supervisors gave him that post because of his gift and talent as a good orator and preacher, which he exhibited during students' evangelisation work and church services when he was a student in the Methodist school in Cape Coast. In any case, his talent was useful to Methodist evangelism in Abakrampa. He worked in Abakrampa for three years as an enlightened well-read liberal who tolerated some of the short-comings of his congregants and enthusiastically

evangelised (Ennin, 2004). Still enamored by the nationalist activities and environment of Cape Coast, he occasionally made time to attend meetings of the ARPS there. He later became a member of the APRS till his death.

Appiah found the teacher-catechist work to be financially unrewarding and he abandoned it. From 1914 to 1917 he worked as a self-employed cocoa purchaser at Osino, in the Eastern Province, and petty trader and farmer at Agona Abodom, the Central Province, but he was not successful in these ventures. He did some occasional lay preaching sessions in the local Methodist society at Agona Abodom where he lived and impressed the local congregation with his flair. Soon, Reverend Ernest Bruce, the new Methodist superintendent of the Gomoa circuit, heard about Appiah's state of near unemployment and his occasional service to the local church, and offered to re-employ him as teacher-catechist in Gomoa Dunkwa. Appiah took the job, but he soon realised that the church needed to undergo some fundamental reforms, especially with regard to the centrality of the individual and also some recognition and acceptance of the needs of the African.

He also pondered over the leadership position of Europeans in the Church and its affairs in the Gold Coast. He thought about why Africans occupied auxiliary positions in both the secular and religious spaces in the colonial period. He saw a disguised colonialism present in the Methodist church, which was very much in common with the mission churches. This was, as far as he was concerned, the spiritual arm of political colonialism. He mused over why the church did not provide an outlet for African Christians to engage the spiritual power of Christ to heal, and why women leadership, miracles, and respect for certain African cultural values were not promoted in the church. He realised that it was because the church was not owned by Africans, so they could not dictate how it should be structured to serve their unique spiritual, cultural and economic needs. Recognising that

the Eurocentric church had not tolerated such norms because they would be similar to indigenous religious practices and spiritual ideas, Appiah thought of introducing some of these ideas into the Methodist church, and thereby sought to implement reforms within the church's organisational structure and liturgy. By doing so, he hoped to disprove colonial missionary paternalistic views and mentality that African cultures were inferior, immoral and doomed to collapse. Maybe, at this time, he heard about Prophet Harris, the itinerant Liberian Methodist preacher, who, not bound to any mission, performed exorcism and cured diseases in Christ's name in the Gold Coast. Grace Tani and John Nackabah, and a third person, John Hackman, who followed Harris later constituted Harris's followers into the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Ghana (Baeta, 1962, p. 9).

Without planning to break away from the church but seeking instead to bring some Afrocentric reforms into the Methodist Church in the African society of the Gold Coast, Appiah secretly desired and had 'the intuition to fast and pray for the faith of miracles' (Jehu-Appiah, 1959, p. 2). He particularly wanted to be able to heal, exorcise and take care of other spiritual needs of the local people and meet the local aspirations of the African congregants. By wanting to infuse African ways and ideas into the church in the African terrain he was resisting the dominance of European ways and notions in Christianity, which did not belong to Europe but to all humanity.

He established a special 'prayer group': *Egyedzifo Kuw* (trans. Faith Society) within his Methodist congregation in 1919 (Musama Disco Christo Church Diamond Jubilee Celebration Programme, 2000, p. 2). This small exclusive group, which held early secret meetings of contemplation and prayers for miracles, also attracted a few of Appiah's teacher-catechist friends from the neighbouring villages of Gomoa Tarkwa, Gomoa Brofun, Gomoa Mumford and Gomoa Dawurampon (Sagoe, 2004). Appiah took long retreats for meditation in the bush. Soon his group became

known to the local church as he introduced some novel activities and ideas into to the congregation. Unique to his ministry was the introduction and extensive use of vibrant African singing and drumming and dancing techniques and musical instruments in the church's service in order augment as well as enliven it, and his performance and instances of miraculous healing with water through faith. Many members of the congregation and the town flocked to hear him and to receive answers to their health and social problems.

