



A Christian Expression of African Spirituality: The Case Study of Three African Initiated Churches in Ghana

Ernestina Afriyie¹

¹ Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra – Ghana.

ABSTRACT

There is a view that African Instituted Churches (AICs) are Christian churches with a spirituality which is similar to traditional spirituality. Scholars have claimed that AICs came up as a response to the spirituality of the churches started by missionaries from the West. The latter churches seemed to ignore the spiritual world, the activities of the Spirit and also the fact that physical occurrences have spiritual causes. As such, the spiritual needs of African converts were not being met. In research to ascertain the validity of this assertion, this researcher looks into the circumstances surrounding the founding of AICs in Ghana, paying particular attention to the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the OSSAH-Madih Church, and the Musama Disco Christo Church. The research was done through participant observations in the AICs mentioned. Secondary data was gathered from articles, books and other research materials written by members of AICs. The research concluded that while some AICs may have started as a reaction to the operation of the mission churches, the spirituality expressed is not a “copying” of African spirituality, but one that comes about with the awareness of the existence of the spiritual realm.

Correspondence

Ernestina Afriyie

Email:

afriyieernestina@yahoo.co.uk

Publication History

Received 3rd April, 2023

Accepted 1st June, 2023

Published online 20th June,
2023

Keywords: *Spirituality, African Instituted Churches (AICs), Zionist, Aladura, World View, African Traditional Religion (ATR)*

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a term which is difficult to define. John Mbiti, in a section of his book *Prayers of African Religion* where he discusses spirituality, uses the term to refer collectively to the values which go to satisfy or cultivate the part of human beings which communicates with or reaches out towards the realm of spirits.¹ Spirituality may refer to many more things including world views, religion, means of relating to the supernatural, and religious beliefs.

In some theological circles, the view is held that the spirituality of African Christianity is just a Christian expression of African traditional spirituality. These theologians consider the development of the faith and its practices from the beginnings of the church in Africa to what it has become today. The coming up of the African Instituted Churches (AICs) early in the history of the church, and the fact that they usually started in areas where there were already missionary-initiated churches are some

¹ John S. Mbiti, *Prayers of African Religion*, (London: SPCK, 1975), 23.

of the points upon which they stand to make this claim. This paper looks at the development of the early AICs in Africa and narrows it down to the AICs in Ghana. It considers whether their spirituality is the result of just seeking to express Christianity in the African way, or something more. The method used for this research is participant observation of some AICs and writings on them by researchers and members of the churches.

Beginning with an overview of the types of AICs in Africa, the paper describes the different types of AICs and discusses what led to their formation. The paper then goes on with an overview of the traditional African worldview. It continues with a description of traditional spirituality. It also looks at the spirituality of the mission-instituted churches (churches started by Western missionaries), and then that of the AICs. It then compares the spirituality of African Traditional Religion (ATR) and that of the AICs and points out the similarities between them. It discusses whether the similarities are due to an intentional effort to make the spirituality of AICs similar to that of ATR, or something else, and then concludes.

Types of AICs in Africa

Churches initiated by Africans and not missionaries from other parts of the world are basically of two types, namely Aladura and Ethiopianism. Aladura is a Nigerian word which means “prayer”. The Aladura referred to as “Zionist” in South Africa, is also referred to as *sunsum sɔre* in Ghana. This is the Akan name meaning “spirit church”, a name which agrees with how Hastings and Ilogu have characterised them.² In these churches, the spiritual life of the members is the focus of emphasis. They are therefore said to be spirit oriented. Examples of these churches in Ghana are: the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the Musama Disco Christo Church, the Saviour Church, and the OSSAH-Madih Church. They are usually churches that were started by Africans who had spiritual encounters while having intense times of fellowship with God. They stress pastoral ministry and the Holy Spirit.

The Ethiopianism churches, on the other hand, are churches that are usually politically oriented. They were started by people who did not like the “ecclesiastical *status quo*” of the existing churches where the leadership was exclusively foreign, and white. Ethiopianist churches thus protested against this. The leadership of Ethiopianist churches is, therefore, all African, and so is the membership. The first of these was founded on the Witwatersrand, South Africa, by Mangena M. Makone. He seceded from the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist as he claimed that there was racial segregation in the church.³

The African Worldview and ATR

The AICs operate in Africa, a place where there is a general belief that there is a physical world and a spiritual world which co-exist together. The gap between the two worlds is virtually inexistent as it is very thin. Thus, Harvey C. Kwiyani mentions that African scholars like Bediako, Mbiti and Megasa talk about the fact that for Africans, the spirits break into the material world of humans at any time, as the spirit world is a reality that is not a distant one.⁴ The spiritual world is real but invisible and the physical world acts as a vehicle for the invisible one. The world is therefore a sacramental one. This means that physical happenings have their cause in the spiritual world. With this view, there is kinship in nature. Everything has a right and place in the world and they may form relationships with each other. This leads to the concept of totemism, the formation of relationships between humans and animals or plants for help. The view of kinship in nature, makes African people treat the environment with respect.

² Gwinyai H. Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 39.

³ Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, 38.

⁴ Harvey C. Kwiyani, “Independent, Enthusiastic, and African: Reframing the Story of Christianity in Africa”, in Waiboko, Nimi, and Afolayan, Adeshina, *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*, (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020), 33-34.

Spirits in the African world are of two types, wicked malevolent ones, and good benevolent ones. In the realm of benevolent spirits, there is a hierarchy of power. On top of this hierarchy is the Supreme Being who is generally believed to be the source of all that there is in the world;⁵ He is the Creator. Each African people have a name by which they call this Supreme Being. For example, in Ghana, the Akan call Him *Onyame* or *Onyankopɔn*, the Ga call Him *Ataa Naa Nyɔnmɔ*, the Ewe call Him *Mawu*. In Nigeria, the Igbo call Him among other names, *Chineke*, *Chuku*, *Ezenu*, the Yoruba call Him *Olorun*, *Olodumare*, *Elemi*. To the Lele of Kasai, He is *Njambi*, and to the Abaluyia of Western Kenya, He is *Wele xabaka*.

Though He is believed to be everywhere, He is also believed to have his abode in the sky. He sees everyone and everything. He is the most powerful of all beings. He is wise and cares about His creation. He controls all the elements of the earth, sunshine, rain, wind, thunder and lightning, and all. All creation depends on Him.