His Circuit's superintendent at Apam heard about his unorthodox innovations and cautioned him and his congregants to disband the Society of the Faithful (Eghan, 2004). His overseers warned him to not neglect his duty and to stop spreading and practising what they called 'curious magical rites and customs', which contradicted Methodist tenets (Baeta, 1962, p. 30). Consequently, he confidently claimed that an angel of God had ordered him to advocate revival and continue his reformatory activities within the framework of the Methodist church and by extension the existing mission churches, and not to dismantle the doctrinal basis of the churches. With the purpose of disrupting what he had started, his superiors transferred him to the village of Gomoa Ogwan (Oguan) in 1920. He carried his 'unorthodox' activities there and intensified the spiritual activities such as speaking in tongues, ecstatic African-style singing and dancing, falling into trances, laying-on-of-hands faith healing, and exorcism in the church and among the local people. Even though he explained the Biblical legitimacy and the socio-cultural usefulness and implications of his innovations and actions to the local community and African society in general, his bosses, especially Reverend Gaddiel Acquaah (OBE), a Gold Coaster, who were auxiliaries to both the mother Methodist church in England and the few European missionaries in the Gold Coast, disagreed and re-cautioned him. Appiah then parted ways with the Methodists, moved to the village of Onyaawonsu where he declared himself

a prophet and married a women by the name of Hannah Barnes, whom he shared his prophethood with, and formed the MDCC. Hannah Barnes became known as Komhyenibaa (Prophetess) Nathalomoa Jehu-Appiah.

Appiah, established a religious commune, which he named as Mozano (My Town), and made it the headquarters of the MDCC. Mozano, in the Gold Coast, was considered by Appiah and members of the MDCC as an African holy city, the 'New Jerusalem, of their African church, which was not inferior to places like England and the Vatican in Rome, which were revered by European Anglicans and Methodists, and Catholics respectively. At Mozano, Appiah became the *Akaboha* (a traditional religio-political authority) and *Komhyeni,* (lit. prophet or seer) of the town and church, which he stated was accessible to all religious traditions, despite the sectarian nature of many churches. Appiah's example of religious reformation and schism couched in African nationalism inspired several independent Afrocentric churches to subsequently emerge in the country both in the colonial and post-colonial periods. His African church supported the Convention Peoples Party-dominated mass struggle for political autonomy in the country from 1949 to 1957. The church's population grew. Some other 'orthodox' churches in Ghana during this period subsequently borrowed some of his reform practices. The MDCC has numerous branches in Ghana and the global African Diaspora (Botchway, 2004).

At this juncture, it is important to consider whether Appiah's actions and beliefs were justified, and whether his intention were predicated on a selfish distortion of the rules of a European religious order, and a purely personal hubristic promotion of his hermeneutics of scripture and ecclesiastical tradition. We can tell from the intellectual ideas and rationalisations that he provided for his rebellious ways, i.e. the innovations and the Black church that he built, that he was a visionary of his times. His reactions as a reformer emphasised a new Christianity to advance Black

Nationalist cultural consciousness in the Gold Coast and other colonies. His actions reflected the frustrations of colonialism during the early decades of the twentieth century when he lived. What was significant is that he intellectually explained his actions as part of a conscious African resistance to European cultural hegemony and religious colonialism. He came to bear some of the key characteristics of the early Gold Coast nationalist politicians. According to Kimble, 'the [early twentieth century Gold Coast] nationalist politician[s] played many parts: newspaper editor, lay preacher, platform orator or petition drafter; as champion of native customs ... or defending the Chiefs' jurisdiction in their own domain' (Kimble, 1963, pp. 555-556). Appiah was a preacher, champion of 'native' customs and defender of traditional authority. His reformatory activities in Christianity meant to endorse several African traditional beliefs, values, customs and norms, and produce ... [an] offering [of] what it regarded as a new perspective and new solutions to problems of traditional as well a contemporary nature in the Gold Coast (Clarke, 1986, p. 189). He advanced his intellectual responses in sermons and wrote some down. He, in a nationalistic fervour, sermonised and wrote in the local Fante language, even though he could speak English. He reasoned that it was better to address his followers in an African language and not that of the coloniser.