Next in the hierarchy of benevolent spirits, are the ancestors. These are the spirits of people who have distinguished themselves in this life. They are people who attained adulthood, married, had children, and made good contributions to life in the society. Among the Akan, the kind of death that a person dies also has something to do with qualifying or not qualifying to be an ancestor. A person who dies through any form of accident does not become an ancestor. Death through motor accidents, falling trees, drowning, childbirth, suicide and so on, disqualifies a person from becoming an ancestor. Death from diseases like tuberculosis, dropsy, epilepsy, lunacy, and leprosy, also does not qualify a person to become an ancestor.

Ancestors are human spirits living in a higher mode of existence. They are still members of their clans, and they can help only the living members of the clan. An individual does not choose who he/she wants for an ancestor. Being human spirits, Sarpong argues, they are not worshiped but only venerated.⁶ In the rituals of veneration, it is the family head who plays the role of “priest” as he stands between the living members of the clan and the ancestors.

Next are the divinities or deities. In West Africa, the Akan call them *abosom*, the Ga *wɔji*, the Ewe *trɔwo*, Yoruba, *orisha*, Ibo, *alusi ndimuo*, and Fon, *vudu*. They may be either male or female. They are generally believed to have been created by God for certain functions. Being creatures, they have limitations just like all other creatures. Some African societies, like the Akan, consider them to be children of the Supreme Being, while others see them as His agents. What this means is that these beings are not in an antagonistic relationship with the Supreme Being. They are not confined to one place. They can move from place to place. They have habitats in the environment – rivers, trees, hills, rocks animals. While they live in these objects, they are not the same as the objects.

Ancestors together with the divinities are believed to be intermediaries between human beings and the Supreme Being. The general belief in African religion is that there is a rift, a distance, between the Supreme Being and human beings. The different African peoples have different myths about how the rift came about. One such myth is told by Michael Kirwen in his book, *The Missionary and the Diviner*. According to the myth, when the Supreme Being created the world, He lived very close to human beings. The heavens were close to the earth and even though human beings could not see the Supreme Being, they could see where He lived in the heavens. There was abundant rain and consequently, plenty of food existed. People did not die, as death did not exist. One day, as two men were arguing, one of them got angry and shot an arrow. The arrow hit the heavens and blood and water came from the clouds. As a result of this, the heavens moved farther and farther away from the earth

⁵ The Lovedu of the Transvaal are an example of African people who do not let the origins of the world exercise their minds. They do not think about who created the world, or how it came into being. See J. D. Krige and E. J. Krige in Daryll Forde, (Ed), *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954/1970), 59-60.

⁶ Peter Sarpong, “African Theology and Worship,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, 4(7), (December 1974), 4.

until it reached where it is now. The rains then no longer fell as regularly as they used to, there was famine, and death became part of human life.⁷

Another myth, also in the same book, is how the Luo tribe explains the separation between God and human beings. This myth has it that, there was a rope between heaven and earth by which the people went up to heaven and back to earth. It was the duty of the chameleon to climb this rope daily to take the meat to the Supreme Being. One day, as the chameleon was carrying the meat up, it fell on the ground and got dirty. He picked up the dirty meat and sent it to the Supreme Being just like that. This made the Supreme Being angry, and He moved far away from the Earth.⁸

Even though the Supreme Being has moved away from human beings, the African view is that He has made available to them means by which they can still reach and communicate with Him; He gave them intermediaries. Mbiti puts these intermediaries into two groups, humans, and spirits. The human mediators include priests, diviners, medicine men, seers, rainmakers, chiefs and kings, and ritual elders. These people are the ones people go to when they need help. They approach the Supreme Being on behalf of the people. To help people, they may pray, sacrifice animals, or make offerings for them. In the event of strange happenings in a person's life, the person may consult, for instance, a diviner to know what lies behind the happenings and how "deliverance" may be obtained. These intermediaries may also interpret dreams or visions that people have.

The spirit intermediaries, on the other hand, include the ancestors and divinities. Humans form relationships with them so they may enjoy their services. In Harold Turner's analysis of primal religions, he explains that through such relationships, human beings are protected from the activities of spirits which are antagonistic to their welfare. The belief is that spirits are stronger and more powerful than human beings.⁹

Bad Spirits (Evil or Malevolent Spiritual forces)

As mentioned above, in the African worldview, there are also spiritual beings which are malevolent, and evil. These include demons and the like. These spirits seek to destroy human beings and keep them from coming into their destiny. There are also spiritual forces which can be tapped by human beings who know how and can do so. Meddling with these forces may show themselves forth as sorcery, witchcraft, and magic. They are neutral in themselves, but they can be used for beneficial or evil ends. Among the Akan, a *suman* (talisman) is made from such spiritual forces. Thus, a *suman* may be given to a person for protection. It may also be for endangering the lives of other people. This means that the spiritual forces can be put both to good and evil use. For example, witchcraft is believed to be of two types, a good type, and a bad type. Those in whom the good type dwells use it for good things, protecting their families and making them famous. Speaking to this, Onyinah avers that the Akan distinguish between good witchcraft and bad witchcraft. When witchcraft is used for good things, it is good witchcraft, and when it is used for causing harm and doing evil, it is bad witchcraft.¹⁰ He goes on to say that bad witchcraft may be used to inflict people with sicknesses, bad fortune, barrenness, and many other things that keep people from enjoying abundant life.¹¹ African people may protect themselves from witchcraft attacks by using medicines like talismans.

There are, among the Akan, for example, people who cannot be harmed by witchcraft. These are people who have strong *sunsum*, a component of a human being derived from the father. In the Akan belief system, a person is composed of three immaterial elements which are contained in the physical body. These are the *akra*, which comes from *Onyankopon* the Creator, the *sunsum*, which

⁷ Michael C. Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Theologies*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 4.

⁸ Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diviner*, 4.

⁹ Harold W. Turner, "The Primal Religions of the World and their Study", in Victor Hayes (ed.), *Australian Essays in World Religions*, (Bedford Park: Australian Association for World Religions, 1977), 27-37.

¹⁰ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2012), 49.

¹¹ Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, (Accra: FEP International Private Limited, 1978), 140-141.

comes from the father, and the *mogya*, which comes from the mother. A person's *sunsum* is the component that deals with the supernatural world. It may be strong or heavy, in which case it is not easily overcome by other spirits, or it may be weak or light, in which case it is easily overcome by other spirits. People born with weak *sunsum* may strengthen their *sunsum* through the performance of certain rituals.¹²

Based on this worldview, African peoples have their traditional religions which make it possible for them to live in their environment. With the traditional religion comes their spirituality which is part of the subject of discussion in this paper. These are considered in the subsequent sections.