In his rationalisations for some of his innovations, these were drawn largely from the African experiences expressed in a distinctly African way. In this way, these Africans were resisting European cultural domination and influence in attempts to assert their own identity. Some of the African strategies of these Black religious resistance involved the use of African music and musical instruments and dance in Christian worship, promotion of faith healing, miracles and spirit possession, acceptance of polygyny as African and Christian, the legitimation of speaking in tongues, and the right of women to be church leaders in the Christian church in Africa, and the justification that he gave to the imperativeness of

the creation of made-in-Africa churches, which brought about the MDCC example. We shall draw examples of his ideas from our translated excerpts of his not so well-known small book, *Christ Mbiamudua Hu Dom Asorn Hu Abakosem* (lit. History of the Army of the Cross of Christ), published in 1943 (Jehu Appiah, 1943). All his innovations found free expression in the MDCC. He used common sense, practical examples from the indigenous African cultural tradition, and his creative hermeneutics of the Bible, to issue his Black liberation theology philosophies, to support his reactions and actions.

Legitimisation of African Musical Instruments, Music and Dance in the Church

Contrary to the Methodist custom, Appiah encouraged the use of African musical instruments like the donno, mpintin, akasa, totorubento and mfiritwuwa, and energetic un-hymn-like singing, including the abibinwom (lit. Black African Songs) genre which carried Fante lyrics, and vigorous clapping and dancing within his Methodist congregation. Such items had commonly been deemed objectionable by the mission churches because they also featured in African traditional religious ceremonies (Sagoe, 2004). Generally the Methodist mission did not permit members to go near indigenous drumming groups and dance to their music. They were permitted to:

> march, or shuffle along, in a ... column, to ... Sankey and Moody tunes played by a village brass band. [W]omen ... sway[ed] a little to ... the tune ... while the men stepped out with dignity bringing up the rear (Bartels, 1965, p. 234).

But this arrangement was quite alien to the indigenous religious terrain and worldview, because, to the African, religion is, apart from the belief in and expectation from the supernatural, a medium of self-expression, entertainment and even enjoyment, which is

deeply rooted in his culture (Nukunya, 1992, p.131). Missionaries were not the only persons who condemned indigenous music and dance expressions. A governor like F.M. Hodgson remarked in 1896 that a mark of 'advancement towards enlightenment and civilised character' was when natives abandoned their performances and adopted "drum and fife band with English instruments' (Dispatch From Hodgson, 1896).

Appiah disagreed with the notion that indigenous instruments and singing and dancing were heathen and uncivil and should be excluded from church services (Prophet M.J. Jehu-Appiah (Akaboha III, 2004). He argued that they injected new meaning and dignity to African Christianity and cultural pride, and allowed an inclusive type and procedure of worship. They could also invoke the Holy Spirit, who channels healing, miracles, and divine messages through tongues and spirit possession (Antobam, 2004). He intellectually rebutted this irrational rule in the church, a rule which his senior, the eminent Gold Coast nationalist and lawyer, J.E. Casely-Hayford – a Methodist himself, earlier interrogated in 1903, that:

> Why ...should not the ...convert sing his own native songs, and play his native airs in church? Why should he not attune his horns, his adziwa, his gomey, or ... his adankum, to the praise of God, much as the Israelites of old praised Jehovah upon the cymbal and the harp? ... Why, indeed, except that the simple missionary has, from the beginning ruled that all these things are against the letter, if not the spirit, of the Gospel? (Casely-Hayford, 1903, p.105).

Appiah opined that the playing of African traditional musical instruments and dancing in the church was not un-Christian. He argued that African ancestors used indigenous instruments such as mpintsin, mfuaba or adziwa, mbenson, and nsenkuto worship and glorify God. However, he argued that due to the so-called:

> modernisation, Europeanisation and doubt many people now deem it wrong for Christians to play these instruments

> and dance to them. [W]e (MDCC) dispel the lie and ignorance to bare the truth. God does not forbid the playing of musical instruments and dancing ... to glorify His name (Jehu-Appiah, 1943, pp. 41-42).