Elements of the Spirituality of African Religion

Prayer

Families and clans rely on their ancestors and the divinities for help in a world filled with wicked spiritual forces. Various rites and rituals are performed around the intermediary spirits. Believing that it is possible to communicate with the spirit or supernatural world, Africans pray; prayers play an important role in the life of Africans. Mbiti sees it as the commonest of the methods for approaching the Supreme Being.¹³ Prayers are usually made with the pouring of libations. Ritual elders, family heads, and human intermediaries pray for others. They may pray for the general public, or they may pray for individuals or groups who approach them for help. When prayers are said within the family, the head or the oldest member of the family prays. Sometimes, however, ritual elders may be called in to pray. It could be said that the event determines who prays. Prayers include the invocation of the Supreme Being, the ancestors and the divinities, praise, information on why they are being approached, the help needed and then, especially among the Akan, a curse is pronounced on anyone who desires evil for the group. A typical Akan prayer would go like this:

*Onyankopɔn Tweaduampong, nsa! Asase Yaa, nsa! Nananom nsamanfo, nsa!
Abosom, nsa!*

Mo adaworoma, afe ano ahyia, yen nyinaa ahyiam ha.

*Yen ahyia mu ha a, na eye Nana Okuapehene na ne dwira twa bere adu. Yesre mo, mo
nyinaa mo mmegyina n'akyi, na Odwira yi a ɔretwa yi, enye animuonyam mma no.*

*Mo nyinaa mo nkwa so! Onipa boneni a ɔno de ɔmpɛ Okuapeman yiye, na ekaa no
nko a na ɔman no asee, saa onipa no de, obi nntɔ nsa nfa nhyira ne busuyeni. Saa
onipa no, mommfa no nkɔ akyirikyirikyiri faako a otumi mma mmehaw yen bio.*

Nananom, mo nkwa, so, Nana Okuapehene nkwa so, Okuapeman nkwa so oo!

Almighty God, a drink! Mother Earth, a drink! Great ancestors a drink! Divinities, a drink!

By your help, the year has ended, and we have all gathered here.

We have all gathered here because it is time for Nana Okuapehene to celebrate his *Odwira*.

We beg all of you to come and support us so that this celebration will bring him glory.

We wish you all long life. Any evil person who does not wish *Okuapeman* well, anyone whose only desire is to see *Okuapeman* destroyed, as for that person, no one buys drink to bless his enemy. Send him far away to a place from where he cannot return to bother us.

Long live our Great Ancestors, Long live *Nana Okuapehene*, Long live *Okuapeman*.

As he speaks, he pours a drink from either a calabash or glass drop by drop onto the ground. Drinks used for prayers may be water, any local drink of the people, or schnapps.

Anytime traditional African people gather prayers are said. Nothing is ever done without prayer. This is because the people believe that human beings are weak and limited in all things and so need the help of benevolent spirits to succeed in what they do. One person leads in the prayer but all

¹² Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 96-97.

¹³ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1991), 61.

present participate by responding with words like, *wie*, or *swie ampa*. In a Ga setting the response is *hiaw*. If the prayers are said in an enclosed place, the one offering the prayer does so facing the entrance.

Sacrifices and Offerings

Offerings and sacrifices are also an element of African spirituality. In the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, sacrifice is defined as “a rite in the course of which something is forfeited or destroyed, its object being to establish relations between a source of spiritual strength and one in need of such strength, for the benefit of the latter.”¹⁴ This definition gives the reason for the destruction of a victim as for “maintaining or restoring a right relationship of man to the sacred order.”¹⁵ The sacrifice may cause a bond of union to be formed between the one who makes the sacrifice and the deity to whom it is made. It may also be for taking away any guilt for the evil that has been contracted knowingly or unknowingly. The act of offering things to a deity is sacrifice. The things that are used in sacrifices may range from vegetables to grains to animals. While some scholars claim that a sacrifice is when blood is shed in an offering to the supernatural, others also see anything offered to the supernatural for specific reasons to be a sacrifice. This paper takes the view that a sacrifice is when anything is offered with the intention of pacifying a deity, or propitiating or expiating some wrongdoing, or getting back life or health. Sacrifices may also be made for purification and cleansing. This is usually done when it is believed that defilement has occurred. On the other hand, anything brought in thanksgiving or appreciation of God or the intermediary spirits, out of one’s own free will, in appreciation of the deity or some request that has been granted, is an offering. It may be an animal or any other thing, like vegetables and grains.

For Africans, blood is life, and a blood sacrifice, therefore, means that a life is being given back to the Supreme Being for another life or other lives. Animals are sacrificed when the issue being dealt with is a serious one. Such sacrifices will therefore be offered for the continuous occurrence of calamities, drought, famines, epidemics, and so on. The kind of animal used for the sacrifice is determined by the case. For needs like health, prosperity, and marital problems only animals are sacrificed. The animals used in these sacrifices must be of one colour and without blemish. If the head of the family does not do it, a local leader, or some special person, like a warrior, may perform the sacrifice. In these sacrifices, the colour of the animal sacrificed has a bearing on what the sacrifice is meant for. David Burnett describes a sacrifice that was made during a rain-making ceremony in his *Unearthly Powers*. The ceremony he describes took place in Karamoja, a village in north-eastern Uganda. A black bull was sacrificed, the colour of the bull symbolising black clouds.¹⁶ In some situations, foodstuffs, eggs, honey, or money among some other things, may be used for sacrifice. This is usually the case when the issue is not serious and does not involve the death of many people.

Corporate Worship

In every religion, worship is one of the elements through which people publicly pay honour to their object of faith. With Africans being a communal people, they engage in corporate worship though from time to time, individuals may perform some private rituals. On fixed days, corporate worship is organised. People converge at a place of worship. This may be the site of a shrine. They pray, sing, clap, play drums and use other traditional musical instruments to express their devotion and joy. Thus, the devotees participate both emotionally and physically in the worship.

Even though all the devotees participate actively in what is done, there is always an officiant who may, depending on the occasion, be joined by other priests. The officiant is the intermediary between the devotees and the divinity. He/she interprets the divinity’s wishes to the devotees and

¹⁴ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1.

¹⁵ J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 135.

¹⁶ David Burnett, *Unearthly Powers: A Christian Perspective on Primal and Folk Religion*, (Eastbourne: MARC, 1988), 13-14.

presents their petitions to him/her. The officiant does several things during the worship. He/she may bless the people or ask individuals to perform certain activities. He/she may also give messages, *nkɔm*, to people in which happenings in the spiritual realm about these devotees may be revealed. When prayers are said, all the devotees are deeply involved in the prayers. Some prayers have litanies which are said, others have choruses, and these would be sung. In such prayers, the leader raises the song, and the devotees respond.