He charged that European instruments were not more appropriate for Christian activities than African ones:

> Most European musical instruments are un-Christian and used for worldly functions. For example the Baan [sic] (Side Drum/Brass Band) are mainly played on the battlefield by European soldiers. However, they can play the same to accompany Christian songs to glorify God. This is deemed proper [by them]. By the same token ... people (Africans), use traditional African musical instruments like the Kyin, etumpan, and kyinsin to worship God. Such is pleasant in the sight of God (Jehu- Appiah, 1943, p. 42).

He creatively invoked scriptural evidence like Psalms 68:25, 81:2-4, 150:3-6 and 149:3 to Biblically legitimise his argument (Jehu-Appiah, 1943). He also identified how 'in Exodus 15:20 ... 'Miriam the prophetess ... and the women went out ... with timbrels and with dances', and how in 2 Samuel 6:14 and 15 David danced and all Israel shouted and sounded trumpets when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was brought. He also pointed out how in 1 Chronicles 15:16 and 19, 'David spoke to ... the Levites to appoint ... musicians to make a joyful sound with musical instruments: lyres, harps, and cymbals (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

The legality of Faith Healing, Miracles and Spirit Possession in Christianity in Africa

When he tackled the issue of faith healing, he argued that God was a God that saved souls and also met the material needs and health problems of people (Jehu-Appiah, 1959, p. 10). The church in Africa was therefore to relate the Gospel to the notion of the importance of spirit backed miracles, faith healing, prosperity and fertility as desired in, and expressed through, the traditions

of Africa. Aware that in the epidemiological universe of Africa, disease was attributed to both physical and spiritual causes, he argued that the church in Africa should logically promote healing through faith:

> God (Nyankopon) is the Healer of humankind. Traditional priests, healers and herbalists even acknowledge that God heals, thus: 'God is our Helper'. Biblical[ly] ... is written ... 'I am the Lord who heals you' (Exodus 15:26). ... Jesus Christ ... healed ... with the spiritual powers within Himself. ... He asked his disciples to preach ... and baptise. ... 'And ... in my name [Jesus] they will cast out demons; ... speak ... tongues ... lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' Mark 16:15-18 (Jehu-Appiah, 1943, p. 37-39).

He emphasised that Jesus Christ engaged in faith healing and the Holy Spirit permitted it so it was wrong and hypocritical for the mission churches to prohibit its use by Africans in the church in Africa. 'Invoking Matthew 17:14-21 into his argument for faith healing, Appiah pointed out that Jesus Christ once restored a boy's good health by rubuking a demon within him; and that Christ told his amazed disciples that if their faith was as a mustard seed they could have healed the young man and say to a mountain to a mountain, 'move from here to there,' and it will move and nothing would be impossible for you' (Jehu-Appiah, 1943). Appiah also made reference to James 5:14-15 which said 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord', to support his rationalisations. Undercutting the authority of the missionary dominance, he cautioned African Christians who 'obeyed' the scepticism of the missionary church that:

> [Y]ou are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness' (Romans 6:16). ... [L]et us [African Christians] ... thrive in faith and dedicate our souls and bodies to Him (God) (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

With regard to the issue of polygyny, he argued that even though the orthodox churches excommunicated polygynists and compelled converts to be monogamous because polygyny was deemed sinful and unacceptable in the Eurocentric church, because European society was mainly monogamous, the institution of polygyny in Africa was important to the building of family and society. Arguing that it was from ancient times, and not a sin that should disqualify any African polygynist from Christianity, he argued that even Abraham, who according to the Bible was God's faithful friend, and other patriarchs like Jacob, Moses and King David, whom Christianity venerates, married many women (Jehu-Appiah, 1943). He pointed out the God's law stipulated that: 'thou shall not commit murder and thou shall not commit adultery', but did not say that thou shall not practice polygyny. He consequently declared that:

> [W]e, [Africans] today, are not obliged ... to marry just one woman; because the worship of God did not start in these modern days... Many of our forbearers and predecessors were priests and prophets whom God spoke with, and yet no law barred them from marrying a number of wives (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

He added that: marriage is a physical, social and cultural institution and contrary to missionary churches' intolerance of African polygyny, intolerance inspired by a European monogamous worldview, Matthew 22:29-30 showed that Jesus Christ never made a law to sanction only monogamy. Appiah further argued that the imposition of foreign laws that forbade polygyny had made many African Christians pretend to be monogamous but to have affairs with several women in secrecy. 'Is this practice not adulterous before God? he asked (Jehu-Appiah, 1943). He interpreted the Pauline declaration on monogamy in 1Timothy 3:2; 12, that it was for bishops and deacons and not for everybody. He added that the same Paul, who wished that men would be celibates, also said in 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, that if men

could not exercise self-control, then let them marry ... than to burn with passion. Appiah charged that some men were unable to keep one wife, and went against God's law by fornicating. Hence, the stance of the MDCC on polygyny was valid. He declared that God instructed the MDCC not to forbid polygyny like other churches. Consequently, he stated that 'The Holy Spirit has revealed its desires concerning marriage to mankind' (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

Appiah deemed the Holy Spirit a vital instructor and ally and edifier of the MDCC, and Christianity as a whole. He opined that the Spirit could possess Christians and reveal God's desires and perform wonders through them. The notion that spirits of ancestors or deities could possess people and create communion between humans and the spirit world, was part of the indigenous African worldview. Appiah therefore argued that 'holy' spirit possession should be legitimate in the context of the church in Africa, and Biblically justifying it, he cited Acts 19:2-6 where Paul laid hands of a group of Christians who had not received the Holy Spirit and the 'spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.' He argued that belief and encouragement of the phenomenon of Holy Spirit possession in the Christian worship pattern of the MDCC, like the days of old, should not be a new phenomenon to many since John 14:16-17 declared that:

> He (God) will give you another Helper ... forever – The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive ... but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

God's Holy Spirit, unlike and Satan's Evil Spirit:

> possesses ... through faith ... mostly Godly people who fast and pray. They [can] perform miracles ... shout out the name of Jesus Christ. ... Other signs include falling down, speaking in tongues, and prophesying.... [T]he Spirit... even came ... upon Saul ... and he walked along prophesying. ... (1 Samuel 19:23-24). [I]gnorance ... in modern times, has shadowed the truth about spirit possession. Remember ...

> [a]lso ... the Day of Pentecost ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak ... tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Others mockingly said, They are full of new wine.' (Acts 2:1-4 and 13) (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

In the case of the MDCC, an African church, he observed that: 'Now ignorance makes people to mock at the members of the church because of their relationship with spirit possession' (Jehu-Appiah, 1943). God, he argued, had not authorised some groups, in reference to missionaries and mission churches, to monopolise the Holy Spirit because, as John 12:32 and Acts 2:39 showed, the Spirit and its gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, performance of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues was promised to humankind. Referencing Mark 3:28-30, he confidently declared: [D]o away with all doubts, and work with the power of the Holy Spirit ... [H]e who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit ... is subject to eternal condemnation ... He rehearsed Jesus Christ's statement in John 14:12 that: '[H]e who believes in me ... greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father,' to further legitimate spirit possession in the MDCC and Christianity in general (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

The Need for an African Church with African Leaders Including Women

His innovations were wise to a mind that could understand and tolerate indigenous African cultural mores and values. They were strange to the Eurocentric minded Christians and churches. Therefore, he finally argued that the creation of an autonomous African church, which would easily accept functional African beliefs and practices such as polygyny, was logical. The Methodist and orthodox churches restrained Afro-centric innovations because paternalistic European missionaries captured Christianity, and traditionally monopolised the leadership and policy making power in the church. The reason for this monopoly

was the imperialist false notion that Europeans were superior to Africans. Racism and prejudice, found in the colonial politics of Appiah's time, also shaped inequalities in the Christian religious arena. Europe still dictated the paradigm and form of Christianity. Appiah claimed that an African controlled church was necessary to be instituted to awaken the African to be self-determining, and repudiate the White supremacy myth and augment the wider Black struggle against European hegemony in African affairs. He used history, logic and his Biblical hermeneutics of liberation for this. Challenging the tradition where the seat of administration of the Christian Church had been cited outside Africa, for example in Rome, England and Jerusalem, he, who had instituted Mozano as the Holy city of his African church, argued that the Gold Coast and Africa could also incubate the Divine:

> [S]ceptics ask whether the Musama Disco Christo Church was introduced into the Gold Coast (Africa) from elsewhere. It is the same as asking whether 'any good thing can come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46) ... [W]e (MDCC) believe that something good can come out of Nazareth.... 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26) (Jehu-Appiah, 1943, p. 29).