Divination

Generally, Africans believe that the things that happen in the physical world have their source in the spiritual world. The practice known as divination is therefore one of the elements of African religion. When things happen in their lives which they do not understand, they seek the services of diviners. A diviner is a person who can reveal the spiritual cause of a person's problem. Among the Kasena people of northern Ghana, the diviner is called a *vorɔ*. The Kasena people see the *vorɔ* as one who helps people to know the spiritual side of what is going on in their lives and advises them on what to do to solve the issue. Thus, Howell writing about the diviner among the Kasena people says "... traditionally, the Kasena had a very high view of diviners whom they considered as a gift from God... to guide them in life and to mediate between them and the spiritual realm."¹⁷ When guidance is needed regarding things like a sick child, or someone whose soul is believed to have been caught by a witch, the person to turn to is the *vorɔ*. He will give guidance as to the cause of the problem and he will give guidance on what to do to solve the problem. Africans believe that the diviner helps people to find the cause of their problem and know what action to take to turn things around.

Visions, Dreams, Revelations

Visions, dreams, and revelations are other important aspects of African religion. Dreams are treated with seriousness as they are means by which the supernatural world communicates with the physical world. Ancestors and divinities give messages to individuals and communities through dreams. Busia in describing the relationship between the dead and the living, tells the story of a sick man who in a dream of the night, saw his dead sister give him medicine. When he woke up the next morning, he raised his pillow and looked where in his dream he had put the medicine. He found it, applied it, and was healed.¹⁸ Visions and trances are also important elements of African religion. Priests receive revelations from the supernatural for communities and individuals. In traditional African communities, now and then, a messenger from a shrine may be seen going into a home or the palace with a message from the divinities or ancestors. These messages come to them in trances or visions.

Taboos and Prohibitions

Sacred beings and objects in African religion lead to the need to observe taboos and prohibitions. Taboo comes from the Polynesian term *tabu* and means prohibition. Taboos may be in connection with food or totems or even marriage. Among the Akan of Ghana, there are taboos based on *ntorɔ*, a group to which an individual belongs by virtue of who his/her father is. *Ntorɔ* is related to divinities and the taboos tend to be those of the divinities. Thus, there are foods which are prohibited for certain people to eat, rivers from which they may not drink, women whom certain men may not marry, and so on. There are also prohibitions that are observed in African traditional religions. Smoking tobacco, and drinking alcoholic beverages by the priest are two things that are prohibited. If a person seeking assistance from the shrine approaches the shrine smoking, a messenger would be sent to inform him to stop it before s/he reaches the shrine. Divinities/deities normally do not like tobacco smoke.

¹⁷ Allison Howell, "Avoiding Mislabelling and Misnaming: Learning to Engage the Gospel of Christ with Culture", *Serving Together*, (October 2014), 6.

¹⁸ Kofi A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti A Study of the Influence of Contemporary Social Changes on Ashanti Political Institutions*. (London; Routledge, 1951).

Objects of Protection

Devotees of deities may be given a *suman* or a representation of the deity to take home. This may be for protection. When a person acquires such an object, s/he would have to act of worship daily. These may take the form of pouring libation before it and making sacrifices to it. In some instances, kola nuts are offered to the object.

Fasting

Abstinence from food for religious reasons is an important part of African spirituality. African traditional priests have times set aside for fasting. These especially have to do with preparation for events like religious festivals. They may stay completely away from food, or eat only food that may not be attractive, for example, boiled plantains and ground pepper without onions or tomatoes. They may also fast from sexual relations. Fasting is believed to prepare a person for effective interaction with the supernatural world.

Healing and other miracles

ATR is characterised by healing and the working of miracles like the making of rain. Peter Sarpong informs that for the African, worship is for signs and miracles. According to him, religion is meant for solving the problems of life. It must help people here and now. For the African, a religion that does not provide antidotes to problems of life like childlessness, disease, poverty, and so on is not worth its mettle.¹⁹ Healing of sicknesses and diseases, working miracles, are therefore prominent in ATR.

Dressing

Colours are important in the traditional religions of Africa. Colours have meaning. Usually, traditional priests in Ghana, for example, dress in white. White signifies purity and dressing in white depicts the purity of the priest. It is common to see the *Wulomei*, the Ga priests, dressed in white with white hair coverings. Also, priests and devotees of shrines go to the shrines barefooted. Wearing shoes or slippers is prohibited at the shrines.

The African and the Spirituality of the Missionary Initiated Churches (Mission Churches)

Having brought up some of the elements of ATR, the paper now considers what the spirituality of the churches that were set up by missionaries from the West was like.²⁰ This section discusses issues which African converts had with the missionary-initiated churches. The spirituality of the African is demonstrated in the elements discussed. Worship in the view of the African must consist of prayers in which all participate actively, making sacrifices where necessary, singing clapping, and drumming. It also includes giving and receiving messages from the priest. African religion is about results, it is first and foremost to ensure well-being and prosperity. People have needs which must be met in their religion.

Andrew Walls holds that when people get converted from their primal faith to another, they do not lose their worldview. What usually happens, he says, is that there is a reordering of the things in the worldview.²¹ Africans who become Christians are still Africans and their views of the world do not change much. Their understanding of what goes into worship remains the same. Christ comes in where the divinities were, but the way He is worshiped is not different from the way the divinities were worshipped. Worship that is made up of the singing of slow songs/hymns, and prayers led by one person with all the others quietly listening, waiting to say Amen at the end does not appear to be worship for the African. When the African worships, his/her whole body is involved, hence the singing, drumming, clapping, and dancing. Again, for the African, worship that does not bring messages about

¹⁹ Sarpong, "African Theology and Worship," 6.

²⁰ The past tense is used here because much has changed in these churches in contemporary times.