In the sense of Ethiopianism, he questioned why Europe and Europeans should lead the church in Africa thus:

> [H]as the time not come for the African also to see God ... [and] to see himself as a human being? Is it not time for an African leader to emerge? (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

This opposed the age-old European missionary subtle intolerance of the labours of African clerics to have equal status in church leadership and administration in both Africa and the African Diaspora. Racial discrimination and the notion of Social Darwinism had long been present in the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast (Bartels, 1965, p. 139). In 1894, Reverend Dennis Kemp, who worked in Cape Coast from 1887-1897 as the General Superintendent of the Gold Coast Methodists, claimed that a

Synod which was exclusively European was desirable and better. Kemp further articulated a Social Darwinist view, a notion that other European missionaries shared, that 'the Negro was not built 'so as to be on an equality – intellectually – with the White race', and that his African friends in Cape Coast were 1500 years behind England in Christian influences' (Bartels, 1965, p. 14). Even though this incident energised some African clerics' wish for religious self-assertion, by the time Appiah worked as a teacher-catechist, his African supervisors were still auxiliaries to European missionaries. Thus, they followed orthodox Wesleyan life in terms of doctrine and liturgy. Many African clerics were still subordinates of a leadership order, which Europe primarily exercised because of a colour line problem and Social Darwinist notions. Conversely, Appiah commented:

> The time has come for us (Africans) to know that Jerusalem is with us in Africa. Africa is our Nazareth. It is here, that we have to ... take our rightful place before the throne of God, instead of crawling before others for them to direct us. Please think about this because you are a human being (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

In a bid to show the practicability and necessity of an African church he referenced the example of the MDCC and declared that it was 'not from overseas.'

> [S]ceptics, God ... has power to use an African to establish a Christian Church ... an African Church ... in Africa. Africa is the land of our birth ... we have to search here ... we shall find.' The 'ladder of Jacob' is everywhere. The ... Church is a genuine Christian Church ... we are not afraid of any disorders. Doubters should read 1 Corinthians 12:5 – 'There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord' (Jehu-Appiah, 1943).

It was in the context of the logic of differences in ministries, that he accentuated and integrated facets of African customary practices and beliefs into the cosmology of the MDCC, which

was a church that was 'never a carbon copy of any imported Church ... [but] purely an African Church' with members who love it because they are Africans (Opoku, 1969, p. 13). He sought to revive the ancient lustre of true religion through his church. For example, he proscribed the use of footwear in the Church's building because it was God's, and a Holy Place. This was related to the African indigenous prohibition of footwear in ritualistic worship places and hierophanic spots like shrines and sacred groves. Additionally, he emphasised that women should have equal access to leadership in Christianity, because they performed leadership functions as priestesses and ritual specialists with moral and spiritual authority in the indigenous setting. His wife was the co-leader and *Akatitibi* (Queen) of the MDCC. Many women became ordained prophetesses, priestesses, mediums, pastors, and healers. This improvement in Christianity in the Gold Coast opposed the androcentric nature of the traditional sacerdotal leadership structure in the mission churches then.

Jehu-Appiah's Legacy

This study has demonstrated that Prophet Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah was as an example of the many manifestations of Blacks/African resistance to foreign control, and reassertion of rights and aspects of their African culture. He initiated African culture-friendly revolutionary ideas and reformatory practises into the Europeanised Methodist Church, and startled people with his supernatural powers. He launched a crusade to Africanise, indigenise and contextualise Christianity, and founded the MDCC to represent, and give grounding to this crusade. His image as an African cultural nationalist leader, does not only come from his charisma, and membership in the nationalist group of the ARPS, and his church's association with the popular Convention Peoples Party, but most importantly from his successful defiance of an established church which largely served the idiosyncrasy of a foreign culture and rule.