²¹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 122-123.

the individual through the priest is no worship. The African Christian still believes in the existence of spiritual forces which may be used by people to harm him/her. When things happen in his/her life which he/she cannot make meaning of, there must be a way of finding out just as he/she could in the primal faith. These things were missing in the type of Christianity that the missionaries brought to Africa. Kwiyani notes that the missionaries to Africa arrived with a theology which could not fathom African spirituality.²²

The gospel was brought to Africa by missionaries from the West. Some of these missionaries had been influenced by the enlightenment and they were “sympathetic to rationalism, critical biblical interpretation and liberal theology” which denies the existence of the supernatural – witches, demons, and the devil. Some of the missionaries had however been influenced by pietism, and believed in the existence of the supernatural, as Birgit Meyer asserts.²³ However, what was obvious was the absence of activities in the practice of Christianity of activities which dealt with the supernatural. Christianity was therefore presented with a worldview that denied the existence of the supernatural, a spirituality which was different from what Africans are used to. The view from the West was that people live in a closed universe, that is, the universe consists of only the material world; there are no spiritual, divine, or supernatural beings or forces in the universe. The belief in the activities of wicked spiritual forces against people was therefore overlooked. In this way, Christianity did not offer much by way of dealing with the spiritual issues in the lives of African Christians. The elements of Christian worship were practised differently. With prayer in corporate worship, for example, there were a lot of silent prayers in which worshippers were called upon to pray “in the silence of your hearts”, or the prayers were read. Opoku Onyinah describes the prayers in these services as “scripted, written out and taught.”²⁴ The active participation in prayer that Africans were used to was not there. Also, although songs were sung, the songs were sung to Western music and at best accompanied by a piano or an organ; there was no drumming, clapping, or dancing.

Again, the practice of “divination” through which people got to know the cause of their troubles and what to do about them was not encouraged, and prophesying was forbidden. Even though Jesus Christ was presented as being greater than all the bad spirits, yet, the ways of appropriating His power were not clear to the converts. Dreams were not considered revelations. There was no way of talking to Christian leaders about dreams to know what they meant. This is what led many of them to resort to going back to the traditional priests under cover of night to seek help with their problems. Worship in the Christian church and its practices were not “scratching the African where he was itching.”

African Independent Churches (AICs)

Several reasons have been given for the start of the AICs in the early part of the twentieth century. It is said that they were a counter-response to the Christianity introduced by the missionaries. Thomas Oduro says that the most prominent factor in these establishments was a desire to reform the churches founded by Western missions.²⁵ According to Opoku Onyinah, the first counter-response was that of the “Ethiopians”, a black nationalist group.²⁶ They protested the domination of whites where power and culture were concerned in the church. This group was followed by another, known as “the prophets”. Though the leadership in this group consisted of people who did not have much education, their ministries were marked with healings and miracles, and the elements that made Africans feel they were relating with supernatural beings. Some of these leaders were William Wade Harris of Liberia,

²² Kwiyani, “Independent, Enthusiastic and African,” 35.

²³ Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana*, (Asmara, Eritrea, Africa World Press, Inc, 1999), 51-53.

²⁴ Opoku Onyinah, “Bird’s-Eye View of Contemporary Christianity in Africa”, in Nimi Wariboko and Adeshima Afolayan (eds.), *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honour of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*, (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020).

²⁵ Thomas Oduro, “The African Independent Churches in Ghana”, *Christianity in Ghana: A Postcolonial History*, (Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2018), 117.

²⁶ Onyinah, “Bird’s-Eye View of Contemporary Christianity in Africa,” 19.

West Africa, Isaiah Shembe of South Africa, and Simon Kimbangu of Zaire. While someone like Harris never started a church, his followers like Grace Tanni and John Nachaba started the Church of the Twelve Apostles in the Gold Coast (Ghana). There are also AICs which were breakaways from the mainline churches. Most AICs have a spirituality which is close to that of the traditional spirituality of African religion. It is for this reason that it is usually assumed that the spirituality of the missionary initiated churches must have led to the establishment of the AICs. Such a view gives the impression that the AICs were a creative response to the mission churches. That is to say that those who started them did so just so that they could worship the Christian God but as Africans. Those who started them in telling their stories, however, give the impression that they were called by God and led by His Spirit to do things the way they did them. While the AICs grew in the context of the mission churches, one cannot overlook the fact that those who started them must have had some form of encounter with the spirit of God. The way they worshiped, together with their practices was not just a rebellion against the *status quo*.

Characteristics of the AICs

Some of the churches called AICs are the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the Saviour Church, the Musama Disco Christo Church, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), the Celestial Church of Christ, the OSSA-Madih Church, and the Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church.

Emphasis on the Spirit

The first characteristic that this paper brings up is that of the emphasis placed on the Holy Spirit in AIC. They are popularly called *sunsum sɔre* (spiritual church) in Ghana because of this. The activity of the Holy Spirit is prominent. Thus, in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, every morning, a basin filled with water is raised three times before a tall wooden cross that stands in the centre of the compound of the church. Fervent prayers are said for the Holy Spirit to bless the water so it would become holy, consecrated, and powerful for healing. It is also a common thing to see worshippers come under the power of the Holy Spirit. Those upon whom the Spirit falls may fall and even roll on the ground. For the healing services, the Holy Spirit is invited to come and heal, and it is only when His presence is seen that the healings begin. People who need spiritual interventions in their lives are each given an enamel basin filled to about two-thirds with water to carry on the head. Baeta reports that in these healing sessions, the drummers and singers strike up and the music gets more and more agitated gradually until the “spirit” hits the water that the sick person is carrying.²⁷

Writing about the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the OSSA-Madih Church, another AIC, Frank Botchway says that the Holy Spirit is invoked and He comes when there is clapping of hands and singing with joy.²⁸ The same is true in the Church of the Twelve Apostles too. In AICs, nothing is done without the invocation of the Spirit. It is the presence of the Advocate sent from the Father in response to the request of Jesus, that makes the worship worship.

Prayer

Prayer is another important element of the life of AICs. Congregations have several prayer meetings during the week. Prayers are offered together in the form known as *dodow mpaebɔ*. Topics are mentioned and all pray. In the end, the one leading the meeting sums up the prayer and with each statement made in the prayer, the congregation responds with Amens and groans. Praying against enemies, wishing them ill, and cursing them, form part of the prayers. Describing prayers in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, Baeta says they are “many and long, and are accompanied by loud shrieks, deep groans and all sorts of other ejaculations, often ending in ecstatic songs”.²⁹

²⁷ C. G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some Spiritual Churches*, (London: SCM Press, 1962), 20-21.

²⁸ Frank Botchway, “The OSSA-Madih Church (Church of Light),” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 3, (2), (December 2000).

²⁹ Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 19.

Sacrifices and Offerings

In most AICs, there is a belief in the once-and-for-all sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for the world. However, there is an element of making offerings, not as in those made during worship. This is what is referred to in Akan as *woyi sraha*. People with certain needs may be asked to go and give gifts, usually in the form of money, to beggars. The leader of the church usually a prophet, *Odiyifo*, gives guidance as to what is to be done in such situations. This does not replace the sacrifice made by Christ, but it is believed to open the way for certain requests to be granted.

Corporate Worship

Members of AICs may worship together several times a week. During the services, the Bible may or may not be read, and a sermon may or may not be preached, depending on the emphasis of the service. Prayers are said, songs are sung. The singing is accompanied by traditional drums. In the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the beaded gourds are also shaken. The people clap and dance. The service is swift and full of action. While the prophet is the leader in the service, everybody participates actively. During the service, someone may come under the power of the Holy Spirit and prophesy in tongues. This will usually be interpreted.

Divination

Another element in the spirituality of AICs is what may be called divination but is not divination as such. People with issues which they do not understand, tell the problem to the prophet and s/he explains what is happening in the spiritual realm and gives guidance as to what needs to be done. This is an important element of this group. One of the reasons why many converts of the mission-initiated churches kept moving to the AICs was because things were happening in their lives which they could not understand, but for which they could also not get help from their churches. Africans always want to know why certain things are happening in their lives.

Vision, Dreams, Trances, and Revelations

Visions, dreams trances, and revelations are phenomena believed to be used by God to give messages to people. These are important in AICs. Most of the founders of AICs experienced one or more of these. In a vision, the one experiencing it sees apparitions without being asleep. The person is awake but sees things other than what is before him. In the case of dreams, they occur when a person is asleep. While sleeping, something comes into a person's mind as though in real life. Trances are like visions. In a trance, one is not aware of one's surroundings. These are all believed to be ways through which God reveals things to people. AICs depend on them for messages from God.

Taboos and Prohibitions

In most AICs, there are rules on what may be eaten, done, and so on, and what may not. These are taboos and prohibitions. For example, members of the Church of the Twelve Apostles observe certain food taboos. They may not eat snails, stinking fish (*mɔmɔne*), pork, and shark. Also, they may not smoke, they may not drink any alcoholic beverages, except wine and beer, and even these, they may take in small quantities so that they do not become intoxicated.

Fasting

AICs are marked by fasting. This may be because most of the founders had their encounters which led to their call in periods of fasting, meditating on the word of God, and praying. There are usually different types of fasting practiced in these churches. For example, a fast may be simple or special. A simple fast may require that a person abstains from solid food from morning till evening for seven days, and for a special fast, a person eats neither solid nor liquid food for three days. The type of fast one undergoes, depends on the directions of the Spirit.\

Healing and Miracles

A prominent aspect AICs is healing, the working of miracles and the meeting of other needs. In these churches, the operation of the spiritual gifts is encouraged. Most AICs are “healing” churches. People suffering from all kinds of diseases, especially those that defy orthodox medicine, may be sent for healing. Lunatics, cripples, deaf and dumb, the barren, alcoholics, and all sorts, may be found on the premises of AICs. People who are faced with troubles in life troup to the churches for help. One may find people who are looking for employment, the opportunity to travel outside the country, improvement in conditions of life, those looking for spouses and the like also there. They are churches that meet the expectations that African people have of religion.

Belief in the Existence of Evil Spirits

Belief in the existence and activities of demons is also strong in the AICs. The belief that evil spirits cause sicknesses and diseases, misfortune, hold back promotions, and so on is strong. Exorcism, the casting out of demons responsible for problems, is therefore part of the practices of the AICs. Demons are said to be responsible for problems like barrenness, lunacy, stagnation, marital problems, and the like.

Dreams, Visions and Trances

Another aspect of AICs is their belief that God still reveals things to people through visions and dreams. Most of those who started or through whom AICs started had visions. In the case of Harris, the precursor of AICs in West Africa, he had a series of visions while he was in prison in Monrovia and these led him to begin to do the work of evangelism. He fell into trances too. The same can be said of William Egyankaba Appiah who started the Musama Disco Christo Church. There is indeed a strong belief in visions in AICs. Dreams are also treated as means by which God speaks to people. Reference is usually made to the many instances in the Bible where God spoke to people through dreams. In AICs, dreams are important and it is important for people to relate their dreams to leaders for interpretation.

Dressing

Most AICs have prescribed attires even for ordinary members. They usually wear white clothes, thus, the nickname, *Nnwera besa*.³⁰ Other colours may be added to the white to distinguish the offices, a red band or sash may be tied in the middle or worn diagonally across a long white robe. Believing that the place of worship is “holy ground”, they do not wear sandals or shoes, or slippers when they enter the place. The practice stands mainly on the fact that when Moses encountered God in the burning bush, he was asked to remove his sandals as he was on holy ground (Exo. 3: 1-6).

Use of Substances

These churches are also characterised by the use of certain substances in their operations. These include incense, oils, Florida water, other perfumes, blessed water, known as “holy water”, and blessed sand from the precincts of the church. These substances are used, in addition to prayers, for healing, protection, and other breakthroughs. Members may sprinkle “holy” water in their homes, shops, and offices to drive away evil spirits and forces. A person going for an interview for a job or visa, or whatever, may polish his/her face with some of the blessed sand, and have the glory of God come upon him/her. This will bring success.

³⁰ *Enwera besa* is a Twi statement which literally means, “calico will finish”. It was a way of teasing the members of the AICs that they would cause a shortage of calico in the system because they wore it so often.

Similarities Between the spirituality of ATR and that of AIC

From the foregoing, it is obvious that there are similarities between ATR spirituality and AIC spirituality. This section discusses the similarities to bring out why it may seem that the AICs were merely a copying of ATR spirituality.

ATR operates with the belief that there is a world of spirits, that the world is populated by spirits, some good and some evil. Evil spirits attack human beings in various ways. They may bring diseases or other forms of calamity, but the Supreme Being, God, has power over the evil spirits. He and His good spirits, if one has good relations with them, are able to come to that person's rescue. African peoples thus consult the human intermediaries, depending on what the issue is, and are helped. This is quite like what pertains to AICs. Here also, there is a strong belief that there are spirits all around. These spirits, good and evil, operate in the lives of people. The evil ones seek to cause harm, and the good ones, headed by God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, protect and deliver people from the activities of these evil spirits. Those who are attacked by evil spirits, therefore, turn to God through the AICs and are helped.

Healing and deliverance which are marks of ATR are also found in the AICs. ATR has rituals for healing the sick. Where necessary, people have to perform *mmusuyi*, rites that drive evil spirits away and set people free. A similar practice is also found in AICs. As has been mentioned above, most AICs are "healing" churches. The sick may go and live on the church premises for work to be done on them. Deliverance from evil spirits and their activities in a person's life is a special feature of these churches.