A number of key individuals interviewed for this study have asserted that the polemical tone that the Methodist authorities used to describe him as a heterodox has almost disappeared in Ghana (Acquah, et al, 2004). Many leaders and theologians of the 'old' churches in Ghana today, including Catholic Archbishop Emeritus Peter Kwasi Sarpong of Kumasi, who has supported the idea of Africanizing the liturgy of the Catholic Church in particular (Sarpong, 2002), have advocated for the inculturation of Christianity in Africa and adaptation of some of his innovations.

It has been 97 years since the saga of Appiah's nationalism and his image as a historical figure started to take shape. This story of courage, hope and perseverance has continued to acquire different features even after his death. Nevertheless, his story reminds Africans to make Christianity meaningful to their culture. He was a phenomenal embodiment of diverse images: visionary, nationalist, politician – traditional leader, and father. As a religious and cultural reformer he inspired the development of other African churches. He was a reformer, because his actions sought the 'modification of existing institutions, the introduction of new ideas and new ways of doing things, a determination to achieve certain definite ends through planned action' (Ikime 1974, p. xiv). His reformation was a resistance campaign against Eurocentric Christianity, the spiritual arm of colonialism. Appiah realised that colonialism, had contributed to the demolishing of African community structures, including rituals, religious concepts, and languages, and the destruction of laws and taboos, and the absorbing of African land and the wealth to a foreign economy, and the European subjection of the African. The missionary churches played a complimentary role in this framework of colonial interference. The churches' agents, the missionaries in, most cases, were the first instruments of colonial dominion and contempt (Fernandez, 1964, p. 533). Their churches imposed Eurocentric Christianity on Africans "lock, stock and barrel" and

contributed to the disruption of African ethnic cultural complexes and turned Africans into followers instead of leaders.

Conclusion

Appiah's conscious awareness of the exploitation present in the Christian churches in the early twentieth century in Cape Coast led to a broad dissatisfaction and disaffection for the Methodist and the westernised church's activities in the Gold Coast. He recognised a religious void within the context of the local Christian landscape because he saw a church that was alien and was not fulfilling the organic aspirations of the society, hence his innovations and call for made-in-Africa churches. He detected discrepancies between the Bible and what the Europeanised churches taught and promoted in Africa. He discovered that the Bible, the Christian constitution, bequeathed blessings to miracles, spirit possession, love for and protection of one's land, fertility, leadership of women, veneration of ancestors, self-determination, equality of humankind, and polygyny, all of which were legal notions within the African indigenous worldview. This awareness about the misrepresentation of the Bible by the churches as well as the adding of their own Western biases to create prefabricated dogmas and abstract theologies to suppress aspects of African cultures and people, compelled Appiah to creatively generate his Biblical hermeneutics as liberation theology arguments to oppose such interpretations, dogmas and theologies and point out faults in the structure of the mission church(es). His arguments, liturgical innovations, and establishment of an African church were aimed at signalling, and did signal and animate, the Africans' natural right and desire to control their own destiny by exercising the intellectual and spiritual powers that God had promised humankind through the Holy Spirit. The nuanced and ultimate implication was that the African, by natural, logical and divine rights, had to free him/herself and be free from White political domination. Appiah and

his work and church implied a resistance to colonialism and a definite stance in the struggle for Black identity.

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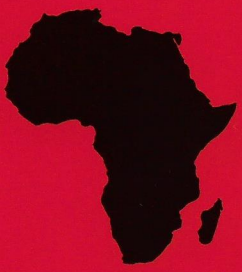

Although there have been a number of studies on Black resistance, very few of these have focused exclusively on such a wide range of resistance campaigns and strategies within a single volume. One of the central arguments of this study is that from as early as the sixteenth century, when Europeans attempted to systematically exploit Africans, Black people have engaged in a variety of organised and sustained resistance campaigns to assert their independence and identity. This book examines some of the different strategies employed by Black people in Africa and the Diaspora in response to European domination and exploitation. Drawing upon research from scholars based at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, this collection of original essays, covers the academic disciplines of African and Caribbean history, literature, politics and psychology. Despite these different approaches, the consistent theme throughout, centres on the strategies employed by Black people to resist European domination and oppression, by fighting for their freedom at every possible opportunity, whether they were in Africa, Britain or the Caribbean.

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