One may also consider the form that worship takes in AICs. These services are highly participatory, with singing clapping, drumming the use of other traditional musical objects, and dancing. When it comes to praying, all pray. This is similar to what occurs in corporate worship in ATR. There is a priest alright, but s/he only leads and all the devotees participate in singing, clapping, dancing, whatever. The worship is active and lively. During the worship, the spirit descends and prophesying, *nkɔmhyɛ*, takes place. The traditional priest speaks in tongues and the linguist, *ɔkyeame*, interprets it. This also happens in AICs. Someone upon whom the Holy Spirit may have come begins to prophesy in tongues. This is then interpreted. In an instance that was observed by this researcher, there was a prophecy meant for a woman. The one prophesying would say, *Kabaa*, and the interpreter would say, *ɔbaa*, meaning woman. Prophesying is an important element of AIC worship just as it is in ATR worship.

The dressing of people in the AICs is also similar to that of the people in ATR. They all dress in white. Traditional African priests dress in white clothes to depict their purity. Thus, the Ga *Wulɔmɔi*, priests, wear white clothes and caps. They always walk barefoot. AIC prophets and their priests, also usually wear white clothes and walk barefooted, especially within the precincts of the chapel. Then also there is the importance placed on dreams, visions and trances in AICs. The way AICs treat dreams, visions and trances is about the same as ATR treats them. The strong belief that they are means by which God gives messages to His people, and reveals things to them in ATR is the same in AICs. The observance of taboos and fasts in AICs is also in ATR.

These numerous similarities create the impression that AICs take the elements of ATR and "Christianise" them. Thus the argument of many scholars has been that AICs are a Christian expression of ATR. From the discussion so far, it is obvious why these scholars believe that this is the case. It is however necessary at this point to consider how the AICs were founded.

Arguments for why the AICs were formed

Clearly, many features of the AICs in Ghana can be found in the traditional religion of the people and it is easy to believe that the churches were started so African converts to Christianity could worship in a way that suited their spirituality. David Barrett sees AICs as constituting an African Reformation.³¹

³¹ John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 86.

It appears that the mission churches had not met the basic spiritual needs of Africans and the AICs came in as “religious movements” to provide Africans with the spirituality that they longed for.

Research has shown that the AICs grew in either the context of the mission churches or other AICs. Hastings notes that some of the areas in which the protestant mission had worked for many years had by 1950, become the places where AICs were found most.³² One reason given for this phenomenon is that the Africans wanted to be free from foreign control. Another is that African Christians wanted to evangelise Africans by modern methods. So it has been said that though it appears that people like Mokone left the mission churches because they had hostile feelings, it was actually because they were looking for the best way to evangelise Africa; they were looking for a theology which would be “relevant to the needs” of African people.³³ Adding his voice to this view, Parrinder says that the United Native African Church, an AIC, was founded as a more effective means of evangelism, and not as an alternative to the missions.³⁴ Omoyajowo also says that the AICs “sought to establish the Christianity of the Bible as they saw it, devoid of its European accretions and in harmony with Africa’s cultural heritage.”³⁵ Appiah-Kubi on his part, argues that the AIC emerged not because, of “social, economic and racial factors, but spiritual hunger”. The Christian faith, as it was being practiced in the mission churches lacked the spiritual fervour that Africans desire in worship.³⁶

All these reasons, good as they are, give the impression that the spirituality of the AIC was something that the founders intentionally worked out, they wanted to have churches that were African, useful to Africans. This can be said to be true for the Ethiopianist AICs. However, given the stories of how the AICs in Ghana started, it would be difficult to say that the people who started the churches intentionally decided to do things the African way, difficult to say that they were just adapting the spirituality of the Christian faith to suit that which African people were used to. It is more like God guided them with new understandings of the faith. A look at the stories behind the formation of these churches will make the point being made here clearer.

Stories Behind Calls of Founders of Some AIC

Mention is first made of William Wade Harris, the premier evangelist in West Africa whose work may be said to have sparked the findings of AICs in the region. He himself never founded a church though. In the story of Harris, he was called through a vision while in prison. Watson Omulokoli writes that Harris spent a lot of time while in prison reading the Bible and praying. One day, while he was praying, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a vision. The angel informed Harris that God had chosen him to preach to all who had not been reached with the gospel.³⁷ In his ministry, Harris healed, interpreted dreams, and allowed the use of herbs for healing. These practices are in line with African spirituality. The way his group sang with the accompaniment of the gourd rattle was also in agreement with music in African religion. Why he decided to operate in a way that mimics African spirituality is not clear. In his account of Harris, Omulokoli gives no indication that Harris had any problem with the way the mission established churches were expressing their Christianity before his encounter in prison. His style of ministry cannot be said to have been in protest against how the faith was being expressed.

With the founder of the OSSA-Madih church, the story is no different. Writing the history of the church, Frank Botchway says that the founder, Samuel Dankwa and a group of people who joined him developed the habit of having intensive prayers and studying the scriptures. He became convinced that the Holy Spirit exists and that the great men of the Bible had operated in His power while doing God’s work. One day, the ‘Spirit’ filled him and took possession of him. He was led into the bush

³² Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 67.

³³ Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, 38.

³⁴ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in Africa*, (Penguin African Library, 1969), 150.

³⁵ Joseph Omoyajowo, “Christian Expression in African Indigenous Churches”, *Presence*, 5, (3), (1972); 9.

³⁶ Kofi Appiah-Kubi, “Indigenous African Christian Churches: Signs of Authenticity”, In Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (Eds), *African Theology en Route*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 117-118.

³⁷ Watson A. O. Omulokoli, “William Wade Harris: Premier African Evangelist”, *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 21, (1), (2002); 3-24.

where he saw himself being encircled by a “marvellous penetrating light”. He fell to the ground and then saw something like the moon coming upon him directly from heaven. An angel appeared to him and told him, among other things, that he would be “the final prophet to gather the elect ones before the second coming of Christ”. Botchway continues that the group started by Dankwa who originally worshiped with the Methodist church grew because of the healing and prophetic powers of the leader.³⁸ Another person who started an AIC was William Egyankaba Appiah, a man who was a teacher/catechist in the Methodist Church at Gomoa Dunkwa in Ghana. In an account of his call given by Christian Baeta in his *Prophetism in Ghana*, while Appiah was working in Gomoa Dunkwa, he became interested in another catechist in the Methodist church, Samuel Nyankson who was a divine healer and also performed miracles. Appiah held Nyankson in high esteem and desired to be like him, filled with the Holy Spirit. He, therefore, understudied Nyankson. He fasted whilst praying and meditated on the word of God. One day, while fasting, praying and meditating, Appiah fell into a trance and saw a vision of three angels from heaven come to him with a crown. They placed the crown three times on his head. They then went back to heaven with the crown. Later, another colleague of his, a co-worker with Nyankson, Job Carthey informed him, Appiah, that God had made him a king. He then told him to make a prayer camp in the open. This was done in a day and the members of Appiah’s congregation met there to pray.

On August 18, 1919, while Appiah was praying in the camp, an angel with an open Bible in his hand appeared to him. The angel approached him and pointed Acts 10 to him. The Spirit of God then came upon him. After this encounter, Appiah realised that he had become a new person. He began to speak in tongues and perform miracles.³⁹

The stories of these three men, Harris, Dankwa and Appiah, show that they did not intentionally seek to operate with African spirituality, yet elements of it were displayed in their ministries. About Harris, Kwame Bediako says that he seemed to function in a spiritual universe which was simple and complex at the same time. He however was able to embrace both as a totality.⁴⁰ In all the stories, the men intensified their prayers and Bible Studies, means by which Christians deepen their relationship with God. It appears that as they deepened their relationship with God, God revealed Himself to them. The revelations brought awareness of the spiritual world and the activity of the Holy Spirit. An awareness of the spiritual world is a characteristic of African spirituality. It is more likely that the similarity between African spirituality and the spirituality of the AICs is because of the awareness of the spiritual world. The AICs operated along lines which fitted the traditional spirituality of African people, but it was not intentional.

That AICs operated along lines similar to the traditional spirituality of African people made people think that the establishers of these churches intentionally decided to do things in their churches the way they did. One may say so perhaps for the Zionist churches. With the pre-independent AICs in Ghana, however, it would be difficult to see them in this way. The experiences of the leaders before and after their calls show that they reacted to their encounters with God in ways that made their encounters meaningful to them. They were African people and they interpreted what they experienced in terms meaningful to them. They established churches which expressed the Christianity of the Bible the way they understood it. The outcome was a spirituality much like the traditional African spirituality. Could it be, that where people are aware of the spiritual realm, they exhibit a spirituality which addresses it, and that spirituality is about the same in all religions? Much as people would want to challenge it, Pentecostal spirituality is similar to that of the AICs. Pentecostal churches have a strong awareness of the spirit world. They place much emphasis on the activities of the Holy Spirit – speaking in tongues as the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, healing and deliverance, working of miracles, prophesying, things which are also aspects of the spirituality of AICs.

³⁸ Botchway, “The OSSA-Madih Church (Church of Light)”, 2-15.

³⁹ Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 26-62.

⁴⁰ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2000), 86.

CONCLUSION

Considering the spirituality of ATR, and that of the AICs, it is clear that they are similar. This makes it easy for many to believe that the founders of the AIC set out to form Christian churches that operated like African churches. However, this paper shows that that was not the case. It has done so by discussing the similarities between the spiritualities of ATR and AICs, and, using the way by which the founders were called to their tasks, shown that the spirituality of AICs is not mere copying and Christianising of ATR spirituality, but a spirituality that comes with the awareness of the presence of spirits in the world and God's activity in the lives of His people. The spirituality of the AICs was not intentional but the result of an awareness of, and encounter with the spiritual realm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Appiah-Kubi, Kofi, "Indigenous African Christian Churches: Signs of Authenticity", in Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (Eds), *African Theology en Route*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979.
- Appiah-Kubi, Kofi, and Sergio Torres, (Eds) *African Theology en Route*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979.
- Awolalu, J. Omosade, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, London: Longman Group Limited, 1979.
- Baeta, C. G., *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some Spiritual Churches*, London: SCM Press, 1962.
- Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2000), 86.
- Botchway, Frank, "The OSSA-Madih Church (Church of Light)," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 3, (2), (December 2000).
- Burnett, David, *Unearthly Powers: A Christian Perspective on Primal and Folk Religion*, Eastbourne: MARC, 1988.
- Busia, K. A., *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, A Study of the Influence of Contemporary Social Changes on Ashanti Political Institutions*. London; Routledge, 1951.
- Forde, Daryll (Ed), *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*, London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954/1970.
- Hastings, Adrian, *A History of African Christianity: 1950-1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Howell, Allison, "Avoiding Mislabelling and Misnaming: Learning to Engage the Gospel of Christ with Culture", *Serving Together*, (October 2014): 4-7.
- Kirwen, Michael C., *The Missionary and the Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Theologies*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987.
- Kwiyani, Harvey C., "Independent, Enthusiastic, and African: Reframing the Story of Christianity in Africa", in Waiboko, Nimi, and Afolayan, Adeshina, *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honour of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*, Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020.
- Mbiti, John S., *The Prayers of African Religion*, London: SPCK, 1975.
- _____. *Introduction to African Religion*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1975, 1991.
- _____. *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*, London: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Meyer, Birgit, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana*, Asmara, Eritrea, Africa World Press, Inc, 1999.
- Muzorewa, Gwinyai H., *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985.
- Krige J. D. and Krige E. J. in Daryll Forde, (Ed), *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*, London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954/1970.
- Oduro, Thomas, "The African Independent Churches in Ghana", *Christianity in Ghana: A Postcolonial History*, Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2018.
- Omoyajowo, Joseph A., "Christian Expression in African Indigenous Churches", *Presence*, 5, (3), (1972).
- Omulokoli, Watson A. O., "William Wade Harris: Premier African Evangelist", *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 21, (1), (2002),
- Opoku, Kofi Asare, *West African Traditional Religion*, Accra: FEP International Private Limited, 1978.
- Opoku Onyinah, "Bird's-Eye View of Contemporary Christianity in Africa", in Nimi Wariboko and Adeshina Afolayan (eds.), *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honour of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*, (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020).
- _____. *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2012.

Parrinder, Geoffrey, *Religion in Africa*, Penguin African Library, 1969.

Sarpong, Peter, "African Theology and Worship," *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, 4, (7), December 1974.

Turner, Harold W., "The Primal Religions of the World and their Study", in Victor Hayes (ed.), *Australian Essays in World Religions*, Bedford Park: Australian Association for World Religions, 1977.

Waiboko, Nimi and Afolayan, Adeshina, *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*, Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020.

Walls, Andrew F., *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2002.
Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol 11.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. Ernestina Afriyie is currently a Lecturer at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, Ghana. Her research focuses on African Christianity